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Press Release – Civil rights groups release final report of public hearings into G20 security issues

“It is imperative that there be a full public inquiry into what happened during the G20 in order to get at the truth and ensure it doesn’t happen again. The maintenance of public confidence in law enforcement demands nothing less.”

OTTAWA, Feb. 28, 2011 – The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) and the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) today released a final report on G20 security issues based on public hearings held last year.

In November 2010, the CCLA and NUPGE organized three days of public hearings in Toronto and Montreal to examine police activity during the G20 Summit. The hearings were called: *Breach of the Peace – G20 Summit: Accountability in Policing and Governance*. More than 60 speakers attended. Peaceful protestors, journalists, innocent bystanders and others told horrific stories of police violence, threats, mistreatment and unlawful detainment.

“The aftermath of the G20 presents a unique historical moment for the Canadian government to improve the legal and policy frameworks governing public order policing,” said Nathalie Des Rosiers, CCLA General Counsel. “It is imperative that there be a full public inquiry into what happened during the G20 to ensure that it does not happen again. The maintenance of public confidence in law enforcement demands nothing less.”

Based on the issues identified over the course of the public hearings, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the major civil liberties violations that took place during the G20 Summit, and puts forward a series of recommendations aimed at protecting constitutional rights in future public order policing operations.

“During the hearings we heard shocking stories of police excesses at the G20 Summit,” said James Clancy, NUPGE National President. “In many cases, it seems as if these excesses, which included widespread violations of *the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, were committed with complete impunity. It is completely unacceptable that the constitutional rights of Canadians were treated with such utter disregard. We can and must do better.”

While the widespread property damage that occurred during the Summit was deplorable, it neither justified nor warranted the extent of the police response that occurred. More than 1,105 people were arrested by police – the largest mass-arrest in Canadian peace time history. Canadians are entitled to policing that does not undermine constitutional values. Unfortunately, the security operations and police conduct chronicled in this report fell well short of this standard, resulting in a significant diminution of public faith in policing.

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Members of Parliament Don Davies (NDP Public Safety Critic) and Mark Holland (Liberal Public Safety Critic) joined the CCLA and NUPGE at the news conference to echo the concerns and recommendations outlined in the report. They were also joined by Natalie Gray, an individual who shared her story of being fired at with rubber bullets during the public hearings.

“New Democrats believe that we need nothing short of a full public inquiry with the powers to subpoena persons and documents and hear testimony under oath,” says NDP MP Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway). “This is the only way to get to the truth of what happened at the G20 Summit.”

“Parliament probed for answers from the government but all we got was stonewalling, says Liberal MP Mark Holland (Ajax-Pickering). “It is now clear that only a full public inquiry will be able to get to the bottom of the Harper government’s G20 billion dollar boondoggle and provide Canadians with the answers they deserve.”

The report is available on CCLA and NUPGE’s websites as of 11am on Monday February 28th.

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About the Canadian Civil Liberties Association:

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) is a national organization dedicated to promoting respect for and observance of fundamental human rights and civil liberties. Its work, which includes research, public education and advocacy, aims to defend and ensure the protection and full exercise of those rights and liberties.

About the National Union of Public and General Employees:

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 11 Component unions. Taken together they are one of the largest unions in Canada. Most of their 340,000 members work to deliver public services of every kind to the citizens of their home provinces. NUPGE also has a large and growing number of members who work for private businesses.