



# Working our land, fighting for our rights



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## Development and Peace affirms its adherence to Catholic Social Teaching in a letter to the Canadian Catholic Bishops

March 20, 2009

### Montreal

Development and Peace's Executive Director, Michael Casey, and its President, Pat Hogan, have personally written to each Canadian Bishop in order to reiterate Development and Peace's commitment "to the Catholic Church in Canada and the Bishops of Canada on all moral and ethical issues governed by the teachings of the Catholic Church."

This letter follows a text that was published on a website entitled: "Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace Funding Pro-Abortion Groups in Mexico."

"The article lists five (out of 11) of our partners in Mexico", write Casey and Hogan, "who are identified by the article as "pro-abortion groups." The general inference and tone of the article implies that these groups are actively involved in the practice and promotion of abortion. By association, Development and Peace is being presented as supporting abortion."

The Executive Director and the President assert: "Let there be no mistake, Development and Peace has never supported abortion services anywhere, at any time, and can not ever support such projects. Development and Peace has never and will never enter into partnership with any organization offering such services. Should we become aware that a partner organization has changed its mandate and begins offering such services, they would be immediately cut off from our partnership support and funding. Development and Peace is committed to remaining vigilant regarding any partner's actions that would place us by association at variance with Church teaching. Should we fail to act on this information, we would lose our raison d'être and the support of our Canadian bishops and Catholic members and donors."

They then go on to explain that the organization has conducted an extensive investigation and consultation with our partners in Mexico to clarify the situation. "These partners are shocked and saddened by these inferences," write Casey and Hogan.

"We are reassured and unequivocally confirm that there is no involvement with abortion in any of our partners' programs or activities, nor has there ever been over the course of our long-term partnership."

"We acknowledge that the article has brought closely to our attention that our partners participated in a nation-wide consultation by the United Nations Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Mexico, and that our partners were contributors (along with 100 other organizations) to an omnibus document on human rights issues in various sectors -- Report of Organizations of Civil Society on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights in Mexico."

"In this consultation, our partners brought forward their concerns on issues that they promote and defend: indigenous people's rights, protection of the environment, a fair judicial system, freedom of the press, social and economic justice, including fair wages and fair trade, and the promotion of equality between women and men. We fully support these themes in solidarity with our partners and in accordance with our shared values. "

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"Some of the other Mexican civil society groups consulted through the process brought forward their own concerns based on their area of interest. Of course, neither we, nor our partners, have any control over the content or recommendations advanced by these other groups."

"At the conclusion of the consultation, the Report was signed by all the organizations who had participated in the process, including a number of religious congregations and religious orders. This signing represents only evidence of participation, and is not an endorsement of all of the points or recommendations in the Report."

Casey and Hogan finally explain that "In the light of this recent controversy, the National Council of Development and Peace (our governing board) added a special discussion on this issue to the agenda of its meeting on Friday March 20, 2009. This discussion has resulted in a formal process to develop a policy reaffirming our principles and our criteria for selecting and maintaining partnerships. We will be able to feature this policy prominently in response to any possible future allegations and innuendoes of this nature regarding our work. "

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