

## Shallow Government Response to Poverty Report, says Citizens for Public Justice

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** - Ottawa, ON: This afternoon, the federal government released its response to the Parliamentary report *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada*. And with it, Citizens for Public Justice's hope for Ottawa to meaningfully engage in poverty reduction efforts evaporated.

"*Federal Poverty Reduction Plan* called on the Government of Canada to step up and join the majority of provinces that already have poverty elimination plans," said Joe Gunn, CPJ's Executive Director and co-chair of *Dignity for All: the campaign for a poverty-free Canada*. "Today, the federal government failed to accept Parliament's main recommendation, and the unanimous resolution of the House: that Ottawa develop and implement a poverty reduction plan. The other 57 recommendations set out in Parliament's report did not receive the substantive attention they deserved."

Official statistics for 2008 showed that at least 3.4 million Canadians lived in poverty. However, research done by Citizens for Public Justice in the May 2010 report *Bearing the Brunt* indicates that the actual number could be as high as 4.3 million as a result of the recent recession.

*Federal Poverty Reduction Plan*, released by the House of Commons Committee (HUMA), was widely hailed by analysts and advocates as a positive step towards reducing poverty in Canada. Experts applauded its recognition of the complexity of poverty and the need for a comprehensive and coordinated response. They were also encouraged by the multi-party collaboration that went into the report.

Despite the growing recognition from all sectors of society of the need for concrete federal action, the government's statement narrowly reiterated existing program spending while lauding labour market attachment as the way out of poverty. CPJ, however, notes that it took almost 8 years after the last recession for unemployment to decline to its pre-recession rate. Without a concerted government effort, it could take years for poverty and unemployment in Canada to decline to their 2008 rate.

"Years of research and analysis, the experience of people living in poverty, and excellent reports by both the Senate (2009) and Parliament (2010), identify a clear need for a more substantive and sustained response," said policy analyst Karri Munn-Venn. "Can there now be any hope that the government will address social inclusion and the well-being of marginalized Canadians in the March 22 budget?"

*Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)* is a national organization of members inspired by faith to seek justice in Canadian public policy. [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca) [1]. *Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada* was co-founded by CPJ and *Canada Without Poverty* in May 2009. [www.dignityforall.ca](http://www.dignityforall.ca) [2].

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[1] <http://www.cpj.ca>

[2] <http://www.dignityforall.ca>