

from those who serve in ministry

with the United Church of Canada in Ontario

an open letter to Doug Ford

July 10, 2018

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

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 (<http://www.united-church.ca>) who live and serve in Ontario, we are encouraged by your promise to listen to faith communities such as ours. (<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/doug-ford-anointed-literally-by-controversial-evangelical-pastor-as-part-of-effort-to-win-social-conservatives>) 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 the specific points we ask you to keep in mind as you assume office:

1. 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 (<https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/ending-poverty>), hunger (<https://www.united-church.ca/tags/food>), 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.

2. Safe, affordable housing (<https://tvo.org/article/current-affairs/how-ontario-churches-are-fighting-the-affordable-housing-crisis>) 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.

3. 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 (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/suleyman-family-finding-a-home-away-from-home/article30703243/>) and to embody a leadership style that is open and compassionate.

4. 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 (<https://www.united-church.ca/stories/home-last>) and ask that you give weight to the evidence that supports a variety of approaches to harm reduction.

5. We value teaching comprehensive sexual education in our schools (https://www.ucobserver.org/to_the_point/2018/04/teaching-sex-ed-in-schools-is-no-sin/) and believe strongly that knowledge leads to better choices and better health outcomes.

6. Climate care is an expression of our call to be good stewards of God's creation (<https://www.united-church.ca/tags/climate-change>). 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.

7. 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,

Adam Hanley (Rev.), *Toronto*

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As this letter circulates further into our networks, those who are in paid accountable ministry with the United Church of Canada continue to send in their names :

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19 Comments

19 thoughts on “an open letter to Doug Ford”

1. HELENA

August 3, 2018 at 11:41 am · Reply

Thank you for this Spirit-filled letter! I hope all churches will send similar challenges to the Ontario government!

2. TOM STOBIE

August 3, 2018 at 10:13 am · Reply

I am glad wiser heads than mine have chosen a considered good wish to our new government. I pray this measured gesture will foster a spirit of co-operative dialogue and enlightened policy and action. I look forward to a response from Mr. Ford.

3. HOWARD A. DOUGHTY

August 1, 2018 at 12:29 pm · Reply

Thank you for your wisdom, your empathy and your eloquent defence of the better Christian principles.

Your message, of course, will fall on deaf ears. Mr. Ford and his enablers have no interest in the people they purport to represent. They are mean-spirited ideologues supported by tremulous quislings.

They have already begun to undermine primary, secondary and college education, environmental protection, economic equity, health care, mental health promotion, democratic norms and public safety. Their policies and practices are irredeemable. Their personal morals and ethics are vicious and venal.

It is good that you “put them on notice.” You must now take the further steps of organizing and mobilizing resistance. Four years of corruption, mismanagement and reactionary governance may seem like a long stretch of public toxicity; however, if the future of Ontario is to be repaired and restored after Mr. Ford’s one term in office, then the time will pass quickly enough and your message passes from sincere advice to authentic advocacy and culminates in relentless interrogation and support for a serious, humane alternative.

Incidentally, in the event that you are open to suggestions from an cheerful “non-believer,” in addition to the obvious reference to the “Beautitudes,” may I suggest drawing the attention of your congregations to the Book of Acts 4: 32-35?

1. REV ERIC LUKACS

August 3, 2018 at 11:14 am · Reply

Hello Howard... Thank you for your kind and intelligent words. We pray that not all ears are dead. Certainly yours are not. We pray that the 42% of eligible voters who stayed home will hear as well and hold all parties seeking the privilege to serve to greater account. Please encourage your friends to join us in mind body and spirit.

2. THOMAS STOBIE

August 3, 2018 at 2:32 pm · Reply

I could certainly compete with Mr. Doughty in hurling invective at Ford and his ilk, but I am glad that the skilled voices of my church leaders are speaking in the measured tones of those who would attempt to influence those in power who have the demonstrated capacity to exercise it destructively. Taking the low road of discourse as seems to prevail in political fora merely debases the voices of intelligence. One can disagree constructively and hope that humanity may thereby prevail. One does not change hearts and minds by assuming a priori that none exist where they are not evident..

1. REV ERIC LUKACS

August 3, 2018 at 3:24 pm

Our faith tells us to Love our neighbor and to remember that God show's no parislity – that means we must find a way to be in harmony. Our way of life depends on it. As the apostle Paul said – do not let the sun go down on your anger but do not let it cause you to sin.

Thank you for you kind words.

4. DAVID HANNA

July 22, 2018 at 2:27 pm · Reply

This letter, expressing the need for continuous attention to social justice issues, is an excellent beginning. Please continue your efforts to press the new Ontario Government on this path.

5. DOREEN PORTER

July 22, 2018 at 1:37 pm · Reply

Thanks to all who took time to compose and sign this letter. May it be heard and meet with success at Queen's Park

6. FR. FRANK WAGNER CSC

July 20, 2018 at 4:00 pm · Reply

Wonderful message, clearly articulated, Gospel inspired and work of the Holy Spirit. Thank you very much.

7. DAVID B. CLEMENS

July 18, 2018 at 4:43 pm · Reply

Excellent letter. Great to see our faith leaders in the United Church speaking up for social justice

8. MAGGIE KHAJA

July 18, 2018 at 2:12 pm · Reply

I had a 'good feeling of pride' reading this letter. Reflecting on the UCC roots in Methodism, 'people' are central to our faith; the disenfranchised, the refugee, the disadvantaged represent the leper, the blind and the lame.

The letter is a call out to all of us to do better and to do more.

9. REV ERIC LUKACS

July 17, 2018 at 6:12 pm · Reply

Thank you all for your encouragement. There are a group who have literally worked around the clock to make this happen. Your "thank yous" with any "but you should have's" will really mean a lot to them.

10. ISOBEL EASTMAN

July 17, 2018 at 4:43 pm · Reply

Thanks for composing that letter to Doug Ford . It is powerful- with striking illustrations- and reflects my thoughts and hopes. Well done. Is there any way lay people can sign on also or would that become too weighty?

11. MARY A. SPAFFORD

July 17, 2018 at 4:20 pm · Reply

I could not have stated it any better myself!! I so much appreciate the positive and collaborative language used!! One does not need to use offensive or demeaning language when expressing an opinion!! Very well said!! I sincerely hope some heed is paid to your suggestions! It is so very important that we support the most vulnerable in our society regardless of who they are!!! Thank you so much for coming forward with this detailed reminder!!!

12. MARY DAVIS

July 17, 2018 at 11:18 am · Reply

Thank you for tgis letter

13. DOREEN TAYLOR-CLAXTON

July 17, 2018 at 8:02 am · Reply

I am not in paid / accountable service of the UCC but would be pleased to sign this well written letter. Do you have a members version?

14. DAVID LEE, OTTAWA

July 16, 2018 at 9:40 pm · Reply

An excellent letter, in timing, tone and content. Well done! It also leaves open the possibility of follow-up, if appropriate, in light of developments...

15. ANNA CHIKOSKI RETIRED UNITED CHURCH MINISTER

July 16, 2018 at 10:06 am · Reply

Fully support this letter!

16. JOHNRYERSON

July 15, 2018 at 9:54 pm · Reply

Well done, I hope all signatories are sending to their mpp and their local media.