

June 25, 2007

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

Re: Canada's Role in Afghanistan

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

Greetings to you and to your Government from the twenty-one member churches of The Canadian Council of Churches.

We write to you keenly aware of the challenges which face Canada in addressing our international responsibilities in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. We recognize the tremendous complexity of the situation, and the desperate need for a peaceful future for a people beleaguered by war for a generation and more.

We write also deeply conscious of your own faith and commitment as a Christian, and pledge to you our prayers as you discern the future direction of Canada's role during the current conflict and the hoped for peace which must surely someday follow.

At the May 2007 meeting of our Governing Board in Toronto, we spent considerable – and prayerful – time as Christian leaders seeking to discern what word we might offer to you.

We found ourselves deeply mindful of scriptural imperatives. We remember God's word to the prophet Micah that we are to *"do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God."*

We remember too, that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was given not as good advice but as a directive for living according to God's will.

This leads us to three points which we offer to you for your consideration in the midst of many voices and many priorities.

First, the Canadian Council of Churches believes that the principal objective of our engagement in Afghanistan must be peace for the people of Afghanistan rather than the forwarding of a war on terror.

Second, we believe that a political solution for reconciliation must be discerned, and that all diplomatic means available must be employed to achieve that end, including “second track diplomacy” engaging civil society and religious networks.

Third, we believe that the valiant effort of Canadian troops must be directed in the first instance to the protection of lives and the preservation of civilian infrastructure in the manner prescribed by the *Responsibility to Protect* doctrine.

We recognize how challenging such goals will be to implement, but have every confidence that with good will, these quintessentially Canadian approaches to strife will prevail.

With our thanks for your attention to this letter, we look forward to your response. With our prayerfully best wishes, we remain,

Your sisters and brothers in Christ . . .

The Rev. Dr. James Christie
President

The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary

Cc: The Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Gordon O’Connor, Minister of National Defense
Brigadier-General Stanley Johnstone, Chaplain General of the Canadian Forces

The Honourable Stephane Dion, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
The Honourable Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Quebecois
The Honourable Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party

The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 21 churches of Anglican, Evangelical, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. We are one of the few ecumenical bodies in the world that includes such a range of Christian churches. The officers and staff of the Council are drawn from the whole diversity of traditions represented by the member churches.