



CANADA WITHOUT POVERTY
CANADA SANS PAUVRETÉ

**Pre-Sessional Working Group of the
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

**Consideration of the List of Issues related to the Sixth Periodic Report of Canada
For the CESCR's 55th Session**

POVERTY, HOMELESSNESS AND HUNGER IN CANADA

**Submitted By: Canada Without Poverty
Submitted On: 23 February 2015**

Canada Without Poverty – founded in 1972, is a leading national anti-poverty organization representing the voices of low-income people in Canada for over 40 years. CWP (formerly known as the National Anti-Poverty Organization) was the first NGO to undertake an oral presentation before the UN CESCR in 1993. With a pan-Canadian reach, Canada Without Poverty is often called upon by federal government committees and civil society to speak to poverty as it relates to various stages of the life-cycle and vulnerable demographic groups. Canada Without Poverty continues to promote the enforcement of economic and social rights as the fundamental basis for the relief of poverty and acts as a central resource point on ES rights in Canada.

I. Poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity are significant problems in Canada, one of the richest countries in the world.

Poverty, inadequate housing, homelessness, hunger, and dismal welfare rates, are violations of the right to an adequate standard of living and are inexcusable considering Canada's relative economic wealth. The Government of Canada is not honouring its obligation to take reasonable steps to the maximum of its available resources to ensure the enjoyment by the most disadvantaged of their economic, social and cultural rights, particularly the rights contained in Articles 2(2) and 11(1) of the ICESCR.

1. Poverty, homelessness, and hunger continue to be problems that are disproportionate to Canada's wealth and resources. Unlike many other developed nations, Canada fared relatively well during the Global Economic Crisis and its aftermath and has boasted about having the strongest economic growth in comparison to other G7 nations.¹

¹ Government of Canada (2012), "Chapter 2: Economic Developments and Prospects," Budget 2012.
<http://www.budget.gc.ca/2012/plan/chap2-eng.html>

2. While Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world and overall economic well-being has risen since 1981, Canada is experiencing consistently **increasing inequality between rich and poor populations.**² A recent report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted that inequality is growing in Canada with the result being more wealth concentrated amongst the privileged few.³ Over the last 20 years, while the richest group of Canadians increased its share of total national income, the poorest group lost share.

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF ARTICLE 11 RIGHTS IN CANADA

3. **1 in 7 or 4.8 million people in Canada live in poverty**, including 546,000 children under the age of 17.⁴ **Canada ranks 24th out of 34 OECD Countries in terms of its poverty levels.**

4. **Indigenous peoples, single mothers, newcomers and people who are racialized, persons with disabilities, youth and children** are most likely to experience poverty, inadequate housing, homelessness and food insecurity in Canada.

5. **Indigenous peoples** in Canada experience the highest levels of poverty: A shocking **1 in 4 Indigenous peoples (Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit), are living in poverty⁵ and 4 in 10 of Canada's Indigenous children live in poverty.**

6. Close to **15% of people with disabilities** are living in poverty, **59% of whom are women.**⁶

7. The OECD recently reported that Canada saw a **2% increase in poverty amongst people 65 years and older between 2007 and 2010, with a 3% increase for those over 75.**⁷ Other OECD countries meanwhile showed stable or decreased levels of poverty for those aged 65 and older during the same period.

8. According to UNICEF, **child poverty rates decreased by 3% between 2008 and 2012 as a result of social spending.** But for Canada's **most vulnerable children, conditions**

² Osberg, Lars and Andrew Sharpe (September 2011), *"Beyond GDP: Measuring Economic Well-Being in Canada and the Provinces 1981-2010"*, Centre for the Study of Living Standards, p.vi.

³ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011), *"Divided We Stand: An Overview of Growing Income Inequalities in OECD Countries: Main Findings"*, p.24, 45, 38.

⁴ Statistics Canada (2011), Populations living in Private Households, Low Income Measure (After-Tax), Statistics Canada National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-014-X2011043.

⁵ Collin, Chantal, and Hillary Jensen (2009), "A Statistical Profile of Poverty in Canada", *Library of Parliament*, p.17.

⁶ Council of Canadians with Disabilities, <http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/poverty-citizenship/demographic-profile/poverty-disability-canada>

⁷ OECD, Pensions at a Glance 2013: Retirement-Income Systems in OECD and G20 Countries, "Old-age income poverty" available on: http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/finance-and-investment/pensions-at-a-glance-2013/old-age-income-poverty_pension_glance-2013-26-en#page1.

deteriorated, with the difference between the median income of poor children and the poverty line increasing by 2% points.⁸

9. In 2011, the **youth unemployment rate (for those aged 15 – 24) was a whopping 14% – double the national average.⁹**

10. **Female lone-parent families are significantly poorer than all other household types in Canada. 21% of all single mothers are low income compared to just 5.5% of married couples.¹⁰** Women are also more likely to be poor¹¹, and generally earn less than men. This earning gap actually increased between 2007 and 2008.¹²

11. **Racialized communities face high levels of poverty.** The 2006 census (the most recent data available) showed that the overall poverty rate for **racialized persons was 22% - double the rate of non-racialized persons.** In two of Canada's largest cities, far more than half of all persons living in poverty were from racialized groups: 58% in Vancouver; and 62% in Toronto. One in five racialized families lives in poverty compared to one in twenty non-racialized families.¹³ Across the country racialized women living in poverty outnumbered men by a factor of 52% to 48%.¹⁴ There is a tendency for racialized individuals to be concentrated in less stable, precarious work.¹⁵

12. **The majority of racialized persons (66%) living in poverty are immigrants.** Almost two-thirds of the racialized immigrants living in poverty came to Canada in the previous ten years and among these 70% had been in Canada for 5 years or less. Once overcoming the language and educational barriers that keep many from finding work, both recent immigrants and racialized individuals are more likely to be paid less than their non-racialized, Canadian-born counterparts when they are employed.¹⁶

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

⁸ UNICEF, Children of the Recession: UNICEF Report Card 12 (2014). Available on: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-s-child-poverty-rate-down-despite-recession-unicef-finds-1.2815426>. See Also: UNICEF Canada, "Canada can do more to protect its children from poverty, new UNICEF report", online May 29, 2012 <http://www.unicef.ca/en/press-release/canada-can-do-more-to-protect-its-children-from-poverty-new-unicef-report>

⁹ Huff Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/08/23/youth-unemployment-canada_n_933810.html

¹⁰Williams, Cara (2010), "Women in Canada, A Gender-based Statistical Report. Economic Well-being", Statistics Canada p.9.

¹¹ Ibid p.20.

¹² Ibid p.10.

¹³ Block and Galabuzi (2010).

¹⁴ These statistics were gathered by the National Council of Welfare in a document called, *A Snapshot of Racialized Poverty in Canada*, which was dismantled by the current government including its website and public access to its documents. Please see point 5 below.

¹⁵ Block and Galabuzi (2011), p.10.

¹⁶ Collin and Jensen, p. 24; Block, Sheila and Grace-Edward Galabuzi (2011) "Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market". Wellesley Institute and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, p.3.

13. The CESCR has described housing and **homelessness** in Canada as a “**national emergency**”.¹⁷ In their most recent report to the CESCR, the Government of Canada states that 150,000 people are homeless each year, a figure which only covers those using emergency shelters. Of course many homeless individuals do not resort to shelters for a number of reasons, including lack of available spaces. Other estimates put the number of homeless at over **235,000 people**, which includes those in shelters and in temporary housing (eg: motels).¹⁸ Neither figure includes the hidden homeless: thousands of individuals (particularly women and youth) and families doubled up with friends, family or neighbours.

14. Another **1.5 million people are living in inadequate housing, and/or facing a serious financial burden which threatens their housing security**.¹⁹

15. **One-fifth of all households** in Canada experience **extreme housing affordability**²⁰ issues. **18% of all renters** or over 730,000 households **experience extreme housing affordability problems**.²¹

16. Over the last 20 years the annual national investment in housing has decreased by more than 46% while the population has increased by 30%. The federal government spends 1/3 less on social housing than it did in the 1990s, and with operating agreements between social housing providers and the government about to expire, 365,000 households are at risk of having their rents increased to unaffordable levels.²²

WELFARE INCOMES

17. **Welfare incomes continue to fall well below any measure of poverty used in this country**. Most welfare recipients are worse off than those in past decades because welfare incomes have not kept up with increased inflation. In many cases rates are 20% lower than in the past.²³

¹⁷ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Review of Canada 1996, 2008 and UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Mission Report on Canada, 2009.

¹⁸ Stephen Gaetz, Tanya Gulliver & Tim Richter, The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014. Available on: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC2014.pdf>

¹⁹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2010.

²⁰ Spending more than 50% of income on rent.

²¹ Stephen Gaetz, Tanya Gulliver & Tim Richter, The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014. Available on: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SOHC2014.pdf>

²² Ibid.

²³ National Council of Welfare, “*Welfare Incomes 2009*”, Vol. 129, Winter 2010, p. viii.

- For example, in **Vancouver, British Columbia** a single mother with two children receives \$1036/mos²⁴, which includes \$660 for housing and \$376 for basic needs.²⁵ Meanwhile, the current average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Canada's most expensive city is: \$1219/mos,²⁶ almost double what is provided by social assistance for housing. Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cut-Off After-Tax (LICO-AT) measure indicates that social assistance rates would have to be 48% higher just to meet that poverty measure.²⁷
- In **Toronto, Ontario**, a single person receives a mere \$7,878 annually, just 42% of the LICO-AT suggested poverty line of \$18,930 for this category.²⁸ Each month recipients are expected to find adequate shelter with a meager \$372, while the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto is \$1,123.²⁹
- **Newfoundland and Labrador** has some of the lowest social assistance rates in the country particularly for youth aged 18 – 30. For example, youth living with a "close relative" receive just \$117/month for living expenses. When living with non-relatives they receive just \$169/month for room and board and all other expenses (the average rent for a 1 bedroom apartment in St. John's is \$500 - 650/mos). These benefit amounts are obviously nowhere near enough to afford shared accommodation along with other living expenses.

MINIMUM WAGE AND PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

18. Not only are welfare rates insufferably low, in each province and territory across the country minimum wage rates fall well below what it is required to maintain an adequate standard of living. For example, experts have calculated that a living wage in Vancouver, British Columbia should be set at \$16.74 per hour³⁰, however, minimum wage in the province is currently set at \$10.25.

²⁴All dollar figures are Canadian currency. Government of British Columbia Ministry of Social Development, "Increases to Income Assistance Rates Table", (2008) http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/2007/increase_table.htm

²⁵ Government of British Columbia Ministry of Social Development, "BC Employment and Assistance Rate Tables", <http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ia.htm>

²⁶ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Rental Market Report, British Columbia Highlights", Housing Market Information, Spring 2012, p.13. http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64487/64487_2012_B01.pdf

²⁷ Statistics Canada, Table 1 "Low income cut-offs (1992 base) after tax", <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/2010005/tbl/tbl01-eng.htm>

²⁸ Government of Ontario, Ministry of Community and Social Services, "Income of Social Assistance Recipients" Table 3: total income from all sources compared to common poverty measures for selected households on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program Toronto April 2010.

http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/publications/social/sarac/recipients_sarac.aspx

²⁹ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, p.51-52.

³⁰ Richards, Tim et al, "Working for a Living Wage", Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC, September 2008, http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2008/ccpa_bc_living_wage_2008.pdf

19. Employees who work in minimum wage positions are primarily comprised of marginalized groups. In 2009, women represented just over 60% of minimum-wage workers, although they made up one-half of employees.³¹
20. Though there has been an upward trend recently in Ontario, for example, minimum wages across the country continue to fall well below acceptable standards under international human rights law.
21. Canada's labour market has changed dramatically. It is no longer the case in Canada that employment leads to economic security and social well-being. Most jobs being created in Canada are low-paying, part-time, temporary or contract and without long term benefits. For example, a recent study found that barely half of people working in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas have permanent, full-time jobs that provide benefits and stability. Everyone else is working in situations that are part-time, vulnerable or insecure in some way. Newcomers to Canada are overrepresented in the precarious employment sector.³²

FOOD BANKS AND FOOD SECURITY

22. **Close to 850,000 people across Canada have no choice but to use foodbanks each month in order to make ends meet. This is a 23% increase since 2008 and the second highest usage rate in the history of food bank usage in Canada.** Over 50% of the individuals using foodbanks are in receipt of social assistance (an obvious indicator that social assistance rates are simply too low), and 12% had income from employment (an indicator that a job does not guarantee an exit from poverty).³³
23. **Nunavut, an Inuit Territory in the North of Canada, has the highest number of households in Canada that are food insecure at 28.8%, which is more than double the Yukon Territory, which holds second place at 11%.**³⁴ Olivier De Schutter, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, on his first trip to Canada in May 2012, observed that there is a widening inequality gap that is affecting food security across the country. Not

³¹ Statistics Canada, "Minimum Wage", <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/topics-sujets/minimumwage-salaireminimum/minimumwage-salaireminimum-2009-eng.htm>

³² It's More Than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-Being, February 2013, <http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/document.doc?id=91>

³³ Food Banks Canada, "Hunger Count Canada, 2014" (2014), http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/getmedia/7739cdf7-72d5-4cee-85e9-54d456669564/HungerCount_2014_EN.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf. Job creation in Canada has not resulted in poverty reduction. In fact, a 2009 survey of residents at Salvation Army shelters for the homeless revealed that nearly one-quarter of the shelter population have jobs – but are still unable to make ends meet. See: Salvation Army (2011), "Canada Speaks": Exposing Persistent Myths about the 150,000 Canadians living on the streets, p. 7. http://vcu.visioncritical.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/REP_TheDignityProject_CanadaSpeaks_01.05.12.pdf

³⁴ Health Canada, "Household Food Insecurity In Select Provinces and the Territories in 2009-2010", http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/nutrition/commun/insecurit/prov_ter-eng.php

surprisingly this gap parallels the ever-growing discrepancy between Canada's international commitments and current domestic social policy.³⁵

II. Poverty is costly. It would be cheaper to solve it.

Poverty has an impact on and cost to society as a whole, from greater demands on the health care and criminal justice systems, to diminished workplace and economic productivity, to harmful and unwholesome divisions in society based on economic status and "class." **It was recently estimated that while poverty is costly, only \$12.6 billion is needed to close the gap between low-income and poverty line.**³⁶

24. **It has been calculated that each year it costs approximately \$55,000 to leave a homeless person on the street, while providing housing and support services would cost only \$37,000.**³⁷

25. Evidence shows that Canada would save **\$7.6 billion** per year on health expenditures, by merely moving people from the lowest incomes bracket to the second lowest income bracket.³⁸ An increase of \$1,000 in annual income to the poorest 20% of Canadians would lead to **10,000 fewer chronic conditions**, and **6,600 fewer disability days** every two weeks.³⁹

26. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada has estimated that four out of five women in prison are there for poverty-related crimes⁴⁰, and that the **cost of incarcerating women** in 2009/10 was **\$211,093 per woman**.⁴¹

III. The federal government has the capacity and jurisdiction to address poverty in Canada.

27. Sub-national governments in Canada – municipalities, provinces and territories –

³⁵ De Schutter, Olivier, Special Rapporteur on the right to food: visit to Canada from May 6-16, 2012. Press statement, May 16, 2012, p. 2-3. http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/201205_canadaprelim_en.pdf

³⁶ National Council of Welfare (2011), *The Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty*, Vol. 130, Autumn 2011, p.2.

³⁷ Intraspac (2012), *Homelessness in Canada*, online at <http://intraspac.ca/homelessCanada.php#.UGn6cfk-vYU>

³⁸ Laurie (2008), p.12.

³⁹ Lightman, Ernie, Andrew Mitchell and Beth Wilson (2008), *Poverty is making us sick: A comprehensive survey of income and health in Canada*, Wellesley Institute and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, p.2.

⁴⁰ Calgary United Way (2008), *Crimes of Desperation: The Truth about poverty-related crime*, p.2. www.calgaryunitedway.org/main/sites/default/files/Crimes%20of%20Desperation%20Final%20mar08.pdf

⁴¹ Public Safety Canada, *Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview*, Table: The cost of keeping an inmate incarcerated has increased, www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cor/rep/2011-ccrso-eng.aspx#b3

have the Constitutional jurisdiction to enact legislation, policies and programs to address poverty, homelessness and hunger in compliance with international human rights law. Under international human rights law they have the obligation to do so.⁴²

28. At the same time, there are no legal or other barriers to keep the federal government from providing leadership in these areas. The federal government has, in fact, traditionally, played such a role. For example, the Social Union Framework Agreement committed the federal government to work along side provinces to ensure access for all Canadians to essential social programs and services, providing assistance for people in need, and promoting the full and active participation of all Canadians in social and economic life.⁴³

29. Different arms of government have, themselves, demonstrated a commitment to these issues. The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology engaged in a significant cross-country research study on poverty and homelessness in 2009 which concluded that the eradication of poverty must be a priority. The report was a call to action that recognized the cost of poverty on society as well as government, and responded with 74 recommendations for the federal government to rectify this “unacceptable situation”.⁴⁴ The first recommendation was for the federal government to adopt a ‘core poverty eradication goal’, followed by the call for a federal housing strategy.⁴⁵ Moreover, the Committee found that *“Canadians are tired of jurisdictional disputes among various levels of governments, and expect that all three levels of government will work together to provide the requisites for worthwhile living for all Canadians.”*⁴⁶ The Committee agreed with this sentiment.

30. A year later in 2010, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (the “HUMA Committee”) released a second comprehensive cross-Canada report that supported these recommendations. This report received little attention by the current government.

31. Members of Parliament (elected officials) in the House of Commons have struck an **all-party Anti-Poverty Caucus** the aim of which is to identify substantive solutions to poverty through collaboration with parliamentarians, civil society and community leaders. They recently helped Canada Without Poverty and our partners launch our National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada. Several MPs have also tried to introduce legislation that would allow for federal leadership on these issues.

⁴² See: Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, “Human Rights Responsibilities of Subnational National Governments in the Context of Housing”

⁴³ Collin, Chantal. “Poverty Reduction in Canada – The Federal Role,” Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament. PRB 07-22E. 23 October 2007.

⁴⁴ Hon. Art Eggleton and the Hon. Hugh Segal (2009), *“In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness, Executive Summary”*, Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, p.1.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.2.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 212.

32. These reports and this initiative clearly indicate that elected Members of Parliament and other federal level public servants understand that they and the federal government have a role to play – alongside the provinces and territories and municipalities – in addressing poverty and homelessness in this country.

33. As it stands **most provinces and territories (save British Columbia) have adopted provincial poverty-reduction strategies**. To date none of these strategies are based in international human rights law and obligations, and none use human rights standards or principles to monitor or measure success.

34. Overall, the national level government has refused to exercise its obligations under international human rights law to ensure sub-national poverty reduction strategies and other sub-national policies and programs dealing with housing, hunger and poverty are in keeping with Canada's obligations. While the Continuing Committee of Human Rights Officials meets twice a year, there are no opportunities or structures to ensure interaction between sub-national level policy and programs and Canada's international human rights obligations.

IV. What has the GOC done since the CESCR's last review of Canada to address poverty, homelessness and hunger in Canada?

35. We have seen little legislative or policy developments to indicate that the national level government is interested in addressing poverty, hunger or homelessness. **In fact, the GOC has, since the last review, undertaken a number of measures that are not in compliance with their obligations under the ICESCR including, inter alia:**

1. **Restrictions on the political activities of charities through the *Income Tax Act*.** Section 149.1 (6.2) of the Income Tax Act has increasingly become an impediment for charitable groups to properly exercise their mandate to pursue the relief of poverty and to provide a voice for people living in poverty in policy discussions within government and in public fora.

Section 149.1 (6.2) of the Act limits the "political activities" of a charitable organization to 10%. A political activity has been interpreted by the Canada Revenue Agency to mean advocating for a change to a law, policy or program; and encouraging the public to take action to change a law, policy or program.

Since 2012, the Government of Canada has earmarked substantial resources – close to \$14 million dollars – to audit charities. Audits are aimed at assessing if charities are trying to eradicate poverty (which is apparently forbidden) and if they are spending too much of their time attempting to change laws and policies that contribute to poverty and other social issues. A negative audit can result in the revocation of an organization's charitable status.

Of course, as this Committee has referenced, the most effective means to relieve poverty in Canada at the present time is to ensure that Canada complies with its international human rights obligations under the ICESCR. Of course to do so, this will require changes to those policies and laws that contribute to poverty in Canada and the adoption of new measures. However, under Canada's Income Tax Act, an organization that devotes itself to ensure the implementation of the ICESCR domestically, such as CWP, by advocating changes to laws and policies risks losing their charitable status. Most charitable organizations rely on charitable donations to fund organizational activities and programs, so charitable revocation will likely cause the demise of the organization.

Having properly resourced organizations to advocate for policy and legislative change that addresses the otherwise neglected interests of poor people is essential to upholding their Article 11 rights. It is also vital to our parliamentary democracy, providing an otherwise non-existent vehicle of expression for poor people, by promoting a more balanced discussion of federal policies and programmes related to the relief of poverty.

2. **Restrictions of Access to Welfare Benefits for Refugees.** Canada recently removed protections for vulnerable persons to access social assistance benefits. In December 2014, the national government passed Bill C-43, provisions 172 and 173 of which remove a key national standard which protected refugees from a requirement that they be residents for a period of time before applying for social assistance. By removing this protection for refugees to access social assistance, the national government acted retrogressively in terms of their responsibilities under Article 11.
3. **Changes to Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement that raised the age of eligibility from 65 to 67 over the next decade.** Once heralded as a success for poverty reduction, these changes will prolong poverty for those on social assistance, and are of particular concern to

Canadians with disabilities who disproportionately live in poverty. It is anticipated that this change will lead to a reversal of the successful poverty reduction efforts for seniors, which now has the lowest poverty level of any vulnerable group at 5.3%.⁴⁷

4. **Elimination of the mandatory long form Statistics Canada census.**

Statistics Canada produces statistics that help Canadians better understand their country - its population, resources, economy, society and culture. It provides accurate and reliable information. Over the decades, Stats Can has gained a reputation as one of the most reliable sources of statistical information in the world, thanks in part to its mandatory long-form census. Despite protests from all sectors of society and testimony from the country's two most senior statisticians, the GOC eliminated the mandatory long form census. The Canadian Human Rights Commission recently suggested that without the long form census it will be impossible for Canada to measure and report on any progress it has made in addressing inequalities, and will make it difficult for Canada to fulfill key international human rights obligations, including its reporting requirements for the UPR and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The long-form census was replaced with the National Household Survey. The reply rate for the new instrument was very low and many statisticians do not find the data to be accurate or reliable, particularly for smaller communities and neighbourhoods.⁴⁸

5. **The defunding and closing down of the National Council of Welfare (NCW) in the June 2012 budget.** Since 1962, the National Council of Welfare had held up a mirror to the nation, highlighting the pockets of poverty and warning policy-makers of the consequences of neglecting those in need. The NCW was specifically mandated to report to the minister and was unique in its research collection and reporting providing accurate pan-Canadian data that was used by various organizations. The NCW also had the statutory authority to create opportunities for the poor to participate in the national decision-making process.⁴⁹ The elimination of the NCW essentially ends national reporting and monitoring on the depth and breadth of poverty in Canada. **The loss of important information gathering will leave a noticeable gap in the current knowledge regarding poverty in**

⁴⁷ Statistics Canada (2012), "Table 3: Percentage of persons in low income (1992 base after-tax income low income cut-offs)", <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/120618/t120618b003-eng.htm>

⁴⁸ <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/experts-debate-how-much-national-household-survey-statistics-count/article11743163/>

⁴⁹ See: Carol Goar, Harper Throws National Council on Welfare on the scrap heap, Toronto Star, 12 April 2012, <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/1160732--harper-throws-national-council-of-welfare-on-the-scrap-heap>

Canada. Such substantive reporting on social wellbeing is necessary in order to not only identify the cross-Canada trends and emerging issues, but also to help map out regional needs and develop targeted solutions.

6. **Refusal to support proposed framework legislation to address poverty and homelessness in Canada that would have implemented Canada's international human rights obligations in this regard.** Bill C-400, *An Act to Ensure Secure, Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing for Canadians*, and Bill C-233, *An Act to Eliminate Poverty in Canada*, were reintroduced into parliament. Despite the fact that Bill C-400 had all-opposition party support as well as the support of civil society, church groups, and Aboriginal representation, the government made it clear to its members that the Bill should be voted down. It was defeated in February 2013. Bill C-233 remains in the parliamentary system but is not being pushed forward as it, in all likelihood, will suffer the same fate as Bill C-400.

V. Questions for consideration for the List of Issues

In light of Canada's federal system, we ask the CESCR to consider Canada's obligations under Article 28 of the ICESCR when setting the List of Issues. We have underscored this in our suggested questions where appropriate.

Article 7.a.ii

36. **What is the Government's position on the rate at which minimum wage should be set? What is it doing to encourage subnational governments (provinces and territories) to set minimum wages so that workers can make "a decent living" in compliance with the ICESCR?**

37. **What is the Government's plan to ensure that its job creation programs are focused on increasing the number of stable, full-time jobs with social benefits and that pay a living wage?**

Articles 2(1) and 11 (1) Adequate Standard of Living, Right to Adequate Housing, Right to Food

38. **In light of the special allocation of funding for the audits of charitable organizations regarding "political activities", what measures is the government of Canada taking to ensure that organizations relying on charitable donations to promote the relief of poverty in Canada are not restricted in their ability to promote changes to**

law or policy necessary for compliance with the ICESCR, in particular with respect to article 2(1) and 11.

39. What is the Government and its subnational counterparts (provinces and territories) doing to ensure that social assistance rates determined by provinces and territories are set at decent levels and in compliance with the Governments' article 11 obligations under the Covenant?

40. What steps has the State Party taken to implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food? How does the State Party intend to appropriately measure their success, particularly in Northern Canada?

41. The Government has been told repeatedly by the CESCR and other UN human rights bodies that it should adopt both a national housing and a national anti-poverty strategy. To avoid jurisdictional concerns raised by the Government in previous reviews, this could be achieved in concert and collaboratively with subnational governments responsible for housing and anti-poverty initiatives. There have been several opportunities for the Government to do so since the last review through legislative initiatives but none to date have been taken up. In light of this, can the Government please explain why it has chosen not to develop a national housing strategy or national anti poverty strategy based in human rights in collaboration with subnational governments?

42. What steps has the Government and its subnational counterparts taken to ensure that housing and "poverty reduction strategies" that have been adopted at the regional and local levels are in compliance with their international human rights obligations?

43. Since the elimination of the long form census, and the closing of the National Council of Welfare, Canada no longer has reliable, valid data that measures and monitors poverty and social assistance nationally. Does Canada intend to restore the mandatory long form census and reinstate the National Council on Welfare? If not, how will the Government ensure poverty, social assistance rates, and other social and economic disadvantage is accurately measured and monitored?

44. How does the Government justify the passing of legislation that permits provinces to take retrogressive measures by denying refugees access to social assistance, in light of the Government's Article 11(1) obligations?