



The Anglican Church of Canada
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December 7, 2005

FEDERAL ELECTION: *What do we value?*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The coming federal election is a time to assess our values. What kind of society do we want to live in? How can we best deal with the issues we face as a society, and strengthen the common good?

An election is about choices. And not just about which name you choose to put your X beside. It's about choosing to put your faith into action, a faith inspired by a vision of justice and dignity for all. We can make that choice...or we can choose to focus only on issues and policy proposals that benefit us personally. It's up to each of us.

Our faith guides us as we prayerfully consider our response to the issues at stake. Inspired by the witness of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, our churches are striving to build communities of hope and compassion in our society. This is a major challenge, when one considers the brokenness around us.

One sign of that brokenness is the increasing number of women, men and children in Canada who live in poverty. While many of us are now racking our brains trying to think of Christmas gifts for people "who have everything," one in every six children across Canada lives in poverty. In Ontario, that means 443,000 children. In the city of Toronto, poverty scars the lives of one child in three. In York Region, 19,000 children rely on foodbanks each year to ward off hunger.

During this federal election campaign, we ask you to particularly consider the plight of children and adults in Canada living in poverty. This is an issue of top priority for our advocacy efforts with government. We will be active in a variety of ways to counter child poverty in coming months. When child poverty rates are less than 5 percent in countries like Sweden and Finland, there is no reason why we cannot match their success.

A range of steps can be taken to tackle poverty, including ensuring more affordable housing so parents don't face the terrible dilemma of "paying the rent or feeding the kids," higher minimum wages, low-cost childcare, and other measures. One of the most effective ways of raising incomes in family households is by increasing the federal Child Tax Benefit. Right now, the benefit is slated to reach \$3,240 per child by 2007. If the benefit was increased to


\$4,900 per child, that would lift a single parent working full-time at minimum wage up to the poverty line.

We encourage you to become actively involved in the election campaign; this is what democracy is all about. As you do so, please keep our society's children, and their parents, in mind. Please ask party candidates if they are aware that one in every six children is living in poverty. Ask what they plan to do about this critical issue. The election questions developed by the Social Justice and Advocacy Board of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto can help you. Make your voice and vote count to alleviate poverty.

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol followed by the name "Andrew" in a cursive script.

Archbishop Andrew Hutchison
Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol followed by a stylized name in cursive script.

Bishop Colin R. Johnson
Anglican Diocese of Toronto

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol followed by the name "Michael" in a cursive script.

Bishop Michael Pryse
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada