



Anglican Church of Canada

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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February 27, 2008

The Honourable Monte Solberg
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Solberg,

We write as Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to request your government to address homelessness in Canada as part of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Canada is a rich country, yet there are between 150,000 to 300,000 people who are homeless while an additional 1.5 million are at risk of becoming homeless. Rental rates are increasing while household incomes of rental families are decreasing. Last October 2007 the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing called homelessness in Canada a “national emergency”. Canada can do better.

In March 2006, our churches called on your government to designate part of the 2006 budget surplus to address homelessness in Canada. We are grateful that your government disbursed \$1.4 billion in a one-time allocation for affordable housing.

In October 2006, we wrote to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development to reiterate our request for a national housing strategy. Again in November 2007, our churches joined with others in the Canadian Council of Churches to request your government to take immediate steps to develop and implement a national poverty reduction strategy.

Yet we are concerned that no plans have been announced to renew major federal government housing and homelessness programs that are set to expire at the end of fiscal year 2008. These programs include: \$1 billion from the 2001 federal-provincial-territorial affordable housing framework agreement; \$1.4 billion from C-48; \$128 million for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance program; and \$135 million for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Our shared faith calls us to be committed to addressing homelessness and poverty in Canada. It is out of this commitment that we will be calling on the members of our respective churches to speak to their elected MPs, or to candidates from all parties should a federal election be called in the near future, and ask them to take the action needed to address these issues.

Together we are asking your government:

1. To join with the provinces to develop a comprehensive housing strategy as a part of an overall national poverty reduction strategy.
2. Immediately to renew and enhance housing spending over a ten-year period as a part of a comprehensive national housing strategy. This includes the three major federal government housing/homelessness funding initiatives which are due to expire in fiscal 2008.
3. To direct particular funding to groups that have been pushed to the margins of Canadian society and are thus at greater risk of homelessness. These include; women, Indigenous peoples, the elderly, youth, racialized communities, immigrants and people with mental illness.

In the Hebrew scriptures, the prophet Isaiah asks what true religious observance is. "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?" (Isaiah 58.7). Our vision is to go beyond the prophet's call, to create a society where the hungry are able to eat their own bread, and the homeless poor are brought into their own house.

We await a reply that indicates how your government will incorporate the critical need for a continued and invigorated affordable housing strategy for all Canadians. Thank you for respecting the urgency of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and the name "Fred".

The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz
Primate, The Anglican Church of Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and the name "Susan".

The Rev. Susan Johnson
National Bishop, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada