



BRITISH COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

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

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

Thank you for all you do to bring peace, justice and love to our aching and beautiful world. Leadership is not an easy task, and those who take it on are to be commended for their dedication and sacrifice. Please accept this letter as our attempt to offer insight and support as you do your best to represent and lead our country in these difficult and trying times.

I am writing you with respect to the situation faced by refugees seeking entry to Canada, and the conditions giving rise to their displacement. Members of the United Church in BC Conference are more than ready to be part of the solution and to that end, we offer the suggestions listed below.

In line with proposals made by the Moderator of The United Church of Canada, The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell, we urge and will support in every way possible an immediate and significant increase in the numbers of refugees allowed entry into Canada, all refugees in general and Syrian refugees in particular. We support and recommend a generous increase in levels of assistance made available to private sponsorships of refugees, and ask that obstacles hindering the reunification of refugee families with family members already in Canada be eliminated. This grave and immediate crisis demands our swift and certain response.

Assisting refugees, however, will not bring the problem to an end. In our long tradition of offering aid and assistance wherever and whenever possible, our church has learned we must address the root causes of the dislocations we treat. In the case of refugees streaming from the Middle East the originating cause is surely war. We encourage your government to actively pursue peaceful settlements to the present conflicts in ways in keeping with Canada's long-standing peacekeeping role.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message. It is our hope you will see it as an offer of support and an expression of solidarity as you lead us and our world to peace. If you require something more from us, please do not hesitate to ask.

Blessings and Shalom,

Keith Simmonds
President
BC Conference

Healthy Congregations Effective Leadership Faithful Public Witness