



CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE

dignity for all: the campaign for a poverty-free canada

June 1, 2009

Dear friend,

A life free from the chains and pains of poverty. Greater equality among citizens. Dependable and genuine social security through hard economic times.

Such are the aspirations today of millions of Canadians – the unemployed, the homeless and the disenfranchised; the working poor, the hungry and the socially assisted; the Aboriginal, the immigrant and the person of colour; the person with disability, the parent and the pensioner.

In support of these aspirations, Citizens for Public Justice, with our campaign partner Canada Without Poverty, is mobilizing the multi-year, multi-partner, non-partisan campaign **Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada.**

This campaign's vision is to make a poverty-free Canada a reality. The conviction behind this campaign is that Canadians can respect and defend the right of every person to dignity and security.

There is much work to be done in the months ahead. We need your support to build awareness and support for the Dignity for All campaign. The help we receive, from you and others like you, will make it happen.

Being poor in Canada means not having enough healthy food for three meals a day, living in damp, crowded or unsafe houses, and going without basic items such as a telephone or a washing machine. It means putting off medical care when you need it, being unable to heat your house or provide adequate clothing for your family.

Poverty also means missing out on community life, and opportunities to develop your talents. Children's schooling can suffer because of untreated illnesses, an overcrowded home with nowhere to study, and not having enough food. They often cannot afford to take part in school or sport activities, or to go on to further education. Adults cannot maintain the social contacts needed for good emotional and mental health.

Over time, the effects of chronic poverty tend to snowball. Families that manage to cover their basic living costs can be forced into debt by unexpected expenses. Others slowly get further and further into debt as each week's income is not

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sufficient to cover their costs. Many experience a loss of dignity and social isolation when they are unable to make ends meet, which erodes their self-esteem and motivation and damages their relationships.

A just society cannot be achieved when individuals only pursue what is best for them alone; it requires the community to work together for the common good. The common good is not being served when one in ten Canadians live in poverty. We must go beyond offering charity to the poor to address the causes of poverty, thereby promoting community and justice.

The desperation and hardship experienced by growing millions of Canadians compel us to make this effort and to continue until economic security and dignity for all is established. But in order to influence the federal government, CPJ and its membership must broaden its base and press its case effectively in Ottawa.

Now is a time of great opportunity for Christians to focus our energies and our strengths on addressing the social structures and policies which create or worsen poverty in Canada. These structures and policies are not inevitable or outside our control, but are based on choices that we have made as individuals and citizens. Until now, as a nation, we have chosen to tolerate the growth of poverty in our communities. We can equally choose to reverse this trend.

In order to continue the work we are doing, and to ensure the success of our campaign, we need to seek a more consistent stream of support from our allies and friends.

To ensure the financial resources necessary for this we are launching the **Dignity for All Pillar Program**, allowing our supporters to donate monthly and become the pillars that hold up the work of Dignity for All. **If the Dignity for All Campaign were to secure 500 supporters to donate \$20 every month, it would provide a base of funding to maintain and increase our activities and advocacy.**

Your donations are critically important to success of Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada. And while any donation you can make is much appreciated, the best way to give is by joining our Dignity for All Pillar Program. Regular monthly donations can help us do so much more.

DIGNITY FOR ALL PILLAR PROGRAM

Advantages for the Dignity for All Campaign

Monthly donations reduce our mailing costs. We can put more money into our public education work and help the environment at the same time.

It provides stable funding. We know we can rely on you from month to month allowing us to budget effectively to better plan activities and run our campaign year-round.

It lowers potential low-donation periods.

Advantages for you

Fewer requests for contributions reduce paper consumption and cost. More of your dollars can go directly to outreach, advocacy and the campaign.

It is conveniently deducted in smaller amounts from your bank account or credit card so that you hardly notice the regular deductions. And changing the amount or cancelling just takes a quick phone call or email.

Your money works to eradicate poverty all year.

Please give what you can financially, and if possible, contribute time and energy as well. Sign up to support the campaign at www.dignityforall.ca , and share the news of this inspiring campaign and CPJ's work with others whom you know support your concerns.

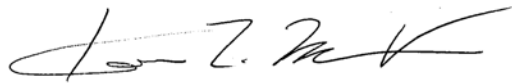
We need volunteers to build awareness of and support for the campaign in your community and church. If you would like CPJ to bring a workshop to your community, distribute campaign materials or volunteer in other ways, please be in touch.

We urge you to help this effort by sending a financial contribution now. Please join us as a Dignity for All Pillar and encourage others that support our work to join as well.

With your help, we have a chance.



Joe Gunn
Executive Director
Citizens for Public Justice



Karri Munn-Venn
Socio-Economic Policy Analyst
Citizens for Public Justice

The Dignity for All Pillar Program is inspired by the detailed description of the foundational support and stability the pillars provided for Temple of the Lord, built by King Solomon.

Boaz and Jachin, two copper pillars, stood in the porch of Solomon's Temple, the first Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 7:15, 1 Kings 7:21; 2 Kings 11:14; 23:3).

Boaz ("fleetness, strength") stood on the left and Jachin ("founding") stood on the right.

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Everyone has a role to play in building a poverty-free and more socially secure Canada – governments at all levels, businesses of all sizes and types, community and other civil society organizations, and individuals. The federal government, with its particular policymaking, legislative, taxation and redistributive powers, has an especially critical role. The *Dignity for All Campaign* is therefore aimed primarily to achieve federal action.

The campaign has three goals:

- 1. A comprehensive, integrated federal plan for poverty elimination:** Linked to and in support of current and future provincial and territorial poverty action plans, a federal plan for poverty elimination will provide a pan-Canadian blueprint for reducing and eventually eliminating poverty. The plan will inspire other efforts to combat poverty and to promote a fair and just society. It will require transparency and accountability by the federal government, with inclusion of robust indicators of low income, material deprivation and social exclusion. And it will be comprehensive in its approach, with measures concerning the following and other thematic areas:

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| a. Income Security | g. Job Creation including a |
| b. Food Security | Green Jobs Strategy |
| c. Housing Security | h. Unemployment Insurance |
| d. Child Care and Early Childhood | i. Health Supports |
| Development | j. Particular supports for vulnerable |
| e. Education and Training | populations |
| f. Labour Standards | |

- 2. A federal Act to eliminate poverty, promote social inclusion and strengthen social security:** Inspired by similar legislation in other jurisdictions, this Act will ensure an ongoing federal role and responsibility for social development, while demonstrating a lasting federal commitment for leadership and for accountability to citizens for results.
- 3. Sufficient federal revenue to invest in social security:** In order to fulfill its role and responsibility to ensure social security, generally, and to combat poverty, specifically, the federal government must have sufficient revenue, or “fiscal capacity.” The *Dignity for All Campaign* will promote public understanding of the link between the taxes Canadians pay and the supports and services we benefit from as a result. The campaign will also advance policy proposals for sufficient and fair taxation.

We believe that the best way to move towards federal action on poverty, equality and social security is for many partners to work together, mobilizing the support and engagement of organizations, communities of interest and individuals across the country. We are building a network of support for *Dignity for All*. Opportunities for engagement surround each of the campaign goals, for example in research, policy analysis, public education and representations to government.