



DIOCESE OF
LONDON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1070 WATERLOO STREET
LONDON, ONTARIO N6A 3Y2
CANADA
519-433-0658
FAX: 519-266-4353

5 February 2018

To the Priests, Deacons and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of London

Re: Canada Summer Jobs Grant (CSJG) Program

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Much has been written and said in recent weeks about the decision of the Government of Canada to expect all groups who wish to apply for summer jobs grants to indicate that the “core mandate” and beliefs of their group are in keeping with the Government’s position on certain matters. These matters, the Government says, are based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and each group must make an attestation that they are in agreement with, for example, what the Government refers to as “reproductive rights”, which include “the right to access safe and legal abortions”. Ironically, expecting such an attestation to get a job grant is in violation of some of the rights that are actually found in the Charter, while some of the contentious positions espoused by the Government are not.

The CSJG program is designed to give summer employment opportunities to students in secondary school, college or university. Many of the students who have had such jobs were able to continue their education because of these job grants. For other youth, it was an opportunity to learn new skills and put them to use.

So much good has come from the CSJG program across our diocese! One former student, Lizz, spoke of her summer internship as “one of the most important and influential experiences of [her] career”, since her internship gave such a valuable opportunity to work in her field of study. Amy, another former student who worked in our Catholic Christian Leadership camps, spoke of her “phenomenal growing experience”. With reference to her God-given strengths and talents, she learned “how to be a leader in large and small-group environments, to be accepting of herself and others”, and how to encourage others to do the same.

Several solutions have been proposed to allow groups to make an application. Some have said something to the effect of “just check the attestation box; no one will ask questions”. Others suggest making an application for grants, adding a statement of alternative beliefs regarding the issues. Still others, that we forgo the grant applications until such time as another government comes to Ottawa.

I believe that we need to take a stand against the position of the Government of Canada, and say that we will not be bullied into even the appearance of collusion on this issue. While others may take an alternative path, we can make a powerful statement by saying ‘no’ to the conditions as set down by the Government. I have decided, therefore, that we, as the people of the Diocese of London, not make application or accept any monies from the CSJG program. We ask that the Government remove or change the attestation, which is a regrettable infringement of freedom of conscience and religion, of thought and belief, of opinion and expression, as guaranteed in the Charter.

Priests, Deacons and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of London
5 February 2018
Page 2

Various groups across the diocese had planned jobs and activities with the hopes of receiving grants totaling just under \$35,000. Without this program, many wonderful opportunities could be lost. This, however, is a target that I believe we could reach, to keep these programs going. I am asking that we take up a special collection throughout the diocese in the month of February. Monies collected would be portioned out accordingly to those who intended to apply to the CSJG program. I am confident that we can respond to this challenge, pooling our resources to support our camps, our interns in the Archives office and in IT services, and our youth in general.

A statement released on 25 January 2018, by leaders of various religious groups (including representatives of the Catholic Church), pointed out, on this matter, that the "promise of a free and democratic society is that there is no religious or ideological tests or conditions to receiving government benefits or protection." Let us send this strong message to the Government of Canada by refusing to participate in their CSJG program, and by showing our support to the youth across our region through a collection to meet their needs this summer. Details about the collection will follow with instructions from the Accounting Department.

I thank you for considering this position, and I ask that we be united in our response to the Government, so that we can send a clear and strong message that we live in a democratic nation where we need to respect one another, and where freedom of conscience and religion matter!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Ronald Fabbro, C.S.B." The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London