

Government “NO” to Federal Action Plan on Poverty Not Acceptable

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Ottawa, ON: *Dignity for All: the campaign for a poverty-free Canada* had its concerns confirmed yet again by the Government of Canada’s response, released this week, to the November 2010 Parliamentary report *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada*.

Federal Poverty Reduction Plan is the result of three years of study by the House of Commons Human Resources Committee (HUMA), and represents a significant step towards eliminating poverty in Canada.

“The multi-party collaboration that led to *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan* gave us hope that maybe this time the government would grasp the need for a comprehensive and coordinated federal poverty elimination plan in Canada,” said CWP director and *Dignity for All* co-chair Rob Rainer. “Sadly, they seem content to maintain the status quo.”

Approximately 4.3 million Canadians live in poverty in a wide array of situations, from the visible homeless to the working poor and fall into many different groups, from recent immigrants to Aboriginal peoples to lone parents.

“*Federal Poverty Reduction Plan* shows that poverty continues to be a serious problem despite many government programs and provincial anti-poverty initiatives and that federal leadership is required if poverty is to be eliminated – and yet the government seems unable to comprehend that current initiatives are not a sufficient response,” said Joe Gunn, Executive Director of Citizens for Public Justice and *Dignity for All* co-chair. “The official response contains no mention of the parliamentary recommendations for a federal poverty reduction fund, increases to the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the elimination of the 2 per cent cap on spending increases for Aboriginal education, or the development of a comprehensive, long-term national housing strategy.”

“We had hoped that the government would see the need for a response that went beyond narrow labour market and economic security measures, especially after so many Canadians wrote to Minister Finley and their MPs calling for the federal government to take leadership on a national poverty reduction plan,” said Make Poverty History Coordinator and *Dignity for All* co-chair Dennis Howlett. “Instead, our concerns have been confirmed. The government appears unmoved by either the facts or the wishes of Canadians, and prefer to let this report and its 58 excellent recommendations gather dust. We plan to make sure it will be an issue that can’t be ignored in the next federal election.”

Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada *is a growing national coalition of over 500 organizations and 8000 individuals co-convened by Canada Without Poverty, Citizens for Public Justice, and Make Poverty History. Together, we are calling for vigorous and sustained action by the federal government to combat the structural causes of poverty in Canada.* www.dignityforall.ca.

Canada Without Poverty is a federally incorporated, non-partisan, not-for-profit and charitable organization with a mission to eliminate poverty in Canada by promoting income and social security for all Canadians, and by promoting poverty eradication as a human rights obligation. Canada Without Poverty was founded in 1971 as the National Anti-Poverty Organization. www.cwp-csp.ca.

Citizens for Public Justice is a national organization of members inspired by faith to act for justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing and public dialogue. Since 1963, CPJ has encouraged citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship. www.cpj.ca.

The Canadian Make Poverty History campaign was launched in February 2005 with the support of a wide cross-section of public interest and faith groups, trade unions, students, academics and literary, artistic and sports leaders. Make Poverty History is part of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) a global campaign pressing for action on global poverty issues. www.makepovertyhistory.ca.

For more information, contact:

Rob Rainer, Canada Without Poverty, 613-314-7755

Joe Gunn, Citizens for Public Justice, 613-867-0309

Dennis Howlett, Make Poverty History, 613-863-3670