

Light A Flame For A Guaranteed Livable Income

Wednesday, September 23 is the day of the Throne Speech. On Tuesday, September 22, 12:30 p.m. on the eve of the Throne Speech, The United Church of Canada is asking Canadians to **light a candle** in support of a **Guaranteed Livable Income**. This symbolic action is to be followed by taking a photo, posting it on social media and sending it to the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, the Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freeland, and our local MP's.

The United Church of Canada is far from alone in this campaign. In May 2020, 41 Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Bishops sent a public letter to the Prime Minister, stressing that NOW is the time for Guaranteed Basic Income. Some 50 Senators have written letters to the Federal Government to support such a program. On August 10, 2020, MP Leah Gazan (NDP, Winnipeg Centre) submitted a motion (M-46) to convert CERB into a Guaranteed Living Basic Income. As of September 18th, some 39,664 persons and organization have added their signatures to this Bill, M-46. An Angus-Reid poll in June 2020 revealed that 59% of Canadians support this idea (4 years ago, the percentage was significantly lower).

The Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador is a non-partisan, multi-faith group of Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. We have been advocating the elimination of poverty in our province and country through a Living Wage for years. We have signed the M-46 Petition and collaborate with all persons, parties and organizations of good will for a Guaranteed Livable Income for all persons in Canada.

NOW, in the midst of the pandemic, is the **time for action**. While lamenting the pandemic, we applaud our "essential workers" who continue to risk their own health for the well-being of others. Too many of our "essential workers" are earning only a minimum wage, placing them below the poverty line. A disproportionate number are women. Thanks to our present governments we had CERB and a number of other helpful pandemic-related programs to address vital, immediate needs. We need to act **NOW** to ensure a Guaranteed Livable Income, in order that that all residents of Canada can live with dignity with the basic necessities of life.

This weekend our Jewish neighbours celebrate Rosh Hashanah, basically, the Jewish New Year – a time of reflection and renewal. Rosh Hashanah is followed ten days later by the "holiest of days", Yom Kippur – a day of atonement. Symbolically, this is a time of new beginnings, commencing with a sombre reflection on wrong-doing, making amends and a re-focusing on making the world a better place. What an opportune time for all of us to do the same, to proclaim that every person in Canada is entitled to a Guaranteed Livable Income. So let us light our candles, write those letters and begin anew (building on the goodness of the past) so that no one is denied their rightful place in Canada's economy.

Marion Pardy

Coordinator, Religious Social Action Coalition of NL