



CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE

CPJ offers questions for leaders' debate

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Ottawa, ON: Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) offered questions on public justice issues to the media consortium responsible for the leaders' debate. CPJ was pleased to make a submission in response to the consortium's call for questions from Canadians.

"Being an informed voter is part of being an engaged citizen," said Joe Gunn, executive director of CPJ. "Public debates are an important source of information for voters. It's essential that public justice issues be given consideration in the debate."

CPJ's questions covered topics from poverty reduction and the growing income gap to action on global warming and care for the environment. See Appendix A for CPJ's submission.

CPJ's public justice questions are also offered to citizens in the format of an election brochure on the CPJ website, www.cpj.ca.

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a national organization that promotes public justice in Canada by shaping key policy debates through research and analysis, publishing and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices that reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship. www.cpj.ca

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APPENDIX A

To: Members of the Media Consortium preparing the televised Leaders' Debates

Citizens for Public Justice is pleased to submit several questions we would appreciate being used for the Leaders' debates which will be televised during the current federal election:

1. *A National Plan to End Poverty:* The latest statistics tell us that at least 3.4 million Canadians live in poverty. At 10% of the population, this is higher than many countries with very competitive economies. **Do you support adopting a federal plan to end poverty in Canada that commits the government to achieving a specific, measurable target for poverty reduction supported by a budget and mechanisms of accountability?**
2. *Close the Growing Gap:* Over the last decade, despite significant economic growth and many Canadians working longer hours, the gap in income and wealth between the rich and poor has steadily increased. Across the board tax cuts have made this gap larger. **How would your party change our federal tax and transfer systems, and especially the Canada Social Transfer, to reverse the trend in the growing gap in incomes and wealth?**
3. *Aboriginal health and poverty:* Aboriginal Canadians live shorter lives and experience more disease at every age. As a recent report from the World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health has shown, poverty is the most important cause of this kind of disparity. **If your party was to form the next government, what specific steps would it propose to take to address Aboriginal poverty and thus improve the health of Aboriginal peoples?**
4. *Refugees and Newcomers:* According to Statistics Canada, even after ten years of being in Canada, newcomers still experience social and economic disadvantages in comparison to the average Canadian-born citizen, including lower income levels and higher rates of poverty. **What will your party do to reverse higher poverty rates and lower earnings among newcomers?**

Will your party immediately establish the Refugee Appeal Division as the law requires?

5. Global poverty: All federal parties are on record to commit 0.7% of GNI to international development assistance, and Canada has promised to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Yet Canadian aid spending as a percentage of Gross National Income has been falling. **What aid increases would your party adhere to, and by when?**

6. Environment: Opponents of strict environmental measures fear that “going green” will hurt our economy. Proponents argue that environmental policies can encourage innovative economic reforms, and that failure to act could cause economic catastrophe. **How would you integrate environmental concerns, especially the need to reduce global warming, with economic and social policy?**

7. Affordable Housing: In 2006, the United Nations called the issue of housing and homelessness in Canada a “**national emergency**”. In Canada, housing is the responsibility of all levels of government. An **estimated four million Canadians are in need of affordable housing. How does your party intend to address the specific housing needs of vulnerable groups?**

Citizens for Public Justice is a national, faith-based organization with members across Canada. As a Christian organization, CPJ's work is rooted in God's call to do justice and to love our neighbours. CPJ was founded in 1963 by justice-oriented Christians and has been supported throughout its 45 year history by those who believe that all individuals, communities, social institutions and governments should contribute to and benefit from the common good. Our mission is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship.