



Bishop
Rev Dr Michael J. Pryse
m Pryse@elcic.ca
Assistant to the Bishop
The Rev Riitta U.T. Hepomaki
rhepomaki@elcic.ca

September 19, 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: A Call for all levels of Government in Canada to develop and/or expand affordable supportive housing strategies

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 calling on all provincial, territorial, federal and municipal governments to develop and/or expand affordable supportive housing strategies that will prevent and alleviate homelessness and address the independent living needs of seniors and others facing challenges to independent living.

Recognizing that governments are able to act to alleviate homelessness only with the support of local communities, the Assembly also encouraged their congregations and members to support such housing initiatives in their communities.

We believe that this motion is based not only on spiritual and humanitarian concern but also on good science. The rationale for the motion noted that:

- Long term housing instability can create a cycle where people keep moving in and out of shelters, hospitals or correctional facilities ... "the use of various emergency services (e.g. police, EMS, hospitals) is roughly 10 times more expensive than the provision of housing with support services.." (All Roads Lead to Home –Region of Waterloo 2007)
- The Federal government's commitment to ongoing funding for homelessness alleviation and affordable housing ceases on March 31, 2014.
- The importance of housing to stabilize individuals and families is highlighted in the report "The Housing First Model: Immediate Access to Permanent Housing". (E. Nick Faldo in Canadian Housing 2008). The Canadian Senate in their December 2009 sub-committee report on *Cities, In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* makes a number of recommendations to address the housing needs of Canadians
 - By 2016, 16.3% of the Canadian population will be over 65 and by 2025 one in five Canadians will be over 65 (CMHC)

- People with mental health issues are more vulnerable to homelessness and represent a visible portion of the homeless population. (CMHC Research Highlight Report – May 2011)
- 25% of Canadians over 55 years old want to remain in their present home for as long as possible even if there are changes to their health (Impacts of Aging of the Canadian Population on Housing and Communities – CMHC 2008)
- As the baby boom population ages more and more seniors will require some supports to live independently in the community or in a supportive housing setting (as opposed to a nursing home).
- The waiting list for housing with support continues to grow in most urban centres (Homeless and Housing Umbrella Group – 2011 Report Card)

Prime Minister Harper, we hold your federal government together with all provincial, territorial, and municipal governments in our prayers and we expect that each level of our government will take bold new actions to develop and/or expand affordable supportive housing strategies for the most vulnerable among us.

With all of God's blessings,

Sincerely,

+ 

Rev Dr Michael Pryse, Bishop
 Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
 MP/ca

- c. 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
 Alison Redford, Premier of Alberta
 Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia
 Gregory Selinger, Premier of Manitoba
 David Alward, Premier of New Brunswick
 Kathy Dunderdale, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
 Bob McLeod, Premier of Northwest Territories
 Darrell Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia
 Eva Aariak, Premier of Nunavut
 Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
 Robert W. J. Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island
 Pauline Marois, Premier of Quebec
 Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan
 Darrell Pasloski, Premier of Yukon Territory
 Municipalities in Provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec