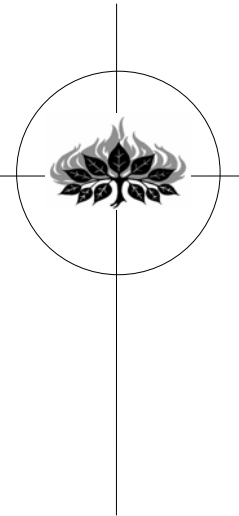


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



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 11, 2008

The Hon. Rodney MacDonald
Premier of Nova Scotia
PO Box 726
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2T3

Dear Premier MacDonald,

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 Nova Scotia is now \$ 7.60, after the May 1, 2007 increase. There are currently about 26,700 employees in Nova Scotia earning the minimum wage or less, or about 6.9% of the workforce. Additionally, there are approximately 25,600 workers earning between minimum wage and \$8.00 per hour. These numbers combined total 13.7% of the Nova Scotia work force. The December 21, 2006 report of the Minimum Wage Review Committee supports a multifaceted approach in dealing with improving the situation of the working poor. Does the Government of Nova Scotia have policies and plans in place to raise the minimum wage to \$10.00 per hour and to index the minimum wage to the cost of living?

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 Nova Scotia?

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

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. Does the Government of Nova Scotia have a poverty reduction strategy in place?

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 from the end of the signature.

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

cc The Hon. Darrell Dexter, Leader of the Opposition, New Democratic Party, Nova Scotia