

A Media Statement from the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction: March 8, 2011

A missed opportunity for leadership and action on a national poverty strategy

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, more than a dozen communities across Canada and a cross section of parliamentarians – of all political stripes - believes the creation of a national poverty strategy is essential for building Canada's future prosperity. Unfortunately the federal cabinet yesterday rejected calls to develop a comprehensive and measurable poverty reduction strategy including 58 recommendations from an all-party parliamentary committee.

"With nearly three and a half million Canadians living below the low income cutoff, including 800,000 children growing up in poverty, our federal government needed to commit to a co-ordinated, national strategy; we are deeply disappointed they didn't take the opportunity to display leadership and move to action" said Howard Elliott, chair of the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable.

In late 2010, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) released a comprehensive report calling on the Federal Government to act on a number of poverty reduction priorities – a report to which the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable had contributed.

Early learning and child care, affordable and accessible housing, employment opportunities and meaningful income support programs have been consistently identified as essential components that move families out of poverty. The Roundtable has also called on the federal government to adopt a cross-departmental approach to tackling poverty in Canada. "A poverty reduction secretariat will establish political accountability, build bridges between various government departments and be able to implement the wide range of solutions need to combat poverty conditions across Canada".

Liz Weaver of Vibrant Communities Canada noted in a recent response to the HUMA committee that "Focusing on Poverty CAN make a Difference: The extensive research, recommendations and public engagement in the Standing Committee's report process proves that poverty is a concern shared by government and citizens. Indeed, the costs of high levels of poverty in neighbourhoods, communities and First Nations are impinging on the prosperity of Canada".

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction has identified the development of a National Poverty Strategy as one of its key action items and will be engaging candidates of all political parties during the next federal election around the need to move forward with a strategy. The federal government also previously rejected a Senate of Canada report calling for the development of a National Poverty Strategy.

For more information, please contact Tom Cooper, Director HRPR at 905-523-5600 x244 or by cell at 905-512-7863