



Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition

"Faith Communities In Action Against Poverty"

News Release – February 20, 2009

Interfaith Prayer Vigil now begins on Tuesday, March 3, 2009

Praying for justice for the poor and our MPPs

As Ontario faces a deepening recession, people of faith are turning to prayer in their efforts to counter poverty and to care for Members of the Provincial Parliament. All people of faith are invited to join us.

Starting Tuesday, March 3 and continuing throughout March people from a range of religious traditions will be praying outside the Ontario Legislature for MPPs and for those hardest hit by the economic crisis. The vigil is organized by a coalition representing Ontario's faith communities called the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC).

The McGuinty government has committed itself to a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Yet recent statements by government leaders hint at tight purse strings as a long-awaited provincial budget draws near. The budget will be the litmus test of the government's commitment to the strategy.

Reflecting the compassion that guides people of faith, ISARC's Interfaith Prayer Vigil will take place each day from Monday through Thursday as a public witness to the commitment of people of faith to those hardest hit by a worsening economy.

As Imam Shafiq Hudda of the Islamic Humanitarian Service, Kitchener, states, "An obligation of every Muslim is to be concerned about the plight of those less fortunate. They are always in our prayers."

"In these challenging economic times our government leaders are called to make difficult decisions that impact different sectors of the province both positively and negatively. The church prays weekly for our leaders in the decisions they make and particularly that they do not neglect the poor and vulnerable", reflects Bishop Philip Poole, Anglican Diocese of Toronto. "Working in partnership, church and government can make a real difference."

Two groups per day will come to Queen's Park where ISARC will have a prayer canopy in front of the legislative building. A morning shift will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and an afternoon shift from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. At noon, a religious leader will guide participants in prayer and reflection.

According to Rabbi Aaron Levy, Toronto, “This prayer vigil embodies the spirit of Psalm 102: 'A prayer for the poor when he is faint and pours forth his plea.' This is a prayer in which all Ontarians of faith and conscience should get involved.”

To participate, email ISARC at isarc@rogers.com or visit www.isarc.ca, and let us know which day you can come and whether you can do a morning or afternoon shift (or both). Let us know in advance when you are coming, so each day can be properly planned.

We welcome your participation – please bring a group from your congregation, synagogue, mosque or temple! Now is the time to come together to pray and remind ourselves, and our MPPs, of our responsibilities to the most vulnerable members of our society.

The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC), representing Ontario’s major faith communities, provides a strong religious voice of conscience on behalf of more than one million Ontarians who struggle with poverty. ISARC is redoubling its witness against poverty as the economic slump worsens.

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition Interfaith Prayer Vigil

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