Jill Dunlop MPP

14 Coldwater Rd. W

Orillia, ON L3V 3L1

(replace with the name and address of your MPP/MLA, etc.)

The Honourable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of the membership of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church, please accept our heartfelt thanks for your tireless and dedicated efforts on behalf of all the citizens of Simcoe North during this incredibly difficult season. We appreciate you and we pray for you regularly. The Scriptures give tremendous dignity to the role and function of civil government:

“for it is God’s servant for your good.” (Romans 13:4 NRSV)

We are commanded to honour the civil authorities and to render unto all what is due, therefore, please accept this expression of our honour and respect for the important role and function you fulfil.

We further recognize that the authority of civil government properly extends to matters of the public good, and managing the spread of a dangerous virus such as COVID-19 certainly qualifies under that mandate. We recognize that a threat of this magnitude requires coordinated public response and we are thankful for the dedicated leadership provided by our federal, provincial and regional leaders from across the political spectrum.

While we admit that for the most part, pastors and religious leaders are not experts in epidemiology, we do dare to claim a certain insight into the human condition and the tremendous social, personal and spiritual costs associated with our current strategy and lockdown protocols. We write this letter to you so as to provide you with the best information possible when it comes time to reevaluate our approach. From our perspective, the impact of these measures has been under appreciated. Families have been forced into poverty, seniors have been separated from their loved ones, addicts have been operating without support, single parents have been placed in an impossible situation and many women have been locked in homes with their abusers. This situation cannot continue indefinitely and we would advocate for a more targeted approach; one that imposes less of a burden upon the overall social and spiritual fabric of our shared society.

It is to this particular consideration that we feel uniquely qualified to speak. It is generally not in the nature of the church to trumpet its actions and contributions to society. Our Lord commanded us to do our work in secret and to seek our commendation from him alone. Thankfully, others have recently taken it upon themselves to shine a light upon the various and significant contributions being made by churches across Canada. According to a recent study by Cardus[[1]](#footnote-1), the value of religion to Canadian society is estimated at $67 billion annually. Of course, that is not what we consider to be our primary value, but it cannot be denied that Canadian churches provide invaluable services to vulnerable individuals and families. Churches provide the bulk of the counselling services in many communities – usually at no cost to the recipients. Congregations work tirelessly with seniors and other shut ins. They deliver meals, organize activities, shovel driveways and make phone calls so as to help the elderly live with dignity in their homes.

Churches minister to the immediate needs of Canadians and also to spiritual needs. We believe that the greatest threat that Canadians currently face is not COVID-19 – as deadly as this virus has proven to be. The greatest threat faced by Canadians is the absence of God in their lives. We believe that through the person and work of Jesus Christ human beings can be healed, forgiven and restored to the lives and dignity they were created and intended to enjoy. We believe that matters now and we believe that matters for eternity. To state the matter simply, we need to find a way to attend to both immediate and ultimate concerns.

The gathering of Christians for worship, fellowship, teaching and encouragement is an essential service – not only to us but also to those we love and serve. The Scriptures identify the gathered assembly of God’s people as the place where miraculous things occur.The Bible says:

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24–25 ESV)

It is when we are together that we are able to stir one another up to love and good works – works that benefit our friends, loved ones and fellow citizens. We cannot do this on our own! We need the grace that God supplies through the ordinary means of corporate worship. It is when we are together that we are uniquely equipped to be the blessing we aspire to be for the people of our great nation. We humbly ask that you find a way to manage the spread of this virus that does not deprive us of our sacred and essential assemblies.

Thank you once again for your extraordinary leadership during these very troubled times.

 Sincerely,

 Rev. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of the Elders and Members Of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. https://www.cardus.ca/research/social-cities/reports/the-hidden-economy-how-faith-helps-fuel-canadas-gdp/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)