



**50
YEARS**

IN FAITH JOIN HANDS INSPIRE HOPE

THE PRIMATE'S WORLD RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT FUND
Anglican Agency for Relief, Refugees, Development and Justice



12 November 2009

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

As leaders of faith communities, we are writing to request a dialogue with you regarding Canada's principles and practices concerning refugee protection. We offer to host that dialogue or to attend a meeting at your office. We bring to this dialogue extensive national experience in refugee protection and private refugee sponsorship and a commitment to building upon Canada's strengths and history in refugee protection.

Deeply committed to justice for refugees, we with other groups have grave concern about refugee protection practices and policies in Canada, particularly the recent imposition of visa requirements, turning back of nationals of moratoria countries, and the statements by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration suggesting the introduction of a two-tier refugee determination system. The announced plans for changes to Canada's refugee determination system would make it less fair, with lesser protections for some claimants based on county of origin.

Churches and faith-based organisations provide services and attend to protection concerns of refugee claimants in Canada. We are in fact the force behind the success of the private refugee sponsorship program now in its 30th year. We celebrate this legacy of sponsoring refugees from all parts of the globe and all faiths. Our members represent a significant portion of the Canadian population. They include people whose families have been in Canada for many generations and more recently arrived refugees and immigrants, and they include racialised minorities as well as ethnic majority peoples.

We know that you are concerned about the current state of Canada's refugee determination system, and we share your concern. However, references by representatives of your government to "bogus" refugee claimants undermine Canada's obligations to refugee protection and question the credibility of refugees fleeing persecution and seeking to have their rights recognised within the border of Canada. They also foster hostility towards refugees and fuel xenophobia in general. Along with you, we play a leadership role in shaping our country and in shaping the dialogue we have about our country, including how we protect refugees, establish refugee policy and meet international human rights obligations.

To that end, we extend this opportunity for dialogue about Canada's role in protecting refugees, and about taking positive steps to strengthen our refugee determination system.

Sincerely,

The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz
Archbishop and Primate
The Anglican Church of Canada

The Most Reverend Pierre Morissette
Bishop of St-Jérôme
President
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Mardi Tindal
Moderator
The United Church of Canada

The Reverend Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The Reverend Bruce Adema
Director of Canadian Ministries
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Anne Mitchell
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Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Donald G. Peters
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee - Canada

Hanny Hassan
President
Council of the Muslim Community of Canada

Fr. Yvon Pomerleau, o.p.
President
Canadian Religious Conference

Dr. Cassim Degani MD
Chair, Board of Directors

International Development & Relief Foundation

The Reverend Dr. Gary V. Nelson
General Secretary
Canadian Baptist Ministries

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

Please respond to:

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