



ELCIC

*In Mission
for Others*

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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The Right Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0A2

November 9, 2009

RE: Human Trafficking

Dear Prime Minister Harper;

I have recently returned from a meeting of the governing Council of the Lutheran World Federation. The focus for our meeting was "Upholding Human Dignity, Confronting Human Trafficking." We heard reports from church based agencies working on the issue of human trafficking as well as reports from regional delegations about human trafficking that is taking place within every country in the world. Estimates of the number of people trafficked world-wide are somewhere between 12 and 27 million. The United Nations estimates that the value of this illicit trade in human beings is \$32 billion. Human trafficking is the second largest criminal activity next to the drug trade.

Recognizing this, the Lutheran World Federation Council has clearly said that they "Absolutely reject the turning of human beings into commodities, especially for the purposes of forced or exploitive labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, armed conflict, or "organ harvesting." It was the view of Council that governments need to do much more to prevent and halt this horrendous activity.

In June, delegates at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada National Convention asked me to communicate to you the on-going concern of our church for the global problem of human trafficking. The problem of trafficking is of increased importance for Canadians with the 2010 Olympics coming to British Columbia.

With this in mind I welcome the passage of Bill C-268 on September 30, 2009 by the House of Commons which will enact stiffer sentences for child traffickers. Prosecuting those who exploit persons through trafficking is a good beginning. I hope that your government will continue to demonstrate leadership on this issue by extending and expanding the services available to the victims of human trafficking.

Trafficked persons are victims, but more fundamentally they are persons; persons who have been deprived of their basic human dignity. They did not choose their situation. Their identities have been stripped, their health compromised and their trust in others and particularly governments and officials, deeply damaged. The Canadian Government can assist in several concrete ways:

- to provide funding and opportunities for training programs that educate and foster compassion in professionals who deal with trafficked persons;
- to provide adequate and accessible funding for trafficked persons to obtain the necessary immigration, legal, protection and health care services they need, including extensive specialized counselling for as long as needed;
- to provide funding for safe shelters for trafficked persons;
- to provide training and adequate funding for police so that they can provide adequate protection services; and
- to provide funding for NGOs and church communities to train persons to care for the special needs of trafficked persons.

Canada can offer leadership on this important issue. Prosecution is an important initial action in helping to stamp out this heinous practice. Rebuilding the dignity of these violated children, women and men is a more difficult task and one that urgently needs to be undertaken. Loving these “neighbours” when there are thousands of our “neighbours” in this situation requires actions that require much of us all but need the support and committed action of your government. I hope this is a task you and your colleagues will undertake. I look forward to your response that indicates the next steps you plan to undertake.

Yours in Christ,

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

cc The Hon. Robert Douglas Nicholson, Minister of Justice
The Hon. Gary Lunn, Minister of State (Sport)
The Hon. Josée Verner, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
The Hon. Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)
The Hon. Jason Kenny, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration,
The Hon. Stockwell Day, Minister for the Asia Pacific Gateway
The Hon Michael Ignatief, Leader of the Opposition
The Hon Gilles Duceppe, Le chef du Bloc Québécois,
The Hon. Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party
The Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary, Lutheran World Federation
Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate, The Anglican Church of Canada
Ms. Ruth Vince, Executive Director, Evangelical Lutheran Women
ELCIC National Church Council