

dignité pour touTEs
la campagne pour un
canada sans pauvreté



dignity for all
the campaign for a
poverty-free canada

www.dignityforall.ca / www://dignityforall.ca/fr

January 6, 2012

Via E-mail: Premier@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Christy Clark
Premier of British Columbia
P.O. Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Re: Council of the Federation Meeting, January 16-17, 2012

Dear Premier Clark:

Dignity for All, the campaign for a poverty free Canada, commends the Council of the Federation for taking a leadership role in bettering the lives of Canadian children and their families, especially those living in poverty. We are especially encouraged by the seven provincial and territorial governments that have chosen to develop plans specific to the reduction of poverty in their respective jurisdictions. The Dignity for All campaign notes that the upcoming January 2012 meeting of the Council will be focussed on an integrated approach to sustainable health for all Canadians. We are supportive of this collaborative approach to the Canada Health Transfer (CHT), and we encourage you to undertake this same approach to discuss the Canada Social Transfer (CST).

The Dignity for All campaign has 555 organizational endorsers and over 8,960 individual supporters who share a deep concern about the lack of public dialogue and discourse on the renewal of the CST. Finance Minister Flaherty's December announcement that the federal government has established a new 10-year funding plan for the CST and CHT without substantial input from the Premiers raises concerns. Dignity for All supporters are aware that escalating costs in the delivery of health care services are of major concern and that innovative solutions should be sought to drive down long term costs to ensure the sustainability of the system. Part of this solution is examining the direct and indirect costs of poverty, one of which is the strain poverty places on the health care system. Adequate investments in the CST to address the root causes of poverty can positively affect the support required from future CHT instalments.

We believe that health and social policies cannot be looked at in isolation; they are inextricably linked. Evidence-based research has shown that even modest investment in social programs which address the broad social determinants of health (i.e. income support programs, affordable housing, etc.) can dramatically reduce the delivery of expensive acute healthcare to Canadians. In other words, by ensuring adequate investment in the CST we can achieve our common goal of reducing the cost of health care services across the country.

The Dignity for All campaign encourages the Council to use the January meetings on the CST renewal as an opportunity to support the existing and emerging provincial and territorial poverty reduction strategies. We also believe the Premiers should take advantage of this opportunity to encourage the federal government to develop its own federal plan to reduce poverty, which will ultimately release

pressure on the healthcare system. A coordinated federal/provincial approach to reducing poverty that utilizes the CST framework, guided by shared values and principles similar to the Canadian Health Act, will have resounding impact in reducing the overall costs of the healthcare delivery.

Historically, secure and sustainable transfer payments that offer Canada-wide standards have played a vital role in developing equitable social programs across the country. The Dignity for All campaign is supportive of the predictable and stable funding arrangements in the current CST framework. However, we have major concerns that without concretely articulated shared principles and values, including increased transparency and accountability, the equitable delivery of social services across Canada is jeopardized.

Again, the Dignity for All campaign applauds the leadership of the provincial and territorial governments in their ongoing support of the most vulnerable in our society and strongly encourages the Council to use the renewal of the CST as opportunity to build on this momentum.

We urge you to renew the CST within a framework of key principles and values that reflect the shared goal of the Council: to ensure adequate support for all Canadians and the economy.

In solidarity for a poverty-free Canada,



Rob Rainer
Executive Director
CWP Advocacy Network



Joe Gunn
Executive Director
Citizens for Public Justice

Cc: Provincial and territorial Premiers
Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
Ms. Nycole Turmel, Interim Leader of the Official Opposition
Hon. Bob Rae, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party
Hon. Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance
Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development
Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health
Peter Julian, NDP Finance Critic
Libby Davies, NDP Health Critic
Hon. Scott Brison, Liberal Finance Critic
Hon. Hedy Fry, Liberal Health Critic
Dignity for All Campaign partners