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September 21, 2012

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

**Subject: Healthcare funding for refugee claimants**

At the July 2012 Convention of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, delegates representing more than 200 congregations from Nova Scotia to Sault Ste Marie, ON, passed a motion directing me to write to you, Prime Minister Harper, to express our concern at the cuts in refugee health coverage announced by the federal government. Further, the delegates called for the reinstatement of full health care coverage to the refugee claimants.

The Lutheran church internationally is in the unique position of having a highly significant role in refugee care. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) with which Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) partners, is second only to the International Red Cross in providing care to refugees internationally. As a result, the Lutheran church is able to speak from a position of considerable experience in the area of refugee health.

Those who have applied for asylum as refugees are by their very nature in need of particular support, both to their physical and mental health. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that does not disappear over time, rather becomes latent and can re-emerge even in senior years if untreated. The side-effects of PTSD include aggression and substance dependency and have been shown to have a continued impact on the family.

The federal government's decision to cut refugee health coverage is out of step with the historic humanitarian compassion of Canadians. We, together with many in the medical community and

other faith communities pray that you will move to reinstate full health care coverage to refugee claimants.

With all of God's blessings,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Michael". The signature is written in a cursive style, with a plus sign to the left of the name.

Bishop Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
MP/sc

- c. Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism  
The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition  
The Honourable Bob Rae, Acting Leader of the Liberal Party  
Daniel Paillé, Leader of the Bloc Québécois