



JUSTICE, DIGNITY & EQUALITY

A HUMAN RIGHTS PLATFORM

vote *for*
rights.

CALL TO ACTION

The next federal government in Canada must make justice, dignity, and equality its foundational principles. The stakes have never been higher, and the challenges are immense.

Urgent action is needed on Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ rights, racial justice, refugee protection, corporate accountability, climate change, the housing crisis, growing inequality, and the international arms trade.

More than the sum of its parts, this call to action represents a human rights platform. It is an opportunity for the next government to ensure that justice, dignity, and equality are not just ideals but at the core of its policies.



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make justice, dignity, and equality
its foundational principles. The
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and the challenges are immense.*



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01

ADVANCING INDIGENOUS RIGHTS & SELF-DETERMINATION

Photo by Amnesty International

**Indigenous children remain
disproportionately
represented in Canada's
child welfare system.**



Indian Act Discrimination & Self-Determination

The Indian Act, designed to assimilate and eradicate Indigenous People and governance structures, contains discriminatory provisions relating to membership, particularly against Indigenous women. Although provisions of the Indian Act have been amended after the court challenge on sex-based discrimination, Indigenous women and their children remain greatly impacted. The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples found that provisions under the Indian Act violate the right to equal protection under the law and discriminate based on sex and the right to culture.

The federal government continuing to decide who is a Status Indian under the Indian Act is in breach of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, article 33, by denying Indigenous Peoples the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a fundamental principle requiring that Indigenous Peoples grant or withhold consent before projects affecting their lands, territories or resources proceed.

Canada's Action Plan to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples does not fully incorporate FPIC, creating gaps in accountability for government and corporate activities that impact Indigenous lands. Failure to uphold FPIC undermines Indigenous governance and environmental stewardship, violating Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Child Welfare

Indigenous children remain disproportionately represented in Canada's child welfare system. According to Census 2021, 53.8% of children in foster care are Indigenous, but only 7.7% of children in Canada are Indigenous. This crisis continues the historical pattern of forced child removal rooted in systemic discrimination.

In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that Canada discriminates against First Nations children by underfunding child welfare services. Despite the ruling, systemic inequities persist. Jordan's Principle, which mandates that First Nations children receive essential services without denial, delay or disruption, remains underfunded, with nearly 140,000 cases in backlog. The federal government has also attempted to narrow the eligibility criteria.

Residential Schools Investigations and Records

In May 2021, a discovery of unmarked graves at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School revealed long-suspected evidence of abuses committed in Canada's residential school system. Many positive steps were taken by the federal government, initially committing to funding the search of residential schools and a national advisory committee for unmarked graves. However, recently the government decided to end funding for the national advisory committee and capped the funding for residential school searches, a decision it later reversed. In addition, Canada is continuing legal battles with residential school survivors in court. These actions re-traumatize survivors and perpetuate residential school denialism.

The Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat announced that testimonies and other records gathered for residential school investigations will be destroyed in 2027, unless individuals request that their testimony be archived. This action, affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada, reduces the ability to examine systemic systems that led to the abuses and future attempts to examine criminal wrongdoing.

Photo by Artur Widak/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Culture and Language

The suppression of Indigenous languages was a core tactic of colonial policies, including residential schools and the forced separation of Indigenous children from their families. Indigenous languages have been steadily declining over time.

In 2021, 13.1% of the Indigenous population reported being able to speak an Indigenous language well enough to conduct a conversation. Language is central to Indigenous identity governance and cultural continuity, yet many Indigenous languages remain critically endangered due to historical and ongoing government actions.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

Indigenous women continue to face disproportionately high rates of violence, compounded by systemic racism in law enforcement. For instance, during the raid by RCMP on Wet'suwet'en territory, Indigenous women defenders experienced human rights violations, including gender-based racial slurs. Such incidents highlight the ongoing patterns of discrimination and the criminalization of Indigenous women who assert their rights.





RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.0** Eliminate all discrimination and erasure provisions under the Indian Act and recognize and support First Nations' rights to self-determination and their authority to define their own citizenship laws.
- 1.1** Uphold Indigenous Peoples' right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent and incorporate FPIC into Canadian law.
- 1.2** Implement systemic reforms to eliminate the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care, prioritizing family reunification including guaranteed long-term, equitable, and sustainable funding for Indigenous child welfare organizations.
- 1.3** Clear the Jordan's Principle backlog and ensure continued access to services.
- 1.4** Ensure residential school site investigations and the National Advisory Committee for unmarked graves receive sufficient funding.
- 1.5** Ensure that investigations into potential criminal activities at residential schools are treated as criminal investigations, with full disclosure from government and evidentiary support.
- 1.6** Fully implement the Indigenous Languages Act and ensure Indigenous languages receive official status.
- 1.7** Provide sustained, long-term funding for Indigenous language programs, including immersion schools and community-driven initiatives.
- 1.8** Establish independent, Indigenous-led investigations into MMIWG cases and ensure law enforcement accountability for negligence and discrimination.
- 1.9** Provide long-term, sustainable funding for MMIWG initiatives, including search efforts, victim support programs and prevention measures.



02



HATE HAS
NO HOME HERE

THE NOTWITHSTANDING
CLAUSE & GENDER RIGHTS

The Notwithstanding Clause

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees fundamental rights. Yet the increasing use of Section 33, the notwithstanding clause, threatens these protections. The notwithstanding clause prevents courts from overturning laws that unjustifiably violate certain rights protected by the Charter, such as the right to equality. Governments are increasingly using it to undermine key rights and bypass judicial oversight.

Governments have invoked the notwithstanding clause to put limitations on third-party political expression during elections, prohibit education workers from striking, ban public-sector workers from wearing religious symbols, and deny transgender students the right to use their chosen names and pronouns in schools without formal parental permission.

Governments continue to threaten fundamental rights, and if they can easily override the Charter, they likely will not hesitate to do so, making fundamental rights meaningless. Ontario Premier Doug Ford recently suggested invoking the notwithstanding clause to clear homeless encampments.

The federal government must commit to not using the notwithstanding clause to override Charter rights. It must also work with provinces to limit their use of it, ensuring Canada upholds its international human rights obligations.

The Use of the Notwithstanding Clause to Override 2SLGBTQIA+ Rights

Across Canada, governments have introduced or passed laws that undermine the rights of transgender people, particularly trans youth. These measures restrict access to gender-affirming care, limit the rights of students in schools, and exclude trans individuals from public spaces.

Saskatchewan passed Bill 137, which requires students under 16 to obtain parental consent before using gender-affirming names and pronouns in schools. To shield this discriminatory law, the province invoked the notwithstanding clause, overriding Charter protections and preventing courts from striking it down.

Alberta has proposed a set of anti-trans laws. The Education Amendment Act requires parental consent for name or pronoun changes at school and for lessons on gender identity and sexual education. The Health Statutes Amendment Act bans gender-affirming care for children under 16, with Premier Danielle Smith openly stating that she will invoke the notwithstanding clause if courts find the law unconstitutional. The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act bars transgender athletes from women's amateur sports.

Quebec has also taken steps against trans inclusion, with a government directive banning the construction of shared gender-neutral bathrooms in public schools. Meanwhile, federal Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre has publicly stated trans women have no space in women's bathrooms, changing rooms, shelters and sporting competition.

While many provinces are rolling back trans rights, New Brunswick recently updated Policy 713, which previously restricted trans students from using their chosen names and pronouns without parental consent. Other provinces should follow New Brunswick's example.





RECOMMENDATIONS

2.0

The federal government must commit to not using the notwithstanding clause to override Charter-protected rights. It must also work with provinces to limit their use of it.

2.1

Governments across Canada must rescind laws that undermine fundamental rights, including those that target minorities. New laws must align with the Charter's purpose of safeguarding rights.

2.2

Canada must commit to ensuring that all levels of government respect and uphold Charter rights for all individuals, without exception.

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03

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RACIAL JUSTICE

Photo by Cole Burston/Getty Images



Photo by Cole Burston/Getty Images

Employment Equity Act (EEA)

In December 2023, the Canadian government released the [report](#) from the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force, which outlined a commitment to modernize the [Employment Equity Act \(EEA\)](#). Among the proposed changes was the creation of two new designated groups under the Act: Black People and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. The report offered concrete, evidence-based recommendations to inform these updates.

While the government acknowledged the importance of the report and expressed an intention to use it as a foundation for change, it has yet to take meaningful legislative action to update the EEA. Despite years of work and the Task Force's clear recommendations, the government has chosen to delay modernization efforts, opting instead for further consultations with affected communities rather than proceeding with the necessary legislative updates.

Black Class Action

Black federal public service workers who were denied hiring and promotion opportunities launched a proposed class action against the Government of Canada seeking justice for decades of systemic discrimination. The Black Class Action Secretariat called the recent dismissal of the action by a federal court judge a "disappointment" but noted this is not the end of their "fight for justice."

The court hearing coincided with the release of a damning [report](#) on the experiences of Black federal employees. The Study on the Black Executive Community in the Federal Public Service, authored by Dr. Rachel Zellars, documented accounts from over 60 current and former Black executives. The report revealed widespread experiences of harassment, intimidation, racist remarks, violence, denial of career advancement, excessive workloads, and other systemic barriers. Many Black executives also faced unfounded accusations of workplace misconduct, including insubordination and bullying, all of which were disproven after investigations.

The report, shared with members of the Black Executives Network (BEN) and deputy ministers in the government, highlighted the emotional, psychological, and physical toll on Black executives and their families.

Hosting the UNPFAD in Canada

On 17 December 2024, the [Second International Decade for People of African Descent was proclaimed](#), offering a chance to address the legacies of enslavement and colonialism, pursue reparatory justice, and uphold the rights and freedoms of people of African descent globally. The first International Decade raised awareness about anti-Black racism and the rights of people of African descent but failed to drive transformative change due to insufficient political will and investment.

Amnesty International Canada and the Black Canadian Civil Society Coalition (BCCSC) are partnering to host the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (UNPFAD) for a consultative meeting in Canada. This significant event will take place across four major cities: Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax.

The primary objective of the consultation is to gather recommendations and feedback on the draft UN Declaration on the Human Rights of People of African Descent. This process will provide a vital platform for Black civil society organizations, human rights defenders, activists, and youth leaders from across Canada to share their insights and perspectives on the thematic areas identified by the Permanent Forum.



RECOMMENDATIONS

3.0

Appoint a Black Equity Commissioner as an independent officer of Parliament.

3.1

Immediately legislate and modernize the EEA by including Black people and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals as equity-deserving groups of people.

3.2

Ensure that all Black workers who were excluded from hiring and promotion opportunities because of systemic discrimination receive effective remedies. Such remedies should acknowledge past injustices, provide meaningful reparations, and commit to systemic reforms that address anti-Black racism in the federal public service.

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3.4

Investigate complaints received in a timely manner, enforce anti-discrimination policies, and ensure fair career advancement opportunities for Black employees. Conduct regular audits and public reporting on progress made to address the challenges faced by Black employees.

3.5

Support the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent. Demonstrate leadership by actively participating in consultative meetings. Share detailed insights on the measures Canada has undertaken, as well as future commitments, to address the needs and rights of people of African descent.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



04

RIGHTS OF REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

Photo by Herika Martinez/AFP via Getty Images



**People sent back to the U.S.
by Canada are at risk of
being deported to face
torture or other abuses.**

Canadian authorities must combat anti-refugee and anti-migrant discrimination. They must refrain from discriminatory discourse, such as implying that migrants are to blame for the increasing cost of living, which is the result of policy failures. While governments have the right to design immigration policies, they cannot do so in a manner that violates migrants' and refugees' rights.

Safe Third Country Agreement

Canada must withdraw from the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) given the dire situation facing refugees in the U.S. The Agreement bars most people crossing into Canada via the U.S. from seeking refugee protection in Canada, based on the premise that the U.S. will fairly assess their claim for protection. People sent back to the U.S. are at high risk of detention in conditions that violate international standards. Families with children have reportedly been detained at U.S. ports of entry for up to two weeks after being rejected by Canada. These ports of entry do not have beds or adequate meal services and are particularly inappropriate for children.

People sent back to the U.S. by Canada are at risk of being deported to face torture or other abuses. The Trump administration's increasingly cruel policies targeting asylum seekers have amplified concerns about the safety of asylum seekers that Canada forcibly removes to the U.S., and about the constitutionality of Canada's participation in the STCA.

Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Canada must overhaul the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). Tens of thousands of people come to Canada each year under the TFWP and carry out essential work in many sectors, including food-processing, caregiving, construction, and hospitality. Instead of being treated the same as Canadians, they receive a closed work permit that ties them to a single employer, who controls their immigration status and labour conditions.

TFWP workers experience many abuses because of the closed work permit, including wage theft, verbal, physical, sexual and psychological abuse, unsafe working conditions which sometimes lead to injury or illness; discrimination; and inadequate housing. They struggle to access justice, as they risk loss of income, non-renewal of their contract, unfair dismissal and other reprisals if they complain. The TFWP targets racialized migrant workers from low- and middle-income countries, who then face insurmountable barriers to accessing permanent residence, putting them at prolonged risk of labour exploitation.

Immigration Detention

Canada must immediately stop using jails and prisons for immigration detention and work to abolish immigration detention, by investing in rights-respecting and community-based alternatives to detention. Canada continues to detain refugee claimants and migrants for an indefinite period based solely on administrative (non-criminal) grounds, most commonly because they believe that the person may not appear for examination, a hearing, or removal. People in immigration detention suffer serious abuses, including discrimination and separation from their families. Some develop suicidal ideation. At least 17 people have died while in immigration detention.

Canada uses criminal justice facilities for immigration detention, which is a violation of international human rights standards. All provinces committed to ending immigration detention in their jails, but Canada responded with plans to use federal prisons. Canada recently asked the provinces to use their jails for immigration detention once again, referring to people as "criminal asylum seekers" even though people in immigration detention are not detained for criminal charges, and it is not a crime to seek asylum.

Access to Healthcare

Canada must provide healthcare essential to prevent a reasonably foreseeable risk of loss of life or irreversible negative health consequences to people with irregular immigration status. It was ordered to do so by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, as the failure to provide such care violates the right to life and equality.





RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.0** Combat anti-refugee and anti-migrant stigma and stop scapegoating refugees and migrants.
- 4.1** Cease removals under and withdraw from the STCA.
- 4.2** Abolish closed work permits and grant open work permits under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
- 4.3** Eliminate discrimination from Canada's immigration system so that people who fill low-wage jobs can access permanent immigration.
- 4.4** End the use of jails and prisons for immigration detention. Work to abolish immigration detention by investing in rights-respecting and community-based alternatives to detention.
- 4.5** Amend the Interim Federal Health Program so that people with irregular immigration status can access essential healthcare.

05

CANADA'S #1 FOSSIL BANK

DIVEST NOW

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Persecution of Human Rights and Environmental Defenders

Canadian companies have a responsibility to respect human rights. However, they often avoid fulfilling this responsibility because binding rules do not exist, and because companies structure their global operations to avoid liability.

The consequences are dire. Canadian multinationals and importers are implicated in widespread and egregious human rights abuses and environmental destruction. And they have been for many years. The abuses include killings, sexual violence, water contamination, land grabs, and forced labour. From the food we eat, to the clothes we wear, to the metals in our phones, we are all implicated.

Human rights and environmental defenders who stand up to powerful corporations frequently face violence, intimidation, and/or criminalization. Indigenous communities, women, and racialized people are disproportionately impacted. And it is often very difficult for communities and workers harmed by Canadian companies to access justice or remedy abroad or in Canada.

Canada Enables Human Rights Violations Abroad

While Canada claims to take its international obligations seriously, it has failed to implement mechanisms to ensure that companies respect human rights and the environment abroad and to ensure impacted communities and workers have access to justice. Instead, Canada has relied almost exclusively on voluntary approaches to address corporate human rights abuses. Evidence shows that voluntary approaches do not work.

Internationally, Canada has blocked progress towards a binding United Nations treaty to regulate the human rights impacts of transnational corporations. If enacted, such a treaty would require all state parties to prevent companies based in their jurisdictions from being involved in human rights abuses anywhere they operate.

Finally, the Canadian government promotes and supports the international operations of Canadian companies — including companies linked to serious human rights violations and environmental destruction, even the killing of human rights defenders. This can include providing embassy and diplomatic support and direct financial backing, among other forms of support.

Canada Owes Justice to Communities Around the World

Communities and workers around the world have called on the Canadian government to finally hold its companies accountable. Several jurisdictions around the world have now enacted, or are in the process of developing, enforceable legislation to prevent and remedy corporate abuse. It is long past time for Canada to follow suit with strong measures to ensure companies respect human rights and impacted people have access to justice.





RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.0** Pass mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation. Such legislation would require Canadian companies, and companies importing goods into Canada, to respect human rights and the environment throughout their global operations and supply chains. It would also give people who are harmed by Canadian companies abroad the right to access justice in Canadian courts.
- 5.1** Commit to creating an effective and independent watchdog for Canadian companies abroad. To do this, Canada must give the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) — currently a toothless office — real investigatory powers. Canada must also finally make the office independent of government and give the office a comprehensive mandate covering all business sectors.
- 5.2** Fulfill Canada’s international obligations to protect human rights defenders. Ensure Canadian government support does not go to companies who fail to respect human rights and the environment. Support progress towards a legally binding international mechanism to end corporate abuse by supporting the passage of a strong United Nations treaty on business and human rights.



06

CLIMATE CHANGE
& JUSTICE



Fossil Fuels

Fossil fuels are the unequivocal source of this crisis. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the continued exploitation and expansion of oil, coal and gas have already had profound and cascading impacts across the full spectrum of human rights. From extraction to combustion, the detrimental human rights impact of Canada's fossil fuel-based economy is well documented. 'Man-camps' housing thousands of oil sands workers, as well as other resource extraction (oil, gas, mining) projects, have been associated with increased and systemic violence against Indigenous women, prompting the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to further investigate the relationship between longstanding resource extraction projects and violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Canada's longstanding campaign of surveillance against Wet'suwet'en land defenders is also intimately linked to the fossil fuel economy.

Human Rights and the Environment

While the human right to a healthy environment is a universally recognized fundamental human right that has recently been enshrined in federal legislation, violence against environmental defenders continues to rise. Human rights and the environment are interdependent. A healthy environment is necessary for the full realization of a range of human rights, such as the rights to life and water. Yet the human right to a healthy environment cannot be achieved without upholding other fundamental human rights, such as the right to free speech, the right to protest, the right to health, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, alongside robust environmental protections.

Extreme Weather Events and Climate Disasters

Extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change and the burning of fossil fuels are displacing a greater number of communities all over Canada each year, with a disproportionate impact on the health and socio-economic conditions of children, women, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups. In a world dangerously off track to meet global temperature goals, costs related to climate disasters are expected to rise to an estimated \$25 billion by 2025. With Canada warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, and the Canadian Arctic warming four times as fast, human rights to life, health, food, water, housing, education, decent work, cultural rights, and the right to a healthy environment are all at unprecedented risk.





6.0

Reduce emissions to support the global effort to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

- Fulfill Canada's legal duty to protect the climate system, as per state obligations under the Paris Agreement on climate change, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United Nations' human rights treaties, and customary international law.
- Defend, strengthen, and build on climate policies that are delivering emissions reductions and commit to a credible plan for achieving Canada's legislated emissions-reduction target.
- Pursue policies to achieve net-zero electricity by 2035 and support fossil fuel phaseout.

6.1

Help communities increase resiliency in the face of climate change.

- Fund and implement Canada's Adaptation Strategy.
- Scale up Canada's contribution to international climate financing for vulnerable, lower-income countries.

6.2

Hold polluters accountable.

- Cap and cut fossil fuel sector emissions to ensure Canada's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions does its fair share.
- Close loopholes in Canada's new framework for phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and end all public financing of fossil fuels.
- Prevent greenwashing and ban fossil fuel advertising.
- Require major polluters to help pay for damages caused by the climate crisis.

6.3

Uphold the right to a healthy environment.

- Advocate for the better protection of environmental human rights and the protection of environmental and land defenders.
- Advance environmental justice and the protection of climate-vulnerable groups in Canada by: (1) developing and implementing a robust national strategy to promote efforts across Canada to advance environmental justice and to assess, prevent, and address environmental racism; and (2) establishing an Environmental Justice office to ensure ongoing institutional capacity to community supports to deliver on this mandate.
- Pursue effective implementation of the new right to a healthy environment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and expand the right to apply under other federal laws.



THE NATIONAL
RIGHT TO HOUSING
NETWORK

07

**CANADA'S HOUSING
CRISIS IS A HUMAN
RIGHTS CRISIS**

Housing is A Fundamental Human Right

In Canada's National Housing Strategy Act (NHTA), the Canadian government formally recognizes housing as a fundamental human right. The NHTA commits to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in alignment with international human rights law. Yet, the country remains in a deepening housing crisis, with homelessness on the rise and a lack of housing affordability disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. At least 235,000 people experience homelessness annually. Renters are twice as likely as homeowners to experience unaffordable housing, with young renters (ages 25-29) most affected.

Housing for Marginalized Communities

Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities, persons with disabilities, newcomers, and women face compounded housing barriers due to systemic discrimination and inequitable policies. People with disabilities are more likely to experience homelessness because of violence or abuse, and these figures were even higher for women with disabilities. Northern and remote Indigenous communities are facing some of the most egregious human rights violations in Canada. Of racialized non-permanent resident children, 35.1% lived in core housing need, a rate almost twice as high as for non-racialized, non-permanent resident children (19.2%), almost three times as high as for racialized children born in Canada (12.1%), and almost six times as high as for non-racialized children born in Canada (6.5%).

Rights-Based Housing

The NHTA establishes human rights accountability mechanisms, including the Federal Housing Advocate, based at the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The Advocate can receive submissions and conduct independent reviews, such as the recent examination of government responses to encampments and the Métis housing crisis in Saskatchewan. Additionally, the Advocate can refer systemic housing issues to a review panel—an open hearing led by three members of the National Housing Council.

Recent panels have examined the financialization of purpose-built rental housing, with an upcoming review focused on the government's failure to prevent homelessness among women, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit people.

Despite the adoption of the NHTA, federal policies, programs, and investments have yet to fully align with Canada's human rights commitments. Recent proposals in Canada's 2024 Housing Plan reflect a rights-based framework that prioritizes those in greatest need, establishes clear targets and timelines, and ensures accountability. For example, the federal government should be commended on recent efforts to: fund tenant organizing through the Tenant Protection Fund; protect renter rights through the Renters' Bill of Rights; through the Encampment Response Fund, support municipalities that invoke rights-based responses to encampments; invest in the new Rental Protection Fund, which will enable non-market housing providers to buy and preserve affordable homes that are rapidly being lost across Canada; and invest in the \$1.5-billion Co-operative Housing Development Program and the \$4.3-billion Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.



Photo by Richard Lautens/
Toronto Star via Getty Images



7.0

Strengthen federal leadership on homelessness and housing precarity.

- Appoint a Special Advisor on Homelessness and Encampments to oversee a national, interjurisdictional plan to prevent and respond to homelessness, ensuring municipalities align their policies with the NHTA.
- Increase investments in homelessness programs by an additional \$3.5 billion annually, in line with the Parliamentary Budget Officer's recommendations, to meet clear human rights-based targets for ending homelessness.
- Ensure that Canada's new Housing Plan upholds the NHTA's commitments by integrating it into the National Housing Strategy and aligning all programs with the right to housing.
- Ensure the immediate release of the \$2.8 billion for an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy to a national Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous housing organization.

7.1

Protect and expand affordable and non-market housing.

- Increase investments in non-market housing to match average funding for social housing by other OECD Countries.
- Double the proportion of non-market rental housing from 3.5% to 6.9% of Canada's total housing stock by 2034.
- Secure existing affordable rental homes through an accelerated, sector-led Canada Rental Protection Fund.

7.2

Implement national standards for renters' rights.

- Adopt the Renters' Bill of Rights as enforceable National Tenant Rights Standards, ensuring provinces meet federal core standards — including vacancy control, rent control, eviction protections, accessibility, and legal supports — to receive housing funding.
- Increase investment in the Tenant Protection Fund to support tenant advocacy organizations and legal services for renters facing discrimination and displacement.
- Ensure enforcement and accountability mechanisms to uphold tenant protections, including a right to organize, a right to timely repairs, and protections against unjust evictions.

7.3

Address systemic barriers to housing for marginalized groups.

- Ensure that at least 25% of federal housing investments support women-focused affordable housing projects, in line with Canada's NHTA commitments.
- Adopt gender-responsive budgeting for housing policies, prioritizing women, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit individuals, particularly Indigenous women facing heightened risks of homelessness and violence.
- Expand disability-inclusive housing policies by aligning the National Housing Strategy with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ensuring accessible, supportive housing for people with disabilities.

7.4

Prevent and reverse the financialization of housing.

- Implement recommendations from the Federal Review Panel's review on financialization, including stronger protections against corporate landlords raising rents and evicting tenants for profit.
- Strengthen regulation of institutional investors in rental housing to curb the erosion of affordability and security for tenants.

08



**POVERTY & INEQUALITY
IN CANADA: A CRISIS WE
CAN NO LONGER IGNORE**



Sixty-five billionaires hold a staggering \$496.76 billion in wealth, while 3.8 million Canadians struggle to meet basic needs.

Wealth Inequality

In Canada, wealth inequality continues to increase at alarming levels. Sixty-five billionaires hold a staggering \$496.76 billion in wealth, while 3.8 million Canadians struggle to meet basic needs. Canadians struggle with harsh realities such as rising grocery prices, unaffordable housing, and growing reliance on food banks. Behind these statistics are real people — parents skipping meals to feed their children, people juggling multiple jobs to stay afloat and Indigenous communities fighting to protect their ancestral lands, values, and cultures.

Living in Poverty

Those living in poverty are being forced to make tough decisions to survive. Over the past few years, the rising cost of living has pushed many Canadians to the edge, especially women and girls who account for the majority of people living in poverty. With 21% of them living in inadequate housing, lone-parent households — the majority of which are women-led — are most likely to be precariously housed. Since 2021, the number of children living in poverty has increased at historic rates, reaching about 1.4 million. The 30% of women living with a disability in Canada are twice as likely to live in poverty than the rest of the population. The poverty rate in racialized communities is 11% — almost double the rate for non-racialized communities (6%).

Growing Inequality Not Inevitable

Growing inequality is not inevitable. It stems from policies and systems that prioritize corporate profits, the ultra-rich and the legacy of colonialism over the well-being of ordinary Canadians. In 2024, billionaire wealth increased by \$309 million per day. Yet, this wealth concentration is not rooted in merit or entrepreneurship. Rather, 61% of Canadian billionaires' wealth is either from crony or monopolistic sources or inherited. Worst of all, the 39% of unearned inherited wealth is going untaxed.

This inequality is more than statistics — it is about lives shaped by systems that prioritize profit over people. It is the outcome of deliberate decisions, and it can be undone with both actions and systemic change. Canada has to act now to radically and rapidly reduce inequality, decolonize the economy and invest in poverty reduction by taxing the ultra-rich and ending extreme wealth and power concentration in the hands of a few. Canada has the opportunity to be a country where wealth is shared, not hoarded, and where dignity and opportunity are rights, not privileges.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.0** Ensure Canadian corporations pay their fair share of taxes. Raise the federal corporate tax rate to 20% and implement a windfall profit tax for companies in all sectors generating oversized profits to stabilize Canada's affordability crisis.
- 8.1** Introduce a permanent wealth tax on the richest Canadians immediately. This tax should be at least 2% for wealth over \$5 million, 3% for wealth over \$50 million and 5% for wealth over \$1 billion. The government should introduce additional equality-boosting measures such as inheritance tax.
- 8.2** Commit to a public review of all federal tax loopholes for individuals and corporations, including the capital gain loophole. Modernize the general anti-avoidance rule regime to avoid corporate tax dodging via tax havens and support the negotiations for a UN tax convention.
- 8.3** Ensure stronger oversight of the grocery sector by the federal Competition Bureau to stabilize food prices and introduce windfall profits taxes on the industry's record profits.
- 8.4** Prioritize unique housing needs for low-income women and gender diverse people in federal investments and programs and commit to bring a stronger gender lens to the National Housing Strategy.
- 8.5** Introduce regulations under the new Canada Disability Benefits Act that reduce poverty for people with disabilities by ensuring benefits supplement existing supports rather than cause them to be clawed back.
- 8.6** Commit to remove barriers to eligibility and access to public supports and programs, particularly for people with precarious immigration status.



09

INTERNATIONAL
ARMS TRADE

In 2023, Canada exported more weapons (\$30.6 million) to Israel than ever before. This high point marked a trend since 2015 in which the value of Canadian arms transfers to Israel had increased nearly every year.

United Nations Arms Trade Treaty

Canada has flouted its international arms control obligations by transferring weapons to actors that pose a substantial risk of using those arms in serious human-rights violations. Canada has also failed to fully implement its arms control obligations under the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), to which it has been a party since September 2019. In 2023, the latest year for which data is available, nearly half (\$1.04 billion) of all of Canada's reported arms exports (\$2.143 billion) were destined for regimes considered to be authoritarian by international monitoring bodies.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy, was the largest non-U.S. recipient of Canadian weapons. Since the signing in 2014 of the Canada-Saudi arms deal, the largest in Canadian history, Canada has shipped \$11.4 billion in armaments to the Saudi monarchy, including hundreds of light armoured vehicles (LAVs). Saudi forces utilized Canadian LAVs during the Saudi-led intervention into the war in Yemen, a conflict that resulted in an estimated 377,000 deaths. This led the UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen to directly name Canada as a state perpetuating the conflict by continuing to provide arms to its belligerents.

Israel

In 2023, Canada exported more weapons (\$30.6 million) to Israel than ever before. This high point marked a trend since 2015 in which the value of Canadian arms transfers to Israel had increased nearly every year.

Following the October 7, 2023 attacks in Israel, Israel launched Operation Swords of Iron, which has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians. Israel faces credible allegations of committing serious violations of international humanitarian law throughout this operation, including instances that likely constitute war crimes. Under ATT Article 7(3), Canadian authorities are barred from transferring weapons when there is a substantial risk that they could be used in such abuses.

Photo by Mustafa Hassona/
Anadolu via Getty Images

In January 2024, Canada suspended new arms export approvals to Israel and later suspended approximately 30 existing export permits. These partial suspensions, however, omitted the majority of already-approved arms export authorizations, allowing them to proceed without restriction.

Canadian-made weapon systems also continue to be transferred first to the U.S. before being provided to the Israeli government. These goods include components for the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, which Israel used in its sweeping bombardment of Gaza during Operation Swords of Iron. As of April 2025, Project Ploughshares estimates that approximately \$130.2 million in Canadian technology has so far been integrated into Israeli F-35s; almost all this technology was routed through the U.S. without oversight from Canadian officials.

Türkiye

In January 2024, it was announced that Canada's policy to halt weapons exports to Türkiye would be overturned following a political agreement between Ottawa and Ankara. Canadian officials had barred the transfer of armaments to Türkiye since 2020, following the Turkish government's illicit diversion of Canadian-made drone technology to its ally Azerbaijan, which then utilized this technology in its invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh that year. Leading human-rights monitors found that Azerbaijan failed to distinguish between civilian and military objects in the invasion, launching indiscriminate air and ground attacks in violation of international humanitarian law.

Loopholes

Due to long-standing regulatory exemptions, Canada does not control most arms exports to the U.S., including military components that are rerouted to third parties, such as Israel. This loophole is a glaring violation of Canada's ATT obligations, which requires states parties to regulate all arms exports on a case-by-case basis to protect against their potential use in violations of international law.

Due to long-standing regulatory exemptions, Canada does not control most arms exports to the U.S., including military components that are rerouted to third parties, such as Israel.





RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.0** Revoke existing and halt further arms export authorizations to Saudi Arabia.
- 9.1** Revoke existing arms export authorizations to Israel and end indirect arms transfers to Israel through the U.S.
- 9.2** Reintroduce the presumptive denial policy on arms exports to Türkiye.
- 9.3** Close all regulatory loopholes that allow uncontrolled arms exports to the U.S. and fully incorporate all ATT provisions into Canadian law.

PARTNERS

