

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Algonquin Territory  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

Andrew Scheer, MP  
Yves Francois Blanchet, MP  
Jagmeet Singh, MP  
Elizabeth May, MP  
The House of Commons  
Algonquin Territory  
Ottawa Ontario  
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March 23, 2020

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, and honoured Parliamentary leaders:

We write today in the context of abiding concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. We also write with gratitude for the blessings of this place we call Canada and for your leadership at this critical time. As a Christian community we honour your sacred calling as *God's servants for our good* (Romans 13), for the common good of all people. Please be assured of our prayers for all of you as you pursue faithfulness in this calling in these critical days. We pray expectantly that God is visiting you all with gifts of wisdom, discernment and humble collaboration.

Prime Minister, thank-you for setting an example in self-isolation and for your calm communications with Canadians in this trying time. We are thankful that all of you are demonstrating respect for the good work and recommendations of PHAC in the efforts to flatten the curve. We also acknowledge the important special measures in the Economic Response Plan of income support for individuals who need it most with a focus on the most vulnerable. We are also grateful for Canada's commitments to international efforts for containment and healing. Thank you too for including non-profits and charities in your measures to assist with a wage subsidy for small businesses.

As all of you know, faith communities are an essential part of social networks that meet the needs of the elderly, lonely, sick and marginalized across Canada. As a Christian community, we consider this work to be a living expression of the presence of Jesus Christ to the world – both through us and in us. In the context of the COVID-19 response and fallout, we know that this work will encounter significant challenges. Faith communities and civil society organizations will be profoundly stretched in their ability to provide vital community support.

God our Creator is faithful and so we, as other communities, will adapt with hope. Many of our churches suspended worship services beginning March 15<sup>th</sup> and are finding physically-distant ways to be present to one-another. Clergy and congregational leaders continue to adapt, providing connection across technological platforms and in simple notes and phone calls. Front-line services to at-risk communities continue with courage and the guidance of public health authorities. Chaplains, as essential members or health care teams, are rising to the monumental challenge of pastoral care in unprecedented times.

In moments of economic shock faith communities usually experience financial challenges given that our work rests on voluntary donations. So, we expect that COVID-19 will have impact on our capacity to sustain the community programs and organizations that provide vital services and spiritual comfort and nurture. Cardus has noted in its research that for every dollar of income to the religious sector, \$4.77 is given back into the community in common good services. This demonstrates that the work of faith communities is vital for social cohesion. For this reason, we humbly request that you, as our national leaders, recognize faith communities as a partner in providing support and hope as the needs of our

communities grow in the course of the pandemic. For some faith communities and civil society organizations, this may mean a need for access to COVID-19 economic relief and stimulus resources.

As people of hope inspired by Jesus, our communities are resilient and creative and will continue to be present for the good of the whole community. Because Jesus is *for the world*, we know that our calling is fully centred on public good and public service. In this trying time, we know that faith communities, civil society, and government need to come together for public good and justice. We crave your support and partnership in this, and indeed, would appreciate an opportunity for dialogue between the faith sector, civil society and government as an element of pandemic response.

Again, please be assured of our community's prayers for all of you. God be with you!

Sincerely,



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The Christian Reformed Churches in Canada are a denomination of 255 churches and ministries across the country. World Renew, Diaconal Ministries, Resonate and the Centre for Public Dialogue are all public service ministries of our denomination. We invest deeply in the major ecumenical organizations in Canada: KAIROS, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.