

Statement on Poverty – St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, Canada

April 17, 2011

Archbishop Fred Hiltz has written a letter that is enclosed in your leaflet this morning. In it, he talks about some pressing social issues that face our nation as we approach the federal election on May 2.

The first item he names in his letter is the grave moral crisis of the growing gap between the rich and poor in this country. Despite continued economic growth, there seems to be a very few who are benefiting from all this prosperity. Statistics Canada reports that the wealthiest 20% of Canadians control close to four trillion dollars in assets, while the poorest 20% have a combined net wealth of less than zero. They have a combined debt of close to five billion dollars.

I wish to add my voice to what our Primate has said, and in doing this I join with a number of my fellow faith leaders – Christian, Muslim, and Jewish in this community – to make a statement about poverty in Canada. Our faith informs us that we have a moral imperative to find ways to share the abundant resources of this country more fairly. As people of faith, it is not enough for us to recognize the problem of poverty and merely mourn such tragedy or just react to its symptoms with handouts. We must act to rectify this crisis!

How can we act?

1. Vote. We must exercise this precious means to make our voices heard. Voting is a right for which our brothers and sisters in troubled parts of the world today are fighting and putting their lives at risk. It is a moral imperative for you to vote in this election.
2. Speak to your local candidates when they visit or go to listen to them at rallies. Ask them how they will stop this widening gap between the rich and poor. I urge you to make this issue – the growing gap between rich and poor – the issue that determines your vote.
3. Look at the policies that are presented by our federal parties and their candidates and ask them to explain how they will have an impact on narrowing the gap between rich and poor.

One tool available to us is the website www.candidatesagainstopoverty.ca. It was created by people of various faith traditions, including our own, who have come together in recognizing that poverty is a failure of society. Through the website, we ask all the candidates of all parties across Canada to pledge that they will work to reduce the growing gap between rich and poor in Canada. Go to the website.

www.candidatesagainstopoverty.ca. See if your candidates have pledged. If not, ask them why not, and encourage them to make a pledge.

It is a moral imperative for you to vote in the coming election. I ask you to make ending poverty a real priority in this election. Let us work to restore the sharing of the riches in Canada.

Thank you.

The Very Reverend Kevin Dixon
Dean of Huron