

Impact of Bill 6 (Safer Municipalities Act) and Bill 10 (Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act) on Precariously Housed Renters and Vulnerable People

2025



Advocacy Centre
for Tenants Ontario

Tenant Duty
Counsel Program

What is Bill 6 and Bill 10?

Bill 6

Bill 6 focuses on enforcement, specifically criminalizing public drug consumption, empowering authorities, and increasing penalties for trespassing. Its primary purpose is to regulate public drug use and strengthen trespass enforcement in Ontario.

Under Schedule 1 of the *Safer Municipalities Act*, the Act bans smoking, injecting, inhaling or consuming illegal substances in any “public place.” This includes tents or makeshift shelters in parks and sidewalks unless the “place” is a supervised consumption site or another legal exemption applies.

Police or authorized provincial officers can order an individual to stop using, leave the area, and provide their name, date of birth, and address. They may also seize or destroy the substances. If individuals do not comply, the police can arrest without a warrant, and offenders can face fines of up to \$10,000 and or up to six months in jail. If individuals are seeking or providing emergency medical services, they will not be charged under this Act.

Under Schedule 2 of *Safer Municipalities Act*, the Act amends Ontario’s *Trespass to Property Act* by introducing two new aggravating factors that courts may consider when sentencing a person convicted of trespassing. The first factor states that if someone is warned to leave a property – either verbally, by signage, or by written notice – and ignores that warning, it becomes a formal aggravating factor at sentencing, leading to a harsher sentence. The second factor states that if a court has found the person is likely to trespass again, determines by the person’s prior history or circumstances, it can increase the severity of the penalty. The penalties can go up to \$10,000.

Bill 10

Bill 10 focuses on amending multiple laws and introducing new tools for law enforcement, emphasizing public safety in Ontario.

Under Schedule 8, titled “*Measures Respecting Premises with Illegal Drug Activity*”, landlords are prohibited from knowingly permitting their properties to be used for production, trafficking, or possession, indicating intent to sell controlled substances or cannabis under federal law. Some enforcement tools include provincial drug law provisions separate from the federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

Regarding the landlord's liability, the provision applies to residential and commercial landlords, municipal housing authorities, non-profit supportive housing operators, and staff and directors. Violations carry fines from hundreds of thousands up to \$250,000 for individuals or \$1 million for corporations, with up to one year in jail, administrative penalties, and cost recovery provisions. Penalties can be avoided if landlords can provide evidence that they took "reasonable measures", although the precise requirements remain undefined.

Police's enforcement powers include entering the premises, removing individuals, sealing or closing off locations, seizing items, and making warrantless arrests in suspected cases of landlord non-compliance. Police can also confiscate devices used for auto theft and adjustments to traffic and crime-related statutes.

Impact On Precariously Housed Renters and Vulnerable Peoples

By granting new enforcement powers to police, expanding fines, and criminalizing behavior tied to survival, Bill 6 and Bill 10 effectively treats poverty and homelessness as offences rather than symptoms of the system's failure.

A recent report by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario highlights that Indigenous people, refugees, and youth are disproportionately affected by chronic homelessness, with Indigenous individuals making up 44.6% of the chronically homeless in northern regions despite being only 2.9% of the population. The number of chronically homeless refugees and asylum seekers rose sharply from 1,834 in 2020 to 10,552 in 2024, and nearly one-quarter of those experiencing chronic homelessness are children or youth who lack dedicated shelter space. Although homelessness is rising across Ontario, rural and northern communities have been hit the hardest, with Northern Ontario seeing a 204% increase since 2016, which is significantly more than the 11% rise in urban areas ([AMO, 2025](#)).

Cycle of displacement and Police Enforcement inside tents (Impacts of Bill 6's Schedule 1)

Many precariously housed renter or vulnerable people, facing eviction or shelter shortages, use tents and other unauthorized dwellings during temporary displacement or eviction ([Evans, 2022](#)). Additionally, the trauma of losing a home can oftentimes push individuals to resort to drug use as a coping mechanism ([Zhao, 2021](#)).

With Bill 6 enabling police to seize and destroy substances, demand identification, arrest without warrant, and order individuals to leave the dwelling in a public place, these enforcement mechanisms expand criminal records for low-level offenses and further exclude individuals from housing and employment.

Because tents are defined as “public places”, these measures could turn one’s essential shelter into a legal liability ([Evans, 2022](#)). Individuals suffering from hardships continually face evictions from their tents due to harmful survival behaviour, which in turn pushes some to rely on drugs as a psychological escape ([Patrick, 2014](#)). If they are experiencing addiction or mental health issues, public use becomes a survival behavior rather than a choice. Health-related behaviors turn into a crime that demands criminalizing people for surviving in conditions the government has failed to resolve.

Precariously housed renters and vulnerable people are more deeply exposed to the criminal justice system’s suspicions. Future landlords may not rent to people with any history of substance-use issues because of losing their fundamental right to shelter, which worsens the systemic discrimination that already exists within the housing market ([Hodgson, Kerman, Kalf-Duschenes & Bardwell, 2024](#)).

The bill may result in forced displacement and loss of personal belongings that are suspected of being in connection with drug use. According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, evictions do not address underlying conditions that have led to individuals creating such encampments, and it does not respect the rights or increase the safety or housing security of encampments residents ([Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2022](#)). The result is not rehabilitation for precariously housed renters or vulnerable people. The distrust between tenants and outreach services is deepened as a result.

Non-payment of fines may lead to warrants and further housing instability. Legal debts such as these become another barrier to re-housing, ultimately trapping renters in a cycle of poverty and homelessness ([Gaetz, 2012](#)). Bill 6 can also raise various potential Charter issues, particularly around freedom of movement, security of the person, and protection against unreasonable search ([CCLA, 2025](#)).

While the question may be for many as to why such individuals cannot simply stop using drugs, the psychological impact of losing access to a fundamental right to shelter is much more complex than what meets the eye.



Because tents are defined as “public places”, these measures could turn one’s essential shelter into a legal liability.

Stripping Housing Security and Deepening Discrimination (Impacts of Bill 6's Schedule 2)

Precariously housed renters are terrorized into self-eviction at the first sign of conflict and with a constant uncertainty of housing stability. Using these 24-hour notices as aggravating factors during sentencing shifts power downright to landlords, resulting in more inequitable outcomes for tenants. The housing instability that comes with such measures causes them to be unable to properly plan for work, school, caregiving, or health care, knowing that such factors will be against them during sentencing.

A single trespass conviction carries a fine of up to \$10,000 simply for being deemed as likely to return. For vulnerable people and other low-income renters, this debt can be catastrophic to their financial stability and lead people to poverty ([Gaetz, 2012](#)).

Landlords may also become risk-averse due to a “likely to trespass again” finding among renters and refuse to rent out their house to people. The homelessness crisis will remain unresolved. Vulnerable renters including newcomers, low-income workers, and people with disabilities become effectively invisible to the justice system. Survivors of domestic violence, racialized communities, and 2SLGBTQ+ youth face steeper barriers to entering the private rental market ([Hodgson, Kerman, Kalf-Duschenes & Bardwell, 2024](#)).

Schedule 2 of Bill 6 reframes housing as contingent on a property owner’s informal notice. Once tenants are held criminally liable for “trespass”, they have no recourse to emergency social housing or shelter beds in many municipalities. Homelessness is legitimized as a “personal choice” or “nuisance”.



Homelessness is legitimized
as a “personal choice” or
“nuisance”.

Landlord and Police Versus The People (Impact of Bill 10's Schedule 8)

Bill 10's Schedule 8 provisions may, on the face of it, seem to target premises used for drug production or trafficking. Still, it carries devastating consequences for precariously housed renters and other vulnerable populations.

Precariously housed tenants already occupy the margins of policy discourse. With this Bill coming into effect, landlords may use unbased suspicions of drug activity to evict and seal the building. Due to the uncertainty of what counts as "reasonable measures" the landlord takes to ensure no drug activity in the tenants' premises; he may opt to evict any tenant rather than incur any liability ([Fox, 2025](#)).

Tenants are silenced from organizing or lobbying for repairs or rent relief, fearing being targeted for evictions. With police issuing removal orders for any premises linked to a prescribed offense based on suspicion rather than confirmed evidence, vulnerable renters may experience abrupt homelessness and destabilizing living situations. Landlords may further shift any recoverable costs onto tenants through rent hikes, damage-deposit claims, or eviction for non-payment, drastically shifting the landlord's power ([Crosby, 2020](#)).

The seizure of personal items, including medications, identification documents, phones, and bedding, may cause tenants to lose critical resources needed for daily living and accessing essential services. Small amounts of saving from odd jobs or tips may be deemed illicit proceeds and can be grounds for confiscation by the police. The financial burdens include facing cost-recovery claims if the building's closure or seizure is tied to their unit. Unexpected debts may have to be relied upon to secure future housing for vulnerable renters who may already be in a cycle of financial instability ([ACTO, 2023](#)).

On a broader scale, the blanket closure order enforced on individuals who may not be involved in any wrongdoing can cause them not properly to maintain health and social service connections. Particularly, supportive housing providers may close programs or tighten admission to avoid any liability, further reducing safe-house options for people leaving shelters or recovering from homelessness. The rental market might hike price to an extent that is out of reach from vulnerable people or precariously housed renters ([CMHA, 2025](#)).

References

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. (2023, June). Housing hardship: How Ontario's renters struggle to keep a roof overhead. https://www.acto.ca/production/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HousingHardship_ACTO_June_2023.pdf

Association Municipalities of Ontario. (2025, January). Municipalities under pressure: The human and financial cost of Ontario's homelessness crisis. HelpSeeker. <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Reports/2025/2025-01-08-EndingChronicHomelessnessinOntario.pdf>

Canadian Human Rights Commission (2022, December). Homeless encampments in Canada a human rights crisis. <https://www.chrc.ccdp.gc.ca/resources/newsroom/homeless-encampments-canada-human-rights-crisis>

Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) (2025, June). CCLA Reacts to Ontario Passing the Safer Municipalities Act. https://ccla.org/equality/ccla-reacts-to-ontario-passing-the-safer-municipalities-act/?utm_source

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) (2025, June). Submission to MAG on Bill 10. <https://ontario.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Submission-to-MAG-on-Bill-10-Schedule-8-2025.pdf>

Crosby Andrew. (2020). Financialized gentrification, demoviction, and landlord tactics to demobilize tenant organizing. <https://herongatetenants.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Financialized-gentrification-demoviction-and-landlord-tactics-to-demobilize-tenant-organizing.pdf>

Evans Allison. (2022, December). Tent encampments in Toronto, Canada: Excavating Northern housing informalities. https://radicalhousingjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/RHJ_Issue-4.2_03_Long-Read_Evans_25-46.pdf

Fox John. (2025 June). Navigating Bill 10: What Ontario's new law means for residential landlords. <https://www.robinsappleby.com/publication/navigating-bill-10-what-ontario-s-new-law-means-for-residential-landlords>

Gaetz Stephen. (2012). The Real Cost of Homelessness: Can We Save Money by Doing the Right Thing? Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press. https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/costofhomelessness_paper21092012.pdf

Hodgson, Kerman, Kalf-Duschenes & Bardwell (2024). Room for Change: Rural Low-Barrier Housing Policy and Program Models for People with Substance Use and Mental Health Comorbidities. <https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/ijoh/article/view/17819>

References

Patrick, Caryl. (2014). Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/AboriginalLiteratureReview.pdf>

Zhao, Yinong (2021). Housing precarity, correlates, and unmet health care and HIV care needs among women living with HIV in Metro Vancouver, Canada.

<https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0401737>