



Bishop Michael J. Pryse

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July 11, 2014

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Julian Fantino
Minister of Veterans Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Minister Fantino:

Subject: A Petition Regarding the Care of Veterans and Training for Chaplains

From June 26 to 29, 2014 delegates representing more than 200 congregations from Nova Scotia to Sault Ste. Marie, ON, gathered at the 2014 Convention of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in Toronto, ON. They overwhelmingly passed the following resolution:

“That the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada petition the Prime Minister and the Minister of Veterans Affairs to adopt the recommendations of the Veterans Ombudsman as set out in the June 2013 report, *“Improving the New Veterans Charter.”*”

In addition we urge the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence to ensure the training of all Canadian Armed Forces chaplains in suicide intervention training such as the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).”

Prime Minister, we agree with you when, at the launch of the New Veterans Charter on April 6, 2006, you said:

“In future, when our servicemen and women leave our military family, they can rest assured the Government will help them and their families’ transition to civilian life. Our troops’ commitment and service to Canada entitles them to the very best treatment possible. This Charter is but a first step towards according Canadian veterans the respect and support they deserve.”

It was a first step and we feel that the Veterans Ombudsman has now set out an appropriate framework for providing the Financial Support, Vocational Rehabilitation and Assistance Support, and Family Support to which our Canadian troops are entitled and deserve.

We are pleased that Rob Nicholson, Minister of National Defence has said that “Canadians can trust that the Armed Forces take the issue of member suicide very seriously.” We are convinced that we need to do more to assist veterans who are suffering from PTSD. At the very least the Minister of National Defence should ensure the training of all Canadian Armed Forces chaplains in suicide intervention such as the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

Prime Minister Harper, may God bless you and your government as you endeavour to provide the Financial Support, Vocational Rehabilitation and Assistance Support, and Family Support that our Canadian troops deserve and are entitled to by adopting the recommendations of the Veterans Ombudsman in his report, *“Improving the New Veterans Charter.”*

With all of God’s blessings,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the name "Michael" in a cursive script.

Rev. Dr. Michael J. Pryse, Bishop,
Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
MP/sc

Cc: The Honourable Rob Nicholson, Minister of National Defence
The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition
The Honourable Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party
The Honourable Mario Beaulieu, Leader of the Bloc Québécois