# The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne Calls for a Guaranteed Livable Income for All

## 2023 Moderator Statement Supporting a Guaranteed Livable Income

Friends, I’m here today to invite you to join The United Church of Canada, its networks and partners, in calling on Canada to ensure a guaranteed livable income for all in our country.

When we talk about a guaranteed livable income, use of “guaranteed” signals a focus on ensuring a base level of income for all. Emphasis is on its being available to anyone below a certain income level rather than necessarily paid out to everyone and then clawed back. The use of “livable” signals an income that enables people to live with dignity, not just stay alive.

When the pandemic first happened, we often heard the phrase “We are all in the same boat.” In fact, we are not all in the same boat. Inequities that existed long before COVID have been exacerbated since the onset of the pandemic.

In 1995, when Marion Best was Moderator of the United Church, she wrote a letter with all 13 Conference Presidents and the Leading Elder of the All Native Circle Conference naming the unravelling of Canada’s social safety nets at that time, and urging communities of faith to reflect and act on what they called then “the growing war against the poor in society.” Canada’s current social welfare system continues to fail to recognize the value of all persons, the work and contributions of all, denying the dignity of our common humanity.

The reality is that while there have been some very minimal baseline gains in poverty reduction over the past decade, there are recent statistics that show disturbing trends with increases in unmet housing needs, food insecurity, unmet healthcare needs, low literacy and numeracy, and slight year-over-year decreases in the median hourly wage.

Even the temporary wage supports put in place in the first two years of the pandemic were only set at 80 percent of the minimum individual need for survival at the time. And those supports were in many cases at least double our current provincial income supports for the poorest in society.

In addition, artists, caregivers, and workers in our precarious gig-economy struggle with inadequate incomes that suck the time, energy, and health from those with the fewest resources. These realities contradict the very justice and peace God envisions for creation.

Therefore, we call for a guaranteed livable income that implements a structure of justice-making and justice-keeping that no longer excuses, rationalizes, and tolerates poverty. We call for a system that expresses a fundamental, fair level of income security for all, as did the early Christians who shared their resources so there was no need among them.

Check out [The United Church (of Canada) website for direct actions](https://united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/create-guaranteed-livable-income-program) you can take to seek daring justice on poverty reduction in Canada. Join me, and add your voices to the growing popular call for this historic movement of the Spirit.

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