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**Mennonite
Central
Committee
Ontario**

November 23, 2007

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, M.P.P.
Premier of Ontario
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Dear Premier McGuinty,

Allow me to offer congratulations on your re-election as Premier of Ontario.

Mennonite Central Committee Ontario was very encouraged by the commitment you made during the election campaign to create a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Ontario. We were then heartened to see the creation of a cabinet committee, chaired by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews, to coordinate the government's anti-poverty strategy.

We will be watching the upcoming Throne Speech with interest to learn more about the government's plans for reducing poverty in Ontario. Specifically, we hope the Throne Speech will elaborate on the Government's plans with respect to targets, policies, consultations and resources.

Mennonite Central Committee is perhaps best known for our relief, development, and peacebuilding work overseas. Yet we also strive to live God's call to do justice and make peace here at home.

MCC Ontario has a number of programs working directly with people most impacted by poverty.

- We connect volunteers to support women and their children leaving shelters to live on their own.
- We walk with and befriend people living on the streets, striving to build community and respect the dignity of people often shunned to the margins of our society.
- We work with victims and offenders to create safer communities and help heal wounds caused by crime.
- Our work with aboriginal peoples brings us face to face with entrenched problems – like the lack of access to clean water and land disputes – keeping aboriginal communities from thriving.
- Our work sponsoring refugees to Canada makes us aware of the hurdles faced by newcomers trying to make a new home in a strange land.

In these and other projects, MCCO looks for ways to directly build community with people in need. In the process we see ways that government policies and programs can be changed to reduce poverty and respect the dignity of all people.

We see the need for social assistance rates to be raised to levels that meet basic norms of adequacy. And we also see that the social assistance system is often still dehumanizing.

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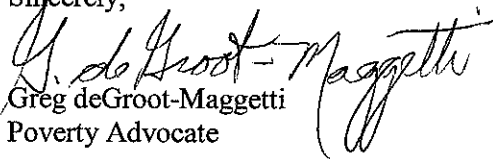
We see the need for the minimum wage to be high enough to lift someone working full time out of poverty. And we also see that Ontario's employment standards need to be more effectively enforced to ensure all people are treated justly at work.

We see the need for more affordable housing. And we also see the need to shift social attitudes towards our neighbours who have no home.

Reducing poverty will, indeed, require a comprehensive and long-term approach, drawing together the efforts of the provincial government, municipalities and non-governmental organizations. That is why it is so encouraging to see poverty reduction as an official part of provincial government policy.

We will look forward to hearing more in the upcoming Throne Speech about the government's poverty reduction plans. We will also look forward to learning more about how Mennonite Central Committee Ontario can be involved in consultations for Ontario's poverty reduction strategy.

Sincerely,


Greg deGroot-Maggetti
Poverty Advocate

cc: Hon. Deb Matthews, M.P.P., Minister of Children and Youth Services
Hon. George Smitherman, M.P.P., Minister of Health and Long Term Care
Hon. John Milloy, M.P.P., Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
Hon. James Bradley, M.P.P., Minister of Transportation
Hon. John Wilkinson, M.P.P., Minister of Research and Innovation
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, M.P.P., Minister of Education
Robert W. Runciman, M.P.P., Leader, Official Opposition
Howard Hampton, M.P.P., Leader of the New Democratic Party
Sophia Aggelonitis, M.P.P.
Gilles Bisson, M.P.P.
Mike Colle, M.P.P.
Cheri DiNovo, M.P.P.
Andrea Horwath, M.P.P.
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