

## Harvest of Letters

### Food Assistance

Since 1967, Canada has been part of Food Aid Conventions, international agreements between the world's richest countries to provide emergency food aid to people around the world who are hungry. In recent years, Canada provided a minimum of 420,000 tonnes of food aid worth \$225 million each year to meet people's immediate food needs around the world—the highest level of support per capita in the world. We are thankful to the federal government for that generous commitment, and to policy makers who have supported this.

Periodically, as they became outdated, the agreements are renegotiated. In April 2012, members of the Food Aid Convention created a new agreement—the Food Assistance Convention. The new agreement contains many improvements, such as allowing for more kinds of assistance (beyond food and seeds) to be counted by donors as part of their commitments and also emphasizing more transparent communication about effectiveness (see sidebar 'Facts about the Food Assistance Convention').

However, while these are positive steps, the new agreement took one significant step backward.

Instead of a predictable, long term promise as required in previous agreements, countries who've signed on will be required to make new commitments on how much food assistance will be given each year. In a time of cutbacks, there is now a real risk that Canada's commitment may be reduced.

#### Facts about the Food Assistance Convention

The Canadian-led negotiations for a new Food Assistance Convention to replace the 1999 Food Aid Convention were completed in early 2012. The new treaty adds new tools to help get food to hungry people—special nutritional foods, livestock to re-establish herds, agricultural inputs, and voucher and cash to let people buy food from the local markets. The focus on these new tools with monetary commitments versus amount of food is the main reason for the change in name from 'food aid' to 'food assistance'. Member countries, including Canada, must ratify the treaty by November 2012.

#### What we're asking

We would like Canada to remain a world leader in providing emergency food assistance. That means making a commitment of at least \$225 million per year—each year—toward appropriate emergency food assistance.

Before June 2013, Canada will be required to make its commitment toward the new Food Assistance Convention. Now is the time to influence this decision by writing letters to your Member of Parliament to ensure that Canada makes a strong and lasting commitment toward ending global hunger.

#### You can help influence Canada's commitment to the Food Assistance Convention

Send a personal, handwritten letter to your Member of Parliament expressing your wishes that Canada continue to be a generous and long term contributor to emergency food needs around the world. Your message on this issue will contribute to ending hunger for people in other countries who are in need of emergency food aid.

#### Checklist for Event Planners

1. Have enough copies of this handout and sample letter, writing paper, envelopes and pens for everyone attending your letter writing event.
2. You can find your Member of Parliament's name by entering your postal code at [parl.gc.ca](http://parl.gc.ca).
3. Letters may be sent postage-free to: MP name with title; House of Commons, Parliament Buildings; Ottawa, ON; K1A 0A6
4. After your event please fill out the Harvest of Letters Report and mail it to Canadian Foodgrains Bank—or fill it out online on the Harvest of Letters webpage at [foodgrainsbank.ca/letters](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/letters).



**Food assistance –  
a generous Canada for  
a world  
without hunger**

*"We bless everyone who has brought us this help."*  
—Tanlimba, food assistance recipient from Niger

# Sample Letter

Use the **sample letter** below as a guide. You will also find more resources by visiting the Harvest of Letters webpage at [www.foodgrainsbank.ca/letters](http://www.foodgrainsbank.ca/letters).

**It's a good idea to start on a positive note.**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of your Member of Parliament) \_\_\_\_\_,

Most Canadians have much to be thankful for—freedom from war, abundant and affordable food, adequate shelter from the winter cold and the summer heat. I'm thankful that Canada is known as a generous country. I am writing to you about Canada's promise to provide a predictable amount of emergency food, agricultural seeds, and tools to help those who are in need.

Canada has recently renegotiated a treaty in which the world's richest countries are recommitting to provide food assistance. I commend the federal government for its role in the new and improved Food Assistance Convention. But one thing concerns me. Previously, such treaties included a long term commitment. Now, they must be made each year. This means commitments could vary from year to year, reducing the amount of emergency food available.

As a supporter of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, I am writing to ask you to support Canada's commitment for a generous, long-term promise through the Food Assistance Convention to help people who don't have enough to eat. In recent years, Canada committed about \$225 million per year, making us a global leader. I hope we will maintain this commitment in years to come.

Sincerely,

**Personal, handwritten letters are most effective.**

**Give credit where credit is due, but don't assume your MP knows about the new treaty.**

**Be clear about what you're asking for.**

**Make the letter personal. Are you a donor or part of a growing project? Mention it. Are you an international development student? Mention it.**

**It's helpful to mention specifically what the government has done in the past.**

**Make sure your return address is somewhere on the letter so that your MP can reply.**

**Post-secondary students who live away from home should write to the MP in the riding where they are eligible to or normally vote. In this case, remember to use your permanent address as a return address. You could also write to the MP in the riding where you go to school, the Minister of International Cooperation or the Prime Minister.**

## Harvest of Letters Report *(or fill out online at [foodgrainsbank.ca/letters](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/letters))*

We held our letter-writing event on / I wrote my letter on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Main contact person \_\_\_\_\_ Name of church/campus/group \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_ Church Affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ Ph \_\_\_\_\_

Our event was attended by \_\_\_\_\_ people (if applicable). Number of letters gathered: \_\_\_\_\_

MP \_\_\_\_\_ #of letters \_\_\_\_\_ MP \_\_\_\_\_ #of letters \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please rate the Harvest of Letters resource on how clear and easy-to-use it was: (5=clear, useful; 1=not clear, difficult).**

Please circle: 5 4 3 2 1 Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Canadian Foodgrains Bank | PO Box 767 | Winnipeg, MB | R3C 2L4 | 1.800.665.0377**