



Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario
Centre ontarien de défense des droits des locataires

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Supreme Court Slams Door Shut on Canada`s Housing Crisis

TORONTO, June 25, 2015 - The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that a Charter challenge holding governments responsible for the crisis in affordable housing and homelessness will never be heard in Canadian courts.

With no evidence before them, two out of three judges at the Ontario Court of Appeal upheld a controversial lower court decision that issues of homelessness do not belong in the courtroom. The Supreme Court decision affirms this ruling and brings to a close the five year wait by homeless and precariously housed applicants to have 10,000 pages of evidence detailing the impact of homelessness on hundreds of thousands of people across the country presented to the court.

“The housing and homelessness crisis is directly related to policy decisions that governments make every day,” said Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada, one of sixteen organizations that intervened in the case. “The Supreme Court’s ruling means that the troubling ways that those decisions impact and even violate the rights of some of the most marginalized communities in Canada remain unexamined.”

There continues to be a worsening housing crisis in Canada. Over the past five years, Ontario’s affordable housing waiting list has ballooned to 168,711 households, the Federal government has announced the revocation of 365,000 housing subsidies for low income households across the country, and the cost of keeping people homeless has continued to skyrocket. It is currently estimated at \$7 billion annually.

“Housing should be a fundamental human right,” asserts Janice Arsenault, an applicant in the case. “It is shameful that disadvantaged people like me have been refused access to court on issues basic to our health, life and well-being. But if the courts think this is a political issue, it’s time for the government to sit up and do something.”

For more information on the Right to Housing Charter Challenge: <http://www.acto.ca/en/cases/right-to-housing.html>

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