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All Local Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Further to our earlier communications about the Community Properties Fund (previously named the Community Endowment Fund), the National Spiritual Assembly wished to share with you some exciting developments in this increasingly important area of the work of the Faith in Canada. Several Assemblies have asked questions about the administration of this Fund and the implications for their budgeting process, which we also wish to address.

As we shared with you in our letter dated 16 April 2018, decades-long efforts to learn about growth have underlined the importance of the strategic and timely purchase and rental of property, whether at the national, regional, cluster, or neighbourhood level. Indeed, since the National Assembly embarked on a process of learning about the acquisition, maintenance and use of property in the context of the needs of the Five Year Plan, great strides have already been made. In Ontario and British Columbia, the two regions whose work serves dozens of clusters each, the acquisition of suitable regional administrative space allowed them to establish a regional office, described in the 28 December 2010 message of the Universal House of Justice, removing obstacles to their ability to pursue the work of the Plan. Neighbourhood properties have been acquired to serve the growing need for space for meetings and core activities in four neighbourhoods across the country, and a search is in process in three others. In several clusters, pioneer homes have been rented to support the neighbourhood service of homefront pioneers.

An example of the limitations imposed by a lack of space and the possibilities that emerge when those restrictions are lifted has been described by the friends in one of these neighbourhoods. With the formation of five junior youth groups in a two-week period and in conversation with the parents, they realized that the stability of the junior youth programme required a public space for their activities. In consultation with their Local Spiritual Assembly and Auxiliary Board member, who then consulted with the National Assembly, priority was given in the context of a national plan to renting a neighbourhood space, funded by the Local Assembly. This rental of property is seen as a natural first step in building capacity and learning about the management and programming of such a building.

Where the Community Properties Fund comes into this picture is that it is intended to generate income that will ensure that the need for properties at every level is met according to a strategic national plan. It may be that a Local Assembly will see a need for a neighbourhood property, or perhaps a Local Bahá'í Centre. In the 1 April 2016 letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, a principle is clarified that even the acquisition of a Local Bahá'í Centre is subject to priorities determined nationally. Thus, when opportunities for growth emerge in a particular area of the country, they will be met, regardless of the size or relative wealth of the Bahá'í community. This allows the entire country to participate in supporting growth wherever it occurs. The Community Properties Fund is the mechanism through which funds will flow.

A question has arisen as to whether a Local Spiritual Assembly which has received earmarked contributions for a Local Haziratu'l-Quds over the years may contribute the funds to the Community Properties Fund to hold and generate income until it is judged that a Local Bahá'í Centre in its community is a priority. The answer is that a Local Assembly is indeed encouraged to do so, confident that the earmarking is recorded and will be respected, and that when, in consultation with the National Assembly it is judged timely, the necessary funds will be released. It is precisely to allow for this return of funds that the nature of the Fund and its name have been changed from "Community Endowment Fund", which would have certain restrictions placed on it, to the more general "Community Properties Fund".

Between now and the end of the Plan, new life will be given to neighbourhoods, clusters and regions that are experiencing growth, through the removal of obstacles of space. With this simple step, an array of complex capacities begin to develop — to assess the need for property by reading reality, to determine the nature of the space needed and undertake a search, to tend to the need to beautify the space and keep it clean, and not least, to manage programming of shared spaces.

The National Assembly has contributed an initial sum of \$2.5 million to the Community Properties Fund and lovingly invited the community to match that sum by the end of the Plan, so that the community enters the next Plan with confidence that the funds for an ever-expanding community's needs are being generated. It is with joy that we share with you that almost \$2 million has been added to that initial infusion, representing generosity and sacrifice by individuals and institutions alike.

We ask that you share this news with your communities, with the assurance of the National Assembly's prayers that their support of this newly-emerging, important area will attract mighty confirmations.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF CANADA



Karen McKye, Secretary

cc: Counsellors B. Nouredin and S. Tashakour
Board of Trustees of Huqúqu'lláh in Canada
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All Regional Bahá'í Councils
All Regional Institute Boards and institute coordinators
All Registered Groups
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(French translation to follow)