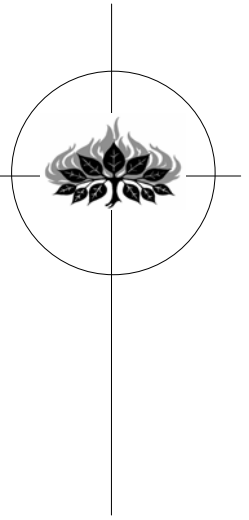


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



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. Danny Williams
Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
Confederation Building, East Block
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Premier Williams,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the 133rd 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 our General Assembly considered was the depth of poverty in Canada today. Many of our congregations in both rural and urban areas seek 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. The minimum wage in Newfoundland & Labrador is now \$ 7.50, and is scheduled to increase to \$8.00 after the planned April 1, 2008 increase. We acknowledge your government's intentions to review the minimum wage by consulting with stakeholders, and report on the conclusions of these consultations in 2008. Does the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador have policies and plans in place to index the minimum wage to the cost of living?

Canada accedes to the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Covenant*. 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.

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

We commend your government's plan to develop a provincial social housing strategy. In the April 26, 2007 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador highlighted new programs and new and additional funding for social housing programs.

We commend your government's commitment to reducing poverty through a multi-faceted plan with a timeline and targets to reduce poverty. How will your government report progress in reducing poverty?

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. We look forward to witnessing the effectiveness of your strategy in reducing poverty levels in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 extending to the left.

The Rev. Dr. Hans Kouwenberg,
Moderator of the 133rd General Assembly,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Cc The Hon. Gerry Reid, Leader of the Official Opposition, Liberal Party, Newfoundland and Labrador