

July 10, 2018

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Subject: Open Letter to Ontario Premier Doug Ford

Dear Premier Ford,

Congratulations on being given a mandate to form government and assume the role of Premier of Ontario. The people have given you the responsibility to lead the province with integrity, wisdom, and compassion.

As ministry leaders in The United Church of Canada who live and serve in Ontario, we are encouraged by your promise to listen to faith communities such as ours. We are asking the members of our congregations to be conscious of working with our government for the greater good of all Ontarians.

The communities we serve and lead may write to you on their own accord, but we write to you today as ministry colleagues who collectively wish to highlight a number of important issues. We ask that you and your colleagues keep them in mind throughout your term in elected office.

We recognize that much of your platform was centred on economic issues, planned economic reforms, and the pursuit of prosperity for the people of Ontario. We trust that the reforms your government introduces will take into consideration the poor and marginalized of society and will work towards advancing their prosperity. It is our experience that the weakest of our society are the most vulnerable to any change, even change that is warranted.

Although there are many issues that are of concern to us as United Church ministry leaders, these are some of the specific points we ask you to keep in mind as you assume office:

- The vulnerable and marginalized must not pay the cost of budget cuts. The poorest members of our society cannot break free of the cycles of poverty, hunger, homelessness, and poor medical care without programs that enable them to become healthy members of our communities. It is far too easy to fall between the cracks of our currently broken systems.
- Safe, affordable housing for all Ontarians needs to be a priority so that all people can benefit from the physical and emotional safety and stability a good home provides. We are particularly concerned about the lack of quality housing options for people who live with disabilities, seniors with low incomes, and Indigenous people living on reserves.
- It is a moral obligation to help those in need, particularly those fleeing for their lives from

other countries. We ask you to do your utmost to welcome and support refugees and to embody a leadership style that is open and compassionate.

- You have promised to make improvements to our health care system, notably doing away with hallway medicine. We encourage you to keep your promise in this regard and to deliver better access to healthcare for all Ontarians. We are particularly concerned for those struggling with addiction and ask that you give weight to the evidence that supports a variety of approaches to harm reduction.
- We value teaching comprehensive sexual education in our schools and believe strongly that knowledge leads to better choices and better health outcomes.
- Climate care is an expression of our call to be good stewards of God's creation. We encourage your government to find and implement strategies that will reduce Ontario's carbon emissions while contributing to a robust "green" economy. We are concerned that lower gas taxes and a move away from both solar technology and light rail transit will have an adverse impact on the environment in Ontario and beyond.
- As the gap between rich and poor widens, access to higher education is becoming increasingly difficult for a growing number of people. Education in general needs to be a priority. As you have stated, Ontario can be one of the most competitive economies in the world. A well-educated workforce is key to that goal.

We appreciate your desire to unify all Ontarians in a vision of prosperity. We respectfully ask that this vision include the points we have raised, namely care of the vulnerable, affordable housing, support for refugees, quality healthcare, comprehensive sexual education in our schools, climate care, and access to higher education for all.

We would be pleased to meet you and with MPPs in our local areas to begin a dialogue about these matters. Lastly, we wish you well as you fulfil your mandate to serve all citizens of Ontario.

Yours sincerely,

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