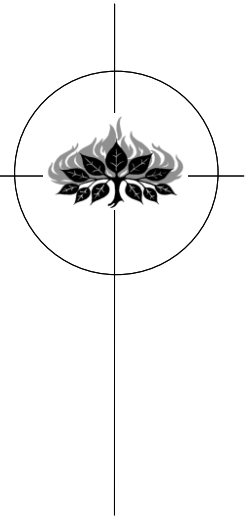


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



MODERATOR OF THE 135TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. A. Harvey Self, B.A., M. Div.

Friday, November 20, 2009

The Hon. Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Kenney,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the 135th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada which met June 7-12, 2009 in Hamilton. The General Assembly is the highest decision-making court of our church.

The General Assembly considered and adopted a report regarding the challenges and barriers faced by immigrants with professional credentials, attempting to acquire accreditation in Canada.

In June 2008, Parliament passed Bill C-50, the Budget Implementation Act 2008 which contained changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Under this legislation, immigration applicants who are skilled workers and professionals must qualify against a list of 38 preferred occupations that are in high demand in the Canadian labour market.

Under the new criteria, successful applicants will have a heightened expectation that they will be able to find work in their profession. What steps is the Government of Canada taking to ensure that successful applicants find work in their profession? Will the Government of Canada ensure that the preferred occupations list reflects changes in Canadian labour market demands?

Half (51%) of immigrants arriving in Canada in the past five years held university degrees. Despite university credentials, poverty, unemployment and underemployment levels are disproportionately high for these immigrants, and particularly for those from the Global South. In 2006 Statistics Canada estimated that 70,000 very recent African-born immigrants had an unemployment rate of 20.8%, more than four times higher than that of people born in Canada.

The 2009 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration notes that successful settlement and integration of new immigrants is an important objective under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The report states that the Citizenship and Immigration Canada settlement program provides income support for new immigrants for up to 12 months after arrival and allocates \$32 million in new funding (over five years) to support the development of a Pan-Canadian Framework on Foreign Qualification Recognition. What impact is this program having?

The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada encourages members of congregations to support newcomers through mentoring, assisting in networking or inviting a

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

speaker from an immigrant settlement service agency. Information on what the Government of Canada is doing to assist newcomers could be of interest to congregations whose members include new immigrants or those congregations that wish to become involved in supporting new immigrants in their community.

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

In grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'HS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Revered Harvey Self,
Moderator, The 135th General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

CC: Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, Liberal Party critic for Citizenship and Immigration and Vice-Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration
Ms. Olivia Chow – NDP critic for Citizenship and Immigration
Mr. Thierry St-Cyr – Bloc Québécois critic for Citizenship and Immigration and Vice-Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration
Mr. David Tilson – Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration