



Giving Hope Today

Presentation to the  
Speaker's Panel on The Lord's Prayer

Legislative Assembly of Ontario  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario

June 2, 2008

The Salvation Army is grateful to the members of the **Speaker's Panel on The Lord's Prayer** for the opportunity to present our position in response to the consideration of **removing** The Lord's Prayer in the Ontario Provincial Parliament.

The Salvation Army was established in 1865 by William and Catherine Booth, in London in response to the social decay and depravity of Victorian England. The Salvation Army is a church. The social service and emergency response ministry's, for which our organization is best known, is motivated by faith. In partnership with other faith agencies, we try to be "the hands and feet of Christ" in the 115 countries around the world in which The Salvation Army currently operates. As a result of *Giving Hope Today* to more than 1.5 million Canadians annually, The Salvation Army has become the largest non governmental provider of social services in Canada.

The Salvation Army understands the importance of change in response to community need and the cultural mosaic in which we serve. However, that does not mean that we stray from our Christian foundation. Rather, we believe it is because of our faith that The Salvation Army is able to continually and proportionately respond to the challenges presented to us. Our commitment and dedication to our faith has enabled The Salvation Army to build partnerships with many stakeholders including government which in turn has helped build strong communities across Ontario.

We believe that the tradition and hallmark of the British Parliamentary system, upon which Canadian government institutions were founded and built, should be maintained. It is our understanding that The Lord's Prayer has been a cornerstone of the Ontario Provincial Parliament since 1793 when Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe first presented the idea that the assembly should commence daily with The Lord's Prayer. **We believe that our forefathers were correct and justified in their introduction of The Lord's Prayer into the daily life of Ontario's government leaders. It was wise and continues to be, to ask God for His wisdom, grace and guidance as you seek to do what is in the best interest of the people of this great Province.**

Referring to the scriptures, we see that two versions of The Lord's Prayer are presented in the New Testament – the Gospel of Matthew 6: 9-13 and the Gospel of Luke 11: 2-4. This prayer reminds us that there is a higher power, God himself and we are reminded to pray communally – as the prayer opens with the word's "Our Father" – suggesting many participating in this prayer experience.



The Lord's Prayer is an all embracing prayer asking for forgiveness and it reminds us to strive daily to help others in our community. Further, we are admonished to stay away from evil. **The truths, challenges and lessons contained in The Lord's Prayer are universal in scope, experience and understanding. We believe these are principles, which make people, governments and communities richer and stronger places to live, work and play.**

The Salvation Army understands diversity of service to humankind. We are after all ministering in 115 countries and in 175 different languages around the globe. We also appreciate that there are many cultures and faiths in the world. As an organization we also share and appreciate the diversity which makes Canada and Ontario rich. This is experienced daily in our work and through participation in multi-faith organizations.

As an organization established in Canada shortly after Confederation, it has been suggested that The Salvation Army is part of the social fabric of Canadian society. We believe that history and tradition is important but that communities and organizations need to reflect an ever changing society.

### **Statement of Support for The Lord's Prayer in the Ontario Legislative Assembly**

**The Salvation Army supports the continued use of The Lord's Prayer in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the daily proceedings as a significant symbol of the spiritual, religious and historic importance of how the Province was founded.**

**However, we also believe that other major faiths should be invited to participate regularly through a rotation of faith blessings and prayers in respect to our modern multi-faith society. These presentations would be in addition to the daily recitation of The Lord's Prayer.**

According to the 2001 Statistics Canada Census, 35% of Ontarians reported to be Protestant and 34% reported to be Roman Catholic. The Salvation Army's statement supports the prevailing percent of religions within the Province of Ontario that would support and adopt The Lord's Prayer as foundational to their core religious beliefs. However, it also recognizes the 30% of Ontarians who claim either no religion or are of another faith background.



The Salvation Army appreciates that this is a sensitive and potentially divisive issue and it is one that must be handled with great diplomacy and understanding. We are grateful to each one of you for your time and for the opportunity to state The Salvation Army's position with respect to the matter of The Lord's Prayer and the Ontario Legislature.

We believe Ontarians can celebrate our diversity and respect religious heritage and the cultural mosaic which makes our Province a vibrant place to live. In closing, let me leave you with the words of the fourth verse of our national anthem, *O Canada*:

“Ruler supreme, who hearest humble prayers, Hold our Dominion in thy loving care,  
Help us to find, O God, in thee a lasting, rich reward. As waiting for the better day,  
We ever stand on guard.  
God Keep our land, Glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee, O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.”

Thank you for the opportunity to present.

Respectfully submitted,

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