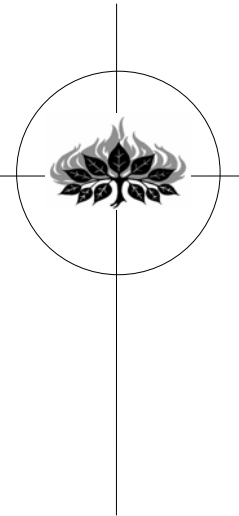


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



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 21, 2008

The Hon. Jean Charest
Premier of Québec
Édifrice Honoré-Mercier, 3e étage
835, boulevard René-Lévesque Est
Québec (Québec) G1A 1B4

Dear Premier Charest,

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 Quebec is now \$ 8.00 and will increase to \$ 8.50 on May 1, 2008. Approximately 161,900 employees earn minimum wage in Quebec, or about 5.1% of the workforce. Does the Government of Quebec have policies and plans in place to raise the minimum wage to \$10.00 an 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.

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

We commend your government's Action Plan to Reduce Poverty and Social Exclusion which, according to the October 2007 Third Year Progress Report, has increased the total number of new social housing units to 20,000. We appreciate the progress report which states that as of March 2007, over half of the new housing units had been completed.

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 commend your government's initiative in beginning the development of a new action plan to continue the work of the initial Action Plan past its completion date in 2009. We look forward to witnessing the continuing effectiveness of your strategy in reducing poverty levels in Quebec.

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. Mario Dumont, Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Action démocratique du Québec
 The Hon Pauline Marois, M.P., Leader of the Parti Québécois