



A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER FROM THE MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

Over the past several weeks, we have witnessed our local, provincial and federal governments make decisions for our collective wellbeing that just a few months ago may not have seemed possible. The Martha Justice Ministry sent the following letter to the Canadian government to share our hope that the far reaching and decisive approach taken during the pandemic will spur on systemic changes that will centre the human rights and dignity of all people in Canada, particularly those experiencing poverty, violence and discrimination.

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing today to thank you for the steps you and our government have taken throughout the COVID-19 crisis to make swift, thoughtful and impactful decisions that are helping to protect communities across Canada and flatten the curve of this pandemic. We cannot imagine the pressure and work required of decision makers across Canada at this time.

It has been comforting and reassuring to see all parties approaching this crisis with respect for one another and a common commitment to supporting those who will be hit hardest by this pandemic — both by the disease itself and the impact it has on society as a whole.

In so many ways, this unprecedented moment is peeling back the layers of our everyday lives to show us what is at the heart of our lives together as communities. When our daily, taken-for-granted rituals and lifestyles are put on hold, we begin to see the fragility of the systems we depend on for survival. Very quickly, we can see we are more alike than we are different.

Those who can afford more insulation from crisis are now coming face-to-face with new realities. But for too many Canadians, the realities surfaced by this crisis are not new — insecurity (economic and social), isolation, homelessness, and no means to plan beyond the day-to-day. These are everyday realities for those already disproportionately impacted by systemic injustices, including Indigenous peoples, racialized peoples, newcomers, and those living on the economic margins.

We hope this moment in history is opening the eyes and hearts of Canadians to those who call for social and economic justice each and every day. We hope that, in this moment, we are growing in our capacity to care for one another.

When we all slowly begin to rise out of this moment of pause that COVID-19 has created, we will be faced with many new questions about how we move forward — what elements of our humanity and compassion, unveiled during this crisis, will we have the courage to maintain?



Continued on the next page



A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER *continued*



Will we continue to offer economic supports for individuals, increased wages and just compensation for frontline workers? Will we continue to see and value the inherent dignity of people and their contributions to our collective survival? Will we have the foresight to strengthen the supports essential for the long-term stability of all persons — a liveable wage or income assistance, health care, and affordable housing?

We know our government can make bold and far-reaching decisions for our collective survival, particularly for those most vulnerable in Canada, both quickly and thoughtfully. We now have new tools and approaches to craft a future for Canada in which **NO ONE WILL BE LEFT BEHIND** — a call that is foundational to the United Nation's Agenda 2030 to which Canada is committed and can play a leading role.

We know as Canadians we have the ability to make decisions that are often thought impossible. And we know these decisions mean all of us will be even more resilient, more prepared, and more able to weather storms like this in future — whether it be the climate crisis, natural disasters or future pandemics.

We pray the love, compassion and collective care demonstrated by our governments, businesses, organizations, communities and individuals across Canada will be the new norm for how we organize our lives in this country, and that we will see these approaches as critical, rather than incompatible, to the vibrancy of our economy.

We hope this experience will continue to foster the foresight and courage within you and our government to make decisions that uphold the dignity of all Canadians. We would appreciate any response you may be able to provide.
Sincerely,

*The Martha Justice Ministry, Core Group
Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish*

support

dignity

care



ANTIGONISH POVERTY REDUCTION COALITION CONTINUES ITS WORK

Despite the limitations of physical distancing, the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC) is pushing forward to advocate for the eradication of poverty locally, provincially and federally.

Sister Marion Sheridan continues to represent the Martha Justice Ministry on the APRC, which is currently holding its meetings virtually. The group is in the midst of drafting letters to provincial and federal government officials to advocate for the development of a Guaranteed Annual Income to ensure that every Canadian has the opportunity for safety, security and health at all times. The APRC is inspired by a group of senators that recently submitted a letter to government in support of a minimum basic income. You can read the letter here: <https://ubiworks.ca/50senators/>

Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition



MARTHA NEW GROWERS UPDATE

Martha New Growers Program has been affected by the restrictions related to COVID-19 pandemic. With great sadness, CSM decided to limit the New Growers to one team.

At the time the decision had to be made, Alaa and Osama were still waiting for their seeds to be shipped, while Olivia and Andrew had seedlings ready to transplant. In consequence, Alaa and Osama withdrew from the program.

Olivia and Andrew have been working hard on their garden and are now in a position that they have produce to sell. They developed a marketing strategy that is in keeping with the Nova Scotia Provincial Guidelines for market gardeners to ensure the safe selling of produce during the Covid-19 pandemic. They are connecting with customers online and arranging for a contact free delivery of the vegetables.



Olivia working hard in the greenhouse