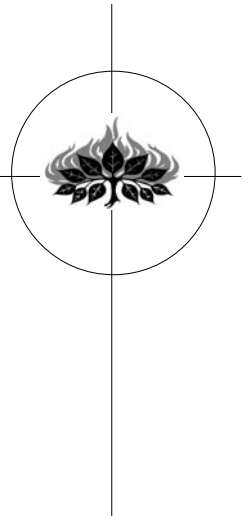


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



MODERATOR OF THE 133RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Dr. J.H. (Hans) Kouwenberg
B.A. (Hons.), M. Div., M.A., D. Min., D.D.

Monday, October 1, 2007

The Hon. David Emerson,
Minister of International Trade,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Emerson,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the 133rd General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, which met in Waterloo, Ontario, June 3-8, 2007. I am writing to you regarding the impact of trade agreements on vulnerable individuals and communities.

The 133rd General Assembly received and approved the report of its International Affairs Committee. The report reflects on challenges that migrants face around the world. Some migrants are short term residents in their host countries and return home at the end of their contracts. Canada hosts agricultural workers under the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

We are developing an appreciation that people migrate because there are few employment opportunities in their own countries. Thousands of Mexicans migrate to the United States, many of whom are undocumented. One cause (and not the only one) of migration is the loss of livelihood.

A study by the Carnegie Endowment For Peace in 2003 indicated that over one million jobs have been lost amongst corn producers in Mexico – many of these producers are small farmers. The report's author, Professor S. Polaski, observed that "...the liberalization of agricultural trade linked to the North American Free Trade Agreement is the most important factor in the loss of agricultural employment in Mexico".

Since 2001, Canada has pursued negotiations with El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (Canada-Central America Four Free Trade Agreement). Canada has responded to disasters, promoted development, supported programs to strengthen greater accountability in public institutions and fostered programs to advance human rights in these four Central American countries. It is regrettable that to date, the negotiations have not been public. There is an opportunity to engage citizens in these four Central American nations, and in Canada, in the discussions about the proposed agreement.

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

The Presbyterian Church in Canada supports trade between and amongst nations, but not in an unqualified fashion. As Christians, we affirm the dignity of each human being. We are mindful of our responsibility to care for those members of our society and of our global community who are marginalized and vulnerable.

There is growing interest in our congregations about purchasing and promoting fair trade products. Fair trade allows producers and their families in many countries to enjoy a sustainable livelihood and to do so with dignity.

We live in an era of growing ties between and among nations. Trade agreements bring us closer together. Initiatives that build trust between and among nations are to be welcomed. Trade agreements can and do promote economic growth. But economic growth should not be the sole criterion of success.

Trade agreements should be publicly reviewed in order to assess their impact on vulnerable individuals and communities. This review should also include the impact of the agreements on human rights and on the environment. Such a process has been largely absent in Canada and elsewhere.

I am writing on behalf the 133rd General Assembly recommending that the Canadian Government include a regular public process to review trade agreements that Canada has signed or is negotiating and to promote this principle within the appropriate multilateral bodies.

I note that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on International Trade passed a motion in September 2006, calling for the immediate release of texts, full public and parliamentary debate and further study of the impact the proposed Canada-Central America Four Free Trade Agreement. This is a welcome initiative by the Standing Committee.

I look forward to hearing from you and 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. Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh, Critic Foreign Affairs, Liberal Party
Mr. Navdeep Bains, Critic International Trade, Liberal Party
M. Serge Cardin Critic International Trade, Bloc Québécois
Ms. Alexa McDonough, Critic Foreign Affairs, NDP Party
Mr. Peter Julian, Critic International Trade, NDP Party
Mr. Kevin Sorenson, Chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International
Development
Ms. Francine Lalonde, Vice-chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and
International Development and Critic Foreign Affairs, Bloc Québécois
Mr. Bernard Patry, Vice-chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International
Development