Justice Charter For the Eradication of Poverty in Manitoba

We the people of Manitoba, seeing the growing gap between the wealthy and people in need, the working poor, and discriminated groups want to act in a timely manner to reverse the situation, to provide for people with needs and support the right for everyone to contribute to society to the best of their ability. To this end we make these demands and will work to make them a reality:

Housing must be a right and a comfort, not a constant crisis!

- End subsidies to private landlords
- Establish stricter rent controls.
- Enact a Tenant Bill of Rights.
- Build and maintain public housing to the standard building code.
- No utility cut-offs; establish a panel with legal power to require landlords and the wealthy to pay.

Universal health care for all, for every need!

- Expand medicare into a comprehensive health care system focusing on prevention.
- Extend medicare to cover all essential services such as eye, drug, dental, ambulance and prosthetics.
- Establish a hot breakfast program for children in schools.
- Reduce pollution from mining and manufacturing, especially from sources located by low income neighborhoods.

Jobs are a human right. Create good-paying jobs for all!

- Create jobs through a massive investment in public housing, a public child care program, and conversion to a "green" economy.
- Increase the minimum wage to $14 an hour.
- Sustain quality job creation by ensuring access to education, ending tuition fees, free student housing, education in Aboriginal and any other language where numbers warrant.
- Increase access to better jobs by reducing the work week with no loss in pay, adding paid vacation days and reducing the pension age for women to age 60.

Provide for those in need!

- Introduce a Guaranteed Liveable Income, above the poverty line and indexed to inflation.
- Improve special needs benefits and introduce a fast appeals process with free advocacy services.
- A public, high quality, free child care program employing well-paid early childhood development professionals.
- For injured workers, establish a fast and free appeals process independent of the Workers Compensation Board. Provide free legal services and always respect the right to appeal.
- Establish a Manitoba pension credit plan funded by payroll deductions and a surtax on corporate income to top up pensions above the poverty line.
- Establish a federally-chartered, publicly-owned bank that does not discriminate against people in poverty, is located in low-income areas, and provides free or nonprofit cheque cashing services and international fund transmittals.
- Establish a province-wide, free and publicly-owned handi-transit service for people with disabilities.
- Establish price controls for essential foods throughout Manitoba.

End racism, sexism and discrimination of all forms!

- Support immediate settlement of Aboriginal land claims and emergency action to end housing, health care and education inequality.
- Take steps to recognize Aboriginal nations on a new basis in Canada, including full national rights and equal nation to nation relations.
- Introduce immediately affirmative action hiring with mandatory quotas for Aboriginal people, people of colour, women and people with disabilities in both the public and private sector.
- Job pay equity for all workplaces.
- Replace the present legal system of retribution and punishment with principles of restorative justice - restitution and reconciliation; include "ability to pay" as a consideration for sentencing people to jail for non-payment of fines.
- Ban discrimination based on social or mental health condition in the *Human Rights Code*.
- Introduce a *Manitoba Bill of Rights* based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), adding protections against all forms of sexism.

Reform the democratic system

- Establish proportional representation so that people will vote for what they want and so that every person's vote will count.
- Pay Legislators the average worker's wage and benefits in Manitoba.

The Justice Charter is for **discussion** by all Manitobans leading up to a **Constituent Assembly** on a weekend on or around March 21, 2009, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A Call will invite groups representing Aboriginal peoples, women, workers, students, people of colour, people with disabilities, injured workers, people living in poverty, people of all faiths and nonbelievers - all supportive groups - to amend and ratify the Charter at the Assembly.Contact the Four Directions Committee if you would like to receive a copy of the Call to the Constituent Assembly or comment on the Charter.

Email: fourdirectionscommittee@gmail.com or phone (204) 792-3371.