



We Come to Pray for our MPPs and Justice for the Poor

We are gathered as a multifaith community to pray for our politicians and the poor living in our province. Our faith traditions remind us that every person is created with dignity and is born into a community which strives to nourish and protect each child. Faith provides us with the wisdom, strength, and vision to create safe, vibrant communities, where people can grow and reach their human potential.

Thus, on the eve of a critically-important provincial budget, we pray for:

- the politicians in their important roles in the Legislature,
- those who are most marginalized, so that their dignity and well-being is not compromised as governmental decisions are made, and
- ourselves as we continue to work toward the community we all desire.



When we pray for ourselves, and others, we do not manipulate God or other people. We place our concerns before God and others. We reflect on how we can make changes that will address these concerns. We ask that others also be led spiritually to shoulder their responsibilities with integrity. At the heart of our prayer is our earnest desire that all people and the world itself will be transformed: that suffering and injustice will cease.

Men and women enter politics to create a better world. As people of faith, many of them are guided by a deep spirituality. The political world is full of negotiation and compromises. Unfortunately stereotypes, prejudices, and the actions of a few have blinded many citizens from seeing their politicians as leaders with integrity. In our prayers for the Members of the Provincial Parliament, we remember the hopes and integrity of our politicians. We ask that they find the strength and wisdom to negotiate and work toward the best Ontario that they and we can imagine.

Our current economic turmoil presents many choices and options. How can we work together so that all residents of Ontario have affordable housing; jobs with living wages; nutritious food; a safe and secure environment; adequate transportation; ability to care for their children; and time to spend with friends, family and neighbours? This is a vision of a good community that we all can enjoy. We must all work toward this vision. Politicians have the responsibility of ensuring that government plays its key role in achieving this vision.



ISARC Interfaith Prayer Vigil

This vision can be attained, even as Ontario faces a daunting economic crisis. Why? Because our economy is not made up of the stocks and bonds traded on Bay Street. The *real* economy is all about our wealth as peoples in the midst of Ontario's abundant natural resources. It's also based on our values, which peoples of faith believe should reflect our shared humanity and commitment to the common good.

ISARC

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition

"Faith Communities In Action Against Poverty"



What We're Working For

The ISARC coalition urges the Ontario government to allocate a permanent annual \$1-billion for social assistance increases and a further \$1-billion for affordable housing in its 2009 budget, to help our neighbours living in degrading conditions. (visit www.isarc.ca to read our full pre-budget brief).

ISARC also works with Ontario's growing anti-poverty coalition, called the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, which seeks to achieve a 25% reduction in poverty over the next 5 years. The 25 in 5 Network includes many of ISARC's justice partners, such as Campaign 2000, Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, Social Planning Network of Ontario, and the Income Security Advocacy Centre. This coalition has mobilized thousands of people across Ontario, including many low-income people, around goals and strategies for breaking the cycle of poverty, and for achieving the goal of a 25% reduction in poverty by 2013. The 25 in 5 Network has produced a Blueprint that outlines how the government of Ontario can achieve tremendous progress in alleviating poverty by allocating a total of \$5-billion in new funding in the 2009 and 2010 provincial budgets. Funding would go towards the following measures:

- Funding to augment recently announced federal monies to build more affordable housing and invest in child care;
- A \$100 Healthy Food Supplement to help all adults on social assistance afford nutritious food;
- A Housing Benefit to help low-income renters meet the rising cost of housing;
- An increase to the Ontario Child Benefit to \$92 a month in 2009 and \$125 a month in 2010 to protect families and their children;
- Provision of 7,500 new affordable childcare spaces, which are crucial for working parents and those retraining to meet the demands of a changing economy.

ISARC will assess the provincial budget and legislation based on whether they provide the assistance that low-income people need so badly.

We will continue to advocate for these changes, and to walk alongside our neighbours left on the margins of our society. May our lives demonstrate the wisdom, integrity and spiritual strength that can grow in all people.

