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MODERATOR OF THE 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Rev. Dr. Robert N. Faris, B.A., M.Div., M.Th., Ph.D.

August 25, 2022

The Hon. Ahmed Hussen, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion  
ahmed.hussen@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister:

Greetings from the General Assembly which met June 5–8, 2022. The General Assembly considered a report on the affordable housing crisis in Canada.

The church believes that housing is a human right and supports the principles of a just recovery from the pandemic that include putting people's health and well-being as the first priority.

I am encouraged that the Government of Canada is committed to taking a rights-based approach to housing, as well as taking into account the systemic barriers faced by Indigenous and racialized people who are at greater risk of housing insecurity.<sup>1</sup> As you know, people with disabilities, people experiencing domestic violence or human trafficking, and women-led, lone-parent families also face systemic barriers to housing security. A human rights approach must be combined with appropriate benefits and services that are trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and reflective of the diverse lived experiences of those most vulnerable to housing insecurity to adequately address systemic barriers to affordable housing.

The development of the National Housing Strategy was an important step to coordinate long-term planning to address housing insecurity. The range of investments since 2015, outlined in the 2022 Budget in new and repaired housing stock, Housing Affordability Supports and the Rapid Housing Initiative are needed and necessary.

The Rental Construction Financing Initiative (RCFI) aims to address the critical lack of propose-built rentals and the federal Budget outlines requirements and incentives that a portion of new rentals will be "more affordable."<sup>2</sup> There doesn't seem to be clarity, however, about how the Government of Canada will ensure that projects receiving funding will target core housing needs for vulnerable groups, while keeping rent affordable. The RCFI's definition of affordability (30% of median household income) is typically much higher than the median rent in local markets. This seems incongruous with the goal of providing affordable housing for those facing housing insecurity. Is this gap being addressed, and what is the Government of Canada's long-term strategy to ensure that affordable units reflect the local context of people facing housing insecurity—and that these units remain "affordable" once the RCFI's mandate ends?

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<sup>1</sup> Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion Mandate Letter, December 16, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, "2022 Budget", pg. 39.

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Victor S.J. Kim and The Rev. Donald G.A. Muir

To implement a rights-based approach to housing in Canada, housing needs to be treated as a basic need and right, and not a commodity. New supports for cooperative housing are both needed and welcome.

I look forward to hearing from you. Rest assured of our prayers for all decision makers in Parliament.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert N. Faris", followed by a period.

The Rev. Dr. Robert N. Faris  
Moderator of the 2022 General Assembly