

# Ottawa rejects Senate plan to fight poverty

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**Laurie Monsebraaten** Social Justice Reporter

The Harper government has refused to adopt any of the 74 poverty-fighting recommendations that were part of a sweeping Senate report on homelessness and poverty.

Instead, the government's response Monday night to the Senate's 300-page report was a 20-page list of Ottawa's current programs and a commitment to "take the committee's recommendations under advisement as it continues to find ways to help Canadians succeed."

Liberal Senator Art Eggleton, whose subcommittee on cities authored the report, said he is "disappointed" in the government's response.

"I think we made it quite clear it's not just how much you spend but how efficiently and effectively you spend it," said Eggleton. "What we really needed was an action plan — an indication that this is a high priority for the government."

Anti-poverty groups were also disillusioned.

"With the majority of provinces and territories pursuing poverty reduction, the federal government needs to do its part," said Laurel Rothman, of Campaign 2000, a national coalition that has been pressing Ottawa to live up to its 1998 all-party resolution to end child poverty by 2000.

"Canadians want our leaders to demonstrate commitment to work together to eradicate poverty during the next decade," she said.

The Senate report, *In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, says a staggering 3.4 million Canadians are trapped in poverty by government social programs that are "substantially broken."

Among the report's 74 recommendations is a call for Ottawa to set a goal of "poverty eradication" and to work with the provinces to create a national child-care system, a federal housing strategy and to ensure income support for people on welfare meets the poverty level.

The report also recommends developing a national income support program for the disabled, increasing the National Child Benefit to \$5,000 by 2012 and boosting the Working Income Tax Benefit so those in low-wage jobs can escape poverty.

The Senate adopted the report in a unanimous vote April 29.