

**Voices for a Just Society
Minutes of Meeting of November 7, 2012
St. John's York Mills Anglican Church**

Attending: Maggie Helwig, GeeGee Mills, Rosemary Pryde, Jannie Mills, Linda Gilpin, Marillene Allen, Shirley Bush, Kathy Salisbury, Howard Watson, Margaret Watson, Heidi Fiebig, Heather McPherson, Jan Gardiner-Williams, Dave Clemens, Rick Parton

Regrets: Jan Buchan, Lynn Watt, Beth Baskin, Kathleen Jolly, Ann Barrett, Audrey Gilpin, Janet Gordon, Margaret Vanderbrook, Chair: Scott McDougall

Note taker: Marillene Allen

- Welcome – Scott McDougall
Opening Prayer - Jan Gardiner-Williams
- Approval of Agenda.
Approval of minutes of meeting of June 6, 2012.
- Scott McDougall reminded attendees of the content of the Drummond Report, referring primarily to pages 3 and 4 of the minutes of June 6th workshop on Drummond.
 1. Those in attendance agreed to support the social assistance recommendations of Drummond Chapter 8.
 2. Scott in particular stressed the importance of advocacy for the cost of living increase perhaps through meetings with MPPs during the leadership transition period.
 3. To date, because of a busy summer, no action has been taken by Voices.
 4. Some members questioned the importance of Drummond given the final SAR report has now been released. Scott argued that it is important to support Drummond as the fiscal framework for the SAR report. The government has accepted the Drummond Report, with the exception of removal of the all day kindergarden, but no steps have been taken to implement its recommendations.
- Maggie Helwig reviewed the final SAR report for Voices using the Anglican diocesan report which has just been released and will be sent to all leaders and potential leaders as well as cabinet. Maggie described the SAR report as a 'pretty good report' and noted that no group has said that it is a bad report.
 1. The largest change is the amalgamation of ODSP and Ontario Works. While not opposed, there is concern that unless implemented well, the disabled could be harmed. Rates will be set and funded by the province, but administered by municipalities who would then have decision-making power in individual cases.

2. SAR recommends a range of benefits should be extended to all low income people, e.g., housing supplement, dental, etc.
 3. The report recommends that a 'Basic Measure of Adequacy' [BMA] be developed to replace the current Low Income Measure [LIM] which is recognized all over the world and is currently the official poverty line. The new measure is expected to be lower than LIM and is controversial. It is regionally calculated. It is at least better than the reality now. The diocesan position wants all to be at least at LIM. [Deep poverty is defined as 80% of LIM. It does not allow people to be part of the community.]
 4. SAR recognizes that the current social assistance amounts are not adequate.
 5. SAR does not address the minimum wage. That is being done separately, but currently going nowhere.
 6. The diocesan report and SAR support the \$100 healthy food supplement, but no steps have been taken to implement it.
 7. Community Start-up and Maintenance is due to expire and includes the social diet allowance. A piecemeal approach is harmful.
- After discussion, Voices agreed to focus on three items:
 1. The \$100 healthy food allowance without cuts to other programs
 2. The ability of social assistance recipients, if working, to keep more of their earnings
 3. The ability of social assistance recipients to keep more of their assets

There was considerable discussion about what steps Voices might take as a group. Geegee Mills suggested that we develop a one-page position paper, circulate by email to Voices and once agreed take it back for endorsement by our congregations or social justice groups. Following this we would then lobby MPPs and try to place articles in newspapers. There was some debate as to whether letters, tweets or emails are the most effective approach for MPPs.

ACTION:

Rosemary Pryde, Scott McDougal, Maggie Helwig – to develop the position paper

Margaret Watson – to develop a list of potential leaders, cabinet and shadow cabinet including names, addresses, and emails.

List to be sent to all Voices members to act individually or as church

There was further discussion about how Voices can exercise its role as an advocate for social justice. In an earlier meeting members of Voices agreed that they cannot officially speak for any church, but only as individuals. Several people noted the difficulty of getting an endorsement from their congregations. Anglican churches, for example, technically would need endorsement at the annual Vestry meeting. Meeting only once a year means that time sensitive issues cannot be properly addressed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m. Further discussion about how Voices can speak as one continued by email. Excerpts are appended.