**The Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Churches’ Forum on Global Ministry:  
Why The Proposed Unified Structure Is Good for the CCC**

**September 29, 2014  
Peter Noteboom, Deputy General Secretary**

**Introduction**At its May Board of Directors meeting, the Canadian Churches’ Forum on Global Ministry (CCFGM), after weighing different scenarios of collaboration, decided to explore becoming a third Commission with The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and creating a single administration for the two organizations. The two organizations actually are the same organization, but have long histories of working independently of one another. A proposal for coming together in a unified structure has been drafted and is currently in discussion. This is a “CCC cover letter” for the documentation of that proposal.

**Why this new relationship, and why is it good for the CCC?**

Already in its DNA, the CCC in its purposes and functions included the phrase: *to serve God's mission in the world … [and] ecumenical and missionary obedience among all Christians.* Over the years, the Canadian Churches’ Forum on Global Ministry has developed experience and relationships on precisely this topic. In its current programming, the Canadian Churches’ Forum on Global Ministry makes a substantial contribution to the CCC’s purpose and functions and aligns well with them.

Over the years, when the CCC surveyed its member denominations or Governing Board members regarding their priorities for the Council, mission, evangelism and culture have consistently been at the top of the list of priorities. On the other hand, the Council has not been in a position to respond to that priority. This unified effort offers member denominations of the CCC who have not participated in the life of the CCFGM an ecumenical table with substantial experience to engage in that *living encounter with one another* (from the CCC purpose and functions). It also offers member churches of the CCFGM who have been engaged in this topic, the possibility of widening the participation around the table to include a broader membership of denominations and Christian traditions.

**Forum**

Both organizations refer to “Forum” in a meaningful way. CCFGM includes the word in its name as a description of the role the CCFGM plays, a Forum of member churches and organizations. The CCC uses the word to describe its way of being together. It is quoted in full here as one of the central organizing principles of work together at the CCC that we all (including the CCFGM) agree to work by:

*The Canadian Council of Churches and all its parts shall function as a forum. In forum responsibility for all positions and views, doctrines, calls for action and decision to act, shall rest with the individual churches who have joined in any given dialogue. Church representatives shall speak with the authority and the mandate of the churches which they represent. Actions taken in the name of the Council as a whole will be those to which every member church has given consent.*

*The forum model recognizes our diversity and provides a method by which we can work together, acknowledging our unity as Christians, yet remaining faithful to the particularity of our respective traditions. It allows the widening of the ecumenical circle and has the potential for providing renewed commitment to ecumenism. To function properly this model relies on the concept that all representatives are expected to be able to speak for their churches. It is recognized that the authority with which the members speak will depend on the polity of the churches they represent. Such a method of interaction will facilitate the engagement of members and member churches in theological reflection on issues of common concern and in determining action as appropriate.*

The CCC’s central organizing principle, Forum, is not at risk. Instead, this is an excellent existing relationship that enhances our practice of Forum.

**Governance**

The CCFGM has found that it no longer has the capacity to maintain a fully functioning governing body with program, finance, audit and personnel sub-committees as it did in the past. Currently, the CCFGM Board and the Executive Committee fulfill all the functions needed. On the other hand, the CCC has a competent and fully functioning Governing Board, Finance and Personnel Committees, and robust Commissions and working groups. The CCC can, with minor adjustments, assume the governance responsibilities while the current CCFGM Board members would be freed up to play prominent leadership roles in the future Commission and its program work.

**Program**

The program work of the CCFGM enriches what the CCC has to offer: educational programming; mission, evangelism and culture expertise; curriculum development; a history of engagement with Canadian churches on partnership; global mission and intercultural ministry. The CCFGM and the CCC already collaborate formally in two locations: The CCFGM participates in the Commission on Justice and Peace, and plays a prominent role in the Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN).

**Administration**

The CCFGM and the CCC rent space on the same floor, next door to one another, on the top floor of the Toronto School of Theology. There would be no moving expenses. We also share the CCC’s photocopier. We already use the same bookkeeper, Alexandra Jimenez. No doubt moving to shared administration will still require effort, but the key relationships and assets are already in place and on location.

**Personnel**

The CCFGM has highly experienced and competent staff. Jonathan Schmidt, Director of the CCFGM has many years of experience and would provide fine staff leadership for the Commission. The Executive Assistant, Girma Bekele, is new to the position but has extensive experience and expertise in the topics of mission, evangelism and culture. One area that may need attention is the understanding regarding parity in resources to Commissions of the CCC. CCFGM would bring in a history of work and programming that is better resourced than the work of the current CCC Commissions.

**Finance**

The CCFGM, thanks to the sale of valuable property years ago, brings with it its own funds and funding. The assets of CCFGM are sufficient to establish both a substantial restricted fund for the work of the Commission and a substantial contribution to the CCC’s own operating unrestricted assets. CCFGM proposes to work out a relationship with its major contributors to guarantee, as much as possible, a stable funding stream for at least the next 3 years. The educational program offerings of the CCFGM also have a history of bringing in resources, over time contributing as much as half its annual budget or more. The investment income from a Commission restricted fund is another important source of revenue.

**Legal**

The CCFGM is not separately incorporated, but instead describes itself as an independent program agency of the CCC. The By-laws of the CCFGM are already included in the CCC By-Laws. The CCFGM enjoys its own charitable status with its own charitable number. The proper way to address the dual charitable numbers will take a little research.

A unified structure will remove existing ambiguity regarding the liability of the CCC for the activities of the CCFGM. Should there be a lawsuit related to the activities of the CCFGM, it is possible that the CCC would be liable under the current arrangement, even though we have no direct control or governance of the CCFGM. The unified structure will align activities, liability, and insurance. The CCFGM does not offer a high risk service such as working with children or vulnerable persons.

**Conclusion**

There are, it appears, few barriers to creating a unified structure, little risk of harm, and important potential benefits for the CCC. The Finance Committee of the CCC has named two questions that may need attention: 1) how can we maintain and enhance the current funding stream for the work of the CCFGM and the enlarged activities of the CCC? and 2) what risk does a unified structure pose to the identity of the CCFGM? These questions and others should be carefully identified and worked through, but the overall advantage of a unified structure is unmistakeable.