



May 22, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister
Privy Council Office
85 Sparks Street, Room 1000
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

The Honourable Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance
90 Elgin Street, 17th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G5

Dear Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Morneau:

Subject: COVID-19 Pandemic and a Universal Basic Income program

Greetings from The United Church of Canada.

As the Moderator of The United Church of Canada, I want to thank your government for the pandemic relief programs it has announced over the past months, including the CERB. Some of these programs are scheduled to end in July but the ongoing effects of the pandemic will be felt by many Canadians, especially vulnerable Canadians, for a long time.

On behalf of the United Church, I write to encourage you to seize this moment, which has included encouraging examples of cross-party and jurisdictional cooperation and build on the positive experience of the CERB. Now is the time to roll out a Universal Basic Income program in collaboration with the provinces, territories, and Indigenous leadership. It is my belief that our collective experience as Canadians during COVID-19 presents a vital opportunity. Drawing on Canadians' realization that poverty can happen very quickly to anyone, together we can take important steps to protect the health and safety of all Canadians going forward.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized our interconnectedness to one another across this country. As a church we seek to care for and uplift human dignity and spirit from birth through death. Across the country, United Church faith communities and social justice and community outreach ministries are

involved in supporting people living in poverty every day through a variety of programs. Since 1972, The United Church of Canada has advocated for Guaranteed Annual Income as a method of insuring economic security for all persons in Canada that is more equitable and less expensive and complicated to administer than the numerous government support programs presently available. Since then, national and international studies and programs have shown that Universal Basic Income is both affordable and has beneficial effects in the areas of health, justice, education, and social welfare, among others.

I encourage you now to move forward and work with provinces, territories, and Indigenous leadership to develop and implement a Universal Basic Income program that provides an adequate living level for everyone and addresses the persistent inequities that exist within the present wage and social benefit structures of our country. Indigenous members of the United Church have reminded us of how structural inequities continue to particularly disadvantage Indigenous peoples. They have reported barriers to accessing programs designed to help Canadians through the pandemic crisis. Accordingly, it is critical that a Universal Basic Income program be designed to ensure both the application and payment processes facilitate participation by all Indigenous peoples, particularly those living in remote communities. I urge you to build a program that is universal, preserves human dignity rather than creates stigma, removes discriminatory barriers, does not penalize people for the work that they do, and is available with a minimum of bureaucracy.

The people of the United Church of Canada look for your leadership in this area and see this as part of the national fabric of services that preserve and protect Canadians, or, as Jesus put it, to help all of us to “love your neighbour as yourself.”

Wishing you grace and peace in your daily duties during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely yours,



The Right Rev. Dr. Richard Bott
Moderator, The United Church of Canada

cc:

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