

INTERFAITH FORUM ON FAITH AND POVERTY

On March 7 and 8, 2011, in Ottawa, representatives from different religious groups participated in a series of meetings and discussions on faith and poverty. The purpose of this event was to foster a national dialogue on poverty. Gladys LeBlanc, Social Justice Coordinator was present.

Representatives from different Christian faith communities from across the country, as well as those of Hindu, Buddhism, Jewish, and Baha'i faith were in attendance. The forum was organized by the Canadian Council of Churches, The Canadian Interfaith Delegation - World Religions Summit 2010, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and Dignity for All.

Those present had a chance to discuss with members of the four federal political parties, on a report that was submitted to the federal government in November 2011. These politicians were members of the Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities Committee (HUMA) who worked on this report.

Following the two day meeting, faith leaders emitted a public declaration inviting the federal government to work in partnership with them in order to eliminate poverty in Canada:

We call on the federal government to give leadership and develop a federal poverty reduction plan that coordinates federal initiatives with existing and emerging provincial and territorial plans; to enact legislation to ensure federal commitment and accountability to poverty reduction goals; to develop a national housing strategy; and for all levels of government to ensure sufficient investment in social security for all Canadians. Faith leaders also promised to bring about a national debate, and to intensify their engagement to reduce poverty: ***As faith communities we commit to launching a national conversation about poverty, to deepen our commitments and multiply our activities that alleviate poverty, and to collaborate with others of good will to address the immediate needs of our neighbours.*** ([Click here to access the complete Public Declaration](#))

Fostering a national dialogue on poverty by inviting Canadian faith leaders and Members of Parliament to interact was a special occasion. Together as people of faith, informed by our respective traditions, we are compelled by our sincerely held beliefs to care for those in need within our communities and across this rich nation.