

EASTERN SYNOD of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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October 6, 2008

The Right Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Subject: National Poverty Reduction Strategy

The recently released Statistics Canada data estimated that in 2006, over 3.4M Canadians lived in poverty (below the low income cut off). Many of those are children – in fact 14.5% of children under the age of 5 are living in a low-income family.

In Ontario, 1 in every 6 children live in poverty. Further the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow; Canada's top earners according to Statistics Canada saw an increase of 16% in median earnings while low income earners saw a drop of 20% in wages.

Other countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom have taken action to address poverty by developing and acting on National Poverty Reduction Strategies. Such strategies with specific programs, targets and timelines have been successful. Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia have also developed such strategies for their citizens. Ontario is in the process of doing so.

At a time of economic uncertainty in Canada and across the globe, a federal strategy to reduce poverty among families and children will build a foundation for a healthier economic future. Therefore at its bi-annual assembly the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada adopted the following resolution:

“That this Synod express its profound disappointment and growing concern to the Government of Canada about the persistent and growing reality of poverty in Canada, especially child poverty, and that this Assembly call on the Government of Canada to work with Provincial and Territorial governments to develop and implement a national poverty reduction strategy.”

Of course poverty reduction does more than simply raise the income levels of our communities' lowest earning families. Reducing poverty strengthens individuals and families, helps our schools and businesses, helps establish unity in our communities and moves more families towards making meaningful contributions to our society. In short, poverty reduction improves the quality of life for all Canadian, thus strengthening Canada's competitiveness in the global economy.

Poverty reduction is not an abstract concept but a real, and achievable goal with real and achievable outcomes.

We urge your Government to adopt a National Poverty Reduction Strategy as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the name "Michael" in a cursive script.

Bishop Michael J Pryse, Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
MJP/cd

cc. Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta
Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba
Shawn Graham, Premier of New Brunswick
Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
Floyd Roland, Premier of the Northwest Territories
Rodney MacDonald, Premier of Nova Scotia
Paul Okalik, Premier of Nunavut
Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Robert Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island
Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec
Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan
Dennis Fentie, Premier of the Yukon Territory
The Rev. Susan Johnson, National Bishop, ELCIC
Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate, the Anglican Church of Canada