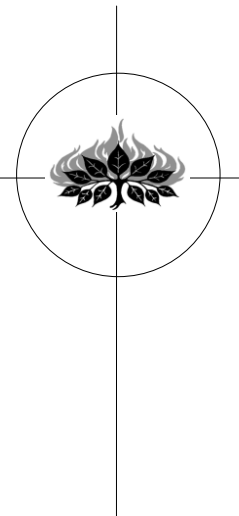


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



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

Monday, November 23, 2009

The Hon. Michael Chan,
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration,
400 University Ave. 6th Floor,
Toronto, ON M7A 2R9

Dear Minister Chan,

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 faced by immigrants with professional credentials, attempting to acquire accreditation in Ontario.

The Government of Ontario is to be commended for steps taken to ensure that Ontario bodies granting professional certifications have fair and transparent accreditation processes. The Ontario Fairness Commission is the first of its kind in Canada. The Presbyterian Church in Canada encourages your government to continue taking steps that ensure due process and to encourage timely and fair recognition procedures of immigrants' foreign credentials.

The Government of Ontario's Career Bridge Internship Program is a positive initiative that provides Canadian work experience for new immigrants with professional international experience. How is the Government of Ontario working with non-governmental employers to provide opportunities for skilled immigrants to work in their profession?

51% of immigrants arriving in Canada in the past five years held university degrees. A majority of these immigrants settled in Ontario. Despite having university credentials, poverty, unemployment and underemployment levels are disproportionately higher for recent immigrants. It is particularly high for recent immigrants 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 Canadian-born people.

Many immigrants take survival jobs when they first arrive in Canada. The chances of an immigrant re-entering their profession diminish the longer they are away from their practice. Working with Ontario institutions and bodies that award professional credentials to ensure that qualified immigrants can quickly enter the workforce is one strategy to help meet the goals of the Government of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy.

The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada encourages members of congregations to support newcomers through mentoring, assisting in networking or inviting a speaker from an immigrant settlement service agency. Information on what the Government of

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

Ontario 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 'H. Self', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Reverend Harvey Self,
Moderator of the 135th General Assembly,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

CC Tim Hudak, Conservative Party critic for Citizenship and Immigration
Cheri DiNovo, NDP critic for Citizenship and Immigration