

31 March 2011

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper

Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

The Honourable Michael Ignatieff

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Gilles Duceppe

Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Mr. Jack Layton

Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada

Ms. Elizabeth May

Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Political Party Leaders:

In view of the current federal election campaign, I would like to take this opportunity to put before you the top priorities of The Canadian Council of Churches. The member churches of the CCC would appreciate receiving a response from each of you on what actions your political party will take on these issues in the next Parliament. You will also see that The Canadian Council of Churches now works in concert with a new Canadian “Interfaith Partnership”, an initiative that is now taking shape with support and leadership from my office. For each of the priorities listed below, please see the links to supporting documentation for more details.

Address Poverty in Canada

The recent *Interfaith Forum on Faith and Poverty* on Parliament Hill ended with a commitment by all participants to work toward making ending poverty in Canada the number 1 issue during this election.

- ✓ What action will your party take to pass an historic Federal Anti-Poverty Act that ensures enduring federal commitment and accountability for results with measurable goals and timelines, publicly comprehensible indicators, and a means for monitoring and evaluating progress to reduce poverty?

<http://www.councilofchurches.ca/en/news-view.cfm?newsID=139>

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/Brief_FederalContributionEndingPoverty.pdf

Address Poverty Globally

Canada's record on meeting the 0.7% target for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has been disappointing, and despite some recent gains ODA is currently frozen under 0.3%.

- ✓ What commitment will your party make to take all necessary steps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, invest 0.7 % of Gross National Income in development assistance in a transparent and accountable manner, and cancel debts of poor countries without regressive conditions?

<http://www.faithchallenge8.com/pdfs/2010%20Interfaith%20Statement%20-%20English.pdf>

Climate Change

The Earth, our home, is a gift from the Creator. The impacts of climate change adversely affect the most vulnerable who are least responsible for it. The strategy of promoting endless economic growth and high consumption lifestyles that contribute to increased GHG emissions must be challenged and constrained. Wealthy countries like Canada must come to a more profound understanding of the interdependence of life and take courageous steps to care for the planet.

- ✓ In the realm of climate change, what concrete plans will your party implement to ensure global average temperatures do not exceed a 2° Centigrade increase from pre-industrial levels?

<http://www.faithchallenge8.com/pdfs/2010%20Interfaith%20Statement%20-%20English.pdf>

Canada's Role in Afghanistan

We believe God desires peace in Afghanistan as well as in Canada. In terms of political commitment and dollars spent, Canada's military investment in Afghanistan dwarfs our support for diplomatic solutions to the conflict, for community reconciliation, promoting human rights, and development. Non-military solutions to resolving the conflict are out of balance with military approaches pursued so far. Meanwhile excellent principles to ground new and important non-military efforts are available in the most recent consensus report of the House of Commons Special Committee on Afghanistan.

- ✓ How will your party work for peace in Afghanistan, supporting Afghans in implementing reconciliation programs and responsive governance at local and district levels, as well as urging the international community to pursue diplomatic efforts to end the war?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/en/Social_Justice/canada-afghanistan.cfm

A World Without Nuclear Weapons

In a recent letter from churches leaders on the topic, they wrote, "We cannot conceive how the use of nuclear weapons could be justified and consistent with the will of God, and we must,

therefore, conclude that nuclear weapons must also be rejected as a means of threat or deterrence.”

- ✓ How will your party work towards achieving the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, and publicly and prominently recommit Canada to the energetic pursuit of the early elimination of all nuclear weapons?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/peace-disarmament/Church_Leaders_Letter_on_Nuclear_Disarmament.pdf

Convention on Cluster Munitions

- ✓ When and under what conditions will Canada become a full state party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions by ratifying it?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/peace-disarmament/Cluster_Munitions_Letter.pdf.

Human Trafficking in Canada

Human Trafficking is a growing worldwide and Canadian phenomenon that exploits and dehumanizes women. The issue is complex, multifaceted, and stretches across different levels of jurisdiction.

- ✓ What federal legislation will your party introduce to better prevent, protect, prosecute and partner to end human trafficking in Canada?

http://www.councilofchurches.ca/documents/social_justice/Human_trafficking-backgrounder.pdf

Prisons and Corrections

Many faith leaders have expressed concern that in this time of financial cuts to important federal services a significant increase in investment in the building of new prisons is proposed. Increasing levels of incarceration of marginalized people is counter-productive and undermines human dignity.

- ✓ What commitments will your party make to enhance public safety through healthy communities that support individuals and families, considers the impact corrections policies have on the most disadvantaged in society, and rely on the most effective ways to restore human dignity for individuals, families, and the communities they live in?

www.cjcc.ca

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We ask that you provide responses to these questions by Monday, 11 April 2011. Accordingly, we will communicate your response to our 23 member churches and their networks, as well as post the response on our website.

Please be assured of our prayers for you and your members in this time of campaigning and elections. May your efforts help strengthen the common good of all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen Hamilton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hamilton".

The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary

The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 23 churches of Anglican; Eastern and Roman Catholic; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox and Protestant traditions. Together we represent 85% of the Christians in Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.