

8 November 2019

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada to congratulate you on your re-election. We want to assure you of our prayers and extend our best wishes as you continue with your responsibilities as Canada's 23rd prime minister.

MCC is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, sharing God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice.

MCC currently supports programs in more than 50 countries, through the efforts of paid workers, volunteers and members of supporting churches. While much of our work is focused on international relief, development, and peacebuilding, MCC—together with our provincial counterparts—also works with local partners across Canada on a wide range of programming related to helping refugees resettle, walking with Indigenous peoples, engaging with victims and offenders in the criminal justice system, and working with people living in poverty.

MCC encourages the federal government to find ways to work across party lines in order to uphold policies and commitments that strengthen human rights, care for the earth and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, at home and abroad. As you appoint a cabinet and set mandates for ministers, MCC encourages you to include the following priority areas, identified out of our global work and relationships.

MCC began nearly 100 years ago to help people devastated by drought, famine and unrest in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine) in 1920. Throughout our history, we have continued to reach out to those affected by war and disaster, many of whom have felt compelled to flee their homes. We partnered with the Canadian government as the first Sponsorship Agreement Holder in 1979, and through many projects globally that have been supported by Canadian government funding.

As we look ahead, we suggest a few areas where we see opportunities for growth in Canada's response to forced migration.

- **Identifying and addressing the root causes of displacement.** Conflict, often combined with other factors such as mega-development projects, poor governance and the impacts of a changing climate, forces people to flee. MCC stands ready to work with the government to identify the root causes of displacement and address those factors, drawing on the expertise of our partners worldwide. We urge you to dedicate diplomatic and financial resources to lead a global effort to identify and address these causes of forced displacement.
- **Increased commitments to international assistance.** We have appreciated your government's focus on supporting women and girls. We believe more efforts in this area, including a strong focus on

organizations engaged in peacebuilding at a local level, can bear good fruit globally in dealing with some of the drivers of displacement. Policies, such as the Feminist International Assistance Policy, must be supported with increased funding commitments to meet the international guidelines of .7% of GNI dedicated to international assistance.

- **Addressing the climate crisis.** MCC is committed to working toward sustainability and we ask the government to uphold their pledges to reduce carbon emissions in order to meet global commitments under the Paris Agreement, and work as quickly as possible toward a just transition to clean energy and a non-dependence on fossil fuels. We hear from global partners about the current impacts of the growing climate crisis on vulnerable communities and encourage the government to include climate adaptation funding as part of its foreign assistance.
- **Commitment to refugee resettlement.** After the 2015 election, your government made a commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees in a short period of time. As an organization we were heavily involved in the effort to resettle refugees and, in 2016, we resettled 1,824 refugees in Canada, an annual total surpassed only in 1980. We urge your government to continue to show leadership in providing resettlement at a time when resettlement spaces are in short supply.
- **Increase commitment to resettling UNHCR referred refugees.** We believe that the UNHCR has an important role in addressing the needs of refugees. The fact that Canada is the 2019–20 chair of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) gives your government a great opportunity to further resettlement. While the number of refugees has continued to increase, the number of resettlement spaces continues to decrease. The UNHCR has a goal of resettling one million refugees in the next ten years, an ambitious goal, particularly as the U.S. drastically reduces their resettlement numbers. We urge continued commitments to resettle those most in need of durable solutions through global processes, including a leadership role in support of the UNHCR.
- **Sustained leadership in promoting refugee sponsorship.** This leadership should take place both here in Canada through the BVOR and PSR programs and globally through support of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).
- **Continued commitment to UNRWA funding.** We were pleased to see the government restore funding to UNRWA. Given our 70 years of experience working with Palestinian refugees, MCC believes that ongoing investment in education, health care, relief, and social services is vital for protecting the lives and dignity of millions of vulnerable people.

We also encourage the government to publicly uphold international humanitarian and human rights laws and standards in all Canada foreign policy. These include:

- **Trade policy and practice in Israel and Palestine.** MCC has supported local Palestinian and Israeli organizations working for a just peace since 1949. We are concerned by Canada's continuing trade relationship with illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank through the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA). We hear from partners that continued construction of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank leads to increased instability and tensions that funding alone cannot alleviate. Canada's trade policies contribute to that instability by giving de-facto recognition to settlements, and labelling products produced in Palestinian territory as products of Israel.
- **A re-examination of Canada's military mission Operation Impact, in Iraq and the surrounding region.** We remain very concerned that Canada's continuing military efforts in the region are not only ineffective in addressing deep-seated conflict but also fuel further fragmentation and undermine the work of local peacebuilding organizations. MCC has seen that addressing complex and protracted conflicts requires coordinated efforts, including humanitarian and development responses, as well as peacebuilding, both through diplomatic efforts and grassroots, community-led initiatives. MCC is therefore deeply concerned by the continued prominence of Canada's military efforts, as evidenced by the latest Operation Impact renewal announcement.
- **Accountability for the extractive sector.** MCC welcomed the announcement of the creation of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) but remains disappointed with the mandate of the CORE. The current CORE position, as announced, does not have the power to investigate but is limited to reviewing complaints. It is not an independent body but rather situated within a government department. Another serious gap in the position's mandate is that the CORE does not have the power to examine risks of harm, but only harm that has already occurred. We ask the government to reconsider this mandate.

In domestic policy, MCC supports continued work on reconciliation and restorative justice, including the following areas.

- **Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law.** MCC was encouraged by the government's support of Bill C-262 through the House of Commons. We were deeply disappointed to see the bill die in the Senate. We ask that the government continue to uphold commitments to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by introducing new legislation to turn the declaration into Canadian law, to the same standard or higher as that of C-262.
- **Support for restorative justice initiatives.** MCC has a long history of working on restorative justice initiatives, such as Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA). Programs such as CoSA make a significant contribution to safer streets and communities through enhanced public safety and protection of Canadians. We ask the Canadian government to continue to financially support these important initiatives and make restorative justice a priority at all levels of government.

As we have with all Canadian governments over the past decades, including over the last four years with your government, MCC will continue to offer our perspective and expertise. We are guided by the voices of our partners and the people we serve in Canada and abroad, and by our faith in God who calls us to promote peace and reconciliation. Our goal is to contribute to policies and programs that are better able to address the profound challenges of our world.

Once again, we wish you well and assure you of Mennonite Central Committee's prayers as you continue to provide leadership for our country. We look forward to ongoing engagement with you in constructive discussions on important public policy issues in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Bauman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rick Cober Bauman
Executive Director,
MCC Canada

CC:

Andrew Scheer, Conservative Party of Canada
Yves-François Blanchet, Bloc Québécois
Jagmeet Singh, New Democratic Party
Elizabeth May, Parliamentary Leader, Green Party of Canada