

# **PRESENTATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

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**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

I thank the members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to highlight the many issues raised during this Review about Canada's compliance with its obligations concerning affordable housing and homelessness in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). These issues are dealt with more fully in the written submissions of the Front d'action populaire en reaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), the Pivot Legal Society and ACTO on behalf of the Right to Housing Coalition. We have also provided additional materials to Judge Pillay, the Committee's Rapporteur, that outline the nature and extent of the housing crisis in Canada.

Previous speakers have addressed the lack of avenues for legal redress and Canada's failure to take a human rights approach to economic, social and cultural (ESC) issues. These problems have had a particularly negative impact on marginalized people seeking housing rights as the *Tanudjaja* case illustrates. We also echo the concern about a lack of reliable data on ESC issues, in particular the extent of housing need and homelessness, especially among minority communities.

We have specific questions that you may wish to raise with the Canadian delegation which suggest the observations we would like you to make in your concluding report on Canada:

1. As people continue to die in the streets, will Canada treat its ongoing housing and homelessness crisis as a national emergency?
2. Will Canada implement a national housing strategy based on the recognition of human rights and reflective of views of people with lived experience and the unique rights? Such a strategy must reflect the views of people with lived experience and the particular needs of women and of indigenous and racialized people.
3. Will Canada immediately invest in new social housing that is accessible to people who are marginalized? As you have heard, many people in Canada are marginalized by very low incomes, homelessness, disability, race, family status and immigration status.
4. Will Canada immediately address the expiry of non-profit housing operating agreements that are putting thousands of affordable homes at risk?

5. Will Canada commit to working with its provinces, territories and municipalities to revoke laws that discriminate against and criminalize homeless people for behavior necessary for survival, such as sleeping or erecting shelter in public places?
6. Will Canada ensure that all housing strategies include provisions for accessibility and appropriate supports and community services for people with disabilities to ensure that they are not compelled to live in segregated institutions?

Thank you for your concern for the housing needs of disadvantaged people in Canada.