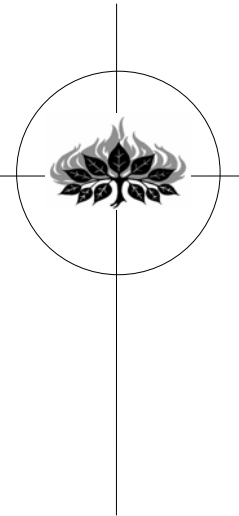


# The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada

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## MODERATOR OF THE 133RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Rev. Dr. J.H. (Hans) Kouwenberg  
B.A. (Hons.). M. Div.. M.A.. D. Min.. D.D.

January 2, 2008

The Hon. Ed Stelmach  
Premier of Alberta  
Room 307, Legislature Building  
10800 - 97th Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Stelmach,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada which met June 3-8, 2007 in Waterloo, Ontario. The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body in our denomination.

One of the issues that General Assembly considered was the depth of poverty in Canada today. Many congregations in both rural and urban areas try to respond as faithfully as they can to the immediate needs of citizens on low incomes.

Most provinces and territories are enjoying impressive economic growth. Yet the benefits of this growth are not being as fairly shared as they might be. With some exceptions, a \$ 10.00 an hour minimum wage would allow an individual working full-time for a year to reach the Low Income Cut-Off, as formulated by Statistics Canada. Our General Assembly approved a recommendation requesting provincial/territorial and federal governments to increase the minimum wage to \$ 10.00 an hour. A report from the United Way of Calgary states that a single person needs to earn at least \$ 15.00/hour to be able to afford a one bedroom apartment in Calgary. The minimum wage in Alberta is currently \$ 7.00 an hour. In many sectors of the economy, the minimum wage is certainly higher than \$ 7.00; about 1% of employees earn the minimum wage. What plans does the Government of Alberta have to increase the minimum wage and do these plans include an increase to \$ 10.00 an hour? Does the Government of Albert have policies and plans in place to index the minimum wage to the cost of living?

The National Child Supplement Benefit (NCSB) is federal financial assistance which can help reduce poverty in low-income earning families. The Government of Alberta currently reduces provincial financial assistance to those who receive the NCSB. According to the 2007 Campaign 2000 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada, there are 86,000 children living in poverty in Alberta. The NCSB can contribute to the well-being of children living in low-income families. Does the Government of Alberta intend to end the claw back of provincial financial assistance to those who receive the NCSB?

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall, The Rev. Donald Muir, The Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp

Canada accedes to the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. States are required to report to the United Nations on measures they have taken to give effect to the Covenant. In May 2006, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the body mandated to review State compliance with the Covenant, recommended that "...federal, provincial and territorial governments address homelessness and inadequate housing as a national emergency...". The recommendation suggests ways to counter inadequate housing, including the implementation of a national strategy for the reduction of homelessness. More recently, while visiting Ottawa on October 22, 2007 the United Nation's special rapporteur on adequate housing, Miloon Kothari, urged the Canadian Government to take steps to address homelessness and inadequate housing. What plans have been developed to address the need for affordable and adequate housing in Alberta?

We believe that a society should be judged by how it treats the vulnerable and marginalized. Too many of our citizens are being left behind in the current prosperity. There is a wonderful opportunity for provincial/territorial and federal governments to work together to reduce levels of poverty through a poverty reduction strategy with measurable targets and a clear timeline.

I look forward to hearing from you. Rest assured of our continuing prayers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hans Kouwenberg", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

The Rev. Dr. J.H. (Hans) Kouwenberg,  
Moderator of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly,  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

cc The Hon. Kevin Taft, Leader of the Opposition, Alberta Liberal Caucus