



The Ontario Religious Leaders Forum

The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC)

Separate letters with the following text were sent to the Premier of Ontario and the two Opposition Parties on December 2, 2015.

Premier Kathleen Wynne,
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Mr. Patrick Brown (MPP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Ms. Andrea Horwath (MPP)
Leader of the New Democratic Party
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

December 2, 2015

Dear Premier Wynne, (Mr. Brown/ Ms. Horwath)

The tragic events in Beirut, Paris, Mali and elsewhere have profoundly touched us all. In the wake of these events, we are saddened by the racist actions taken by some people toward our Muslim neighbours in Canada. Such violence and hatred have no place in our country. There can be no religious justification or defence of racist and intolerant attacks on the essential dignity of people.

Bringing to justice those responsible and thwarting the capacity of the perpetrators of such crimes and acts of hatred is obviously important and essential. But so too, is the Canadian response of reaching out and reaching beyond the violence and bigotry to build a peace founded on understanding, compassion and justice. Particularly in Canada, such a response is supported by people of all faiths and shared by many beyond our faith communities. Nowhere is that response put to the test more than in our response to the current national project to bring Syrian refugees to Canada. We have been heartened by the generous and compassionate response of Canadians

across the country. Many in our faith communities have pledged their support and are working very hard to help welcome these people.

We write to encourage you as a leader in our Province as you undertake important work to ensure the human rights of all and build a culture of peace. We are painfully aware that seeds of doubt and fear have been sown amidst the compassion and commitment of Canadians. The issues that have led to war in the region and have forced people to flee their homes are as complicated as they are horrific. But this is a moment that summons all of us to exercise public courage in the face of such fears. Extending a welcome to those who reject violence and have been displaced by such perverse visions is one concrete way that each and every one of us in Ontario can work to safeguard respect for human rights and build peace in the midst of conflict.

We understand the daunting challenges involved in preparing to receive such a large number of people and families. Disappointments and setbacks will no doubt punctuate the moments of elation. Nevertheless, without challenges, there are no accomplishments. The work of building peace in our world and in our communities is a difficult, uncertain and an imprecise task but it remains a compelling one. We do not write to you with simple answers to the very difficult questions you will have to address. We write to assure you of our prayers, the support of many of our members, and encourage you in your leadership in doing what is right for vulnerable people whose very lives are in the balance.

We remain faithfully yours,



The Rev. Dr. Susan Eagle
Chairperson of ISARC
United Church of Canada

The Rev. Dr. Michael Pryse
Bishop of the Eastern Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The Most Rev. Douglas Crosby OMI
Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of
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The Rev. Gordon Dunbar
President of Hamilton Conference
United Church of Canada

The Most Rev. Colin Johnson
Anglican Archbishop of Toronto
Metropolitan of Ontario

The Rev. Bryan Ransom
President, Toronto Conference
United Church of Canada

The Rev. Karen R. Horst,
Moderator, 141st General Assembly,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Rev. David Allen
Executive Secretary, Toronto Conference,
United Church of Canada

Ms. Angela Schwartz
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The Rev. Cathy Larmond,
President, London Conference
United Church of Canada

The Rev. Stewart Walker
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