



CENTRETOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE
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The Hon. Dr. Frances Lankin & Dr. Munir A. Sheikh
Commissioners
Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario
2 Bloor Street West
4th Floor, Suite 400
Toronto ON M4W 3E2

15th March 2012

Dear Dr. Lankin and Dr. Sheikh,

Founded in 1967, the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC) is composed of 24 Christian churches in Ottawa Centre, Ottawa South and Ottawa East. A list of these churches is provided with this email.

At CCSAC's monthly Board meeting, on Monday 5th March, 2012, the following message to you, our Commissioners for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, was approved.

The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) has provided a detailed response to the Social Assistance Review Commission. This response reflects the concerns of the faith communities of the province which is backed by the research undertaken by ISARC in their own social audit across the province in 2010. This research is available in the ISARC publication ***Persistent Poverty***.

We confirm and support ISARC's work in this most pressing and vital issue.

The Ontario Poverty Reduction Act signed by all parties in 2009 referred to the vision of a province where every person has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential and contribute to, and participate in, a prosperous and healthy Ontario. When this Act was promulgated the economic crisis of today was already underway. The province stepped in with short term subsidies to tide various sectors of the provincial economy over what was thought at the time to be a temporary blip. The Drummond Report of 2012 indicates that in the intervening years the ability of the province to meet the expectations of the Act is now limited by increasing short and long term provincial debts, declining provincial government revenues, and rising unemployment.

The Drummond Report refers to the 2011-12 Social Assistance Review Commission whose task is to identify ways to meet the objectives of the Ontario Poverty Reduction Act of 2009. Unfortunately we are now at the point where the imperative of poverty reduction is challenged by the imperative of debt reduction.

The Drummond Report recommends a **one half of one percent annual increase** in provincial social assistance in the years 2012-2018, with any additional programme dollars arising from efficiencies in the provision of social assistance services and programmes.

The Options paper of the Social Assistance Review **does not highlight** the significance of the urgent needs of the **many low income families** and **single seniors** in Ontario who experience **end of the month cycles of hunger and hardship**. Those living on social assistance, as well as those with dependents working part time or even full time on the minimum wage **without health and dental benefits** also share **this cyclical hunger and hardship**.

The faith communities across the province provide stop-gap help to such families through food banks, shelters, and soup kitchens. The increasing demand on such temporary measures is yet one more indicator that the challenge of poverty and social inequality is growing.

This raises a serious reflection missing in the work of both the SAR Commission and the Drummond Report on **the basic principles of community – of who we are in relation to each other, of the priority for all citizens to work for the good of all; i.e., to focus on the common good; that is, the good of all.**

With great respect, we urge you to the view that wealth creation, when not **for** the common good, does not promote the common good which is the vision of the 2009 **Poverty Reduction Act**.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Dole

Paul Dole
Chair, Centretown Churches Social Action Committee

CENTRETOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Founded in 1967, the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC) is currently comprised of **twenty-four member churches**. Its mission is to "unite Christians of all denominations through joint participation in social projects and prayers." CCSAC was started in 1967 by nine churches to respond to social needs in the Centretown area. Since then, CCSAC has undertaken many initiatives on behalf of the poor and isolated in our community. CCSAC's mandate also includes advocacy for social justice, especially for issues relating to poverty.

CCSAC's work with the poor and needy is to all who are in need, regardless of race, background, condition or creed.

Each church contributes to CCSAC in a number of ways:

Funding from church donations and special events unique to each church.

Donations of food - each week, church members bring food to Centretown Emergency Food Centre (CEFC) or to their own church, whereupon it is delivered to CEFC.

Volunteer effort include stocking shelves, packing food allotments and distributing food at the CEFC.

CCSAC's board is composed of representatives from all churches.

CCSAC's purpose is to unite our member churches in social action and prayer. Christian principles guide our actions and our work: service to others, respect and tolerance for those we serve, along with humility about our service; and stewardship of the resources provided for us. These principles guide all CCSAC representatives (volunteers who work directly with the needy in our community, our Coordinator and our committee representatives).

CCSAC is comprised of the following member churches:

Blessed Sacrament

Canadian Martyrs

Christ Church Cathedral

Church of the Ascension

Dominion Chalmers United

Eglise unie St-Marc

First Baptist

Fourth Avenue Baptist

Glebe-St. James United

Knox Presbyterian

Centretown United

Religious Society of Friends

St. Andrew's Presbyterian

St. Barnabas Anglican

St. Giles Presbyterian

St. John the Evangelist Anglican

St. Matthew's Anglican

St. Patrick's Basilica

St. Peter's Lutheran

St. Peter & St. Paul Anglican (ANIC)

St. Theresa's

Southminster United

Trinity Anglican

Wesley United