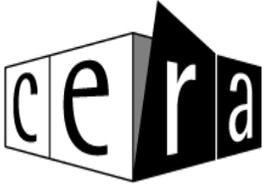




CANADA WITHOUT POVERTY
CANADA SANS PAUVRETÉ



Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Centre pour les droits à l'égalité au logement

**Submission to the Human Rights Council
On the Occasion of the 2nd Universal Periodic Review of Canada**

**Submitted By:
Canada Without Poverty (CWP) &
the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA)**

9 October 2012

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

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Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation – The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), founded in 1987, is the only organization in Canada dedicated to promoting human rights in housing and ending housing discrimination. CERA carries out this work through public education, research, law reform, human rights casework, test case litigation and by using international human rights law and mechanisms. CERA has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

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POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Between 3 million and 4.4 million people in Canada currently live in poverty.¹ Over 250,000 people are homeless.

The following brief is submitted by two leading NGOs focused on addressing poverty and homelessness in Canada: **Canada Without Poverty (CWP)** and the **Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA)**.

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

1. **Poverty and homelessness continue to be problems that are disproportionate to Canada's wealth and resources.** Unlike other developed nations, Canada has fared well during the recessionary period and boasted about having the strongest economic growth in comparison to other G7 nations.²

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.**³ 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.⁴ Over the last 20 years, while the richest group of Canadians increased its share of total national income, the poorest group lost share.

3. This is what poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity look like in Canada:

¹ Conference Board of Canada (2012), <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/hot-topics/canInequality.aspx>. There is no official poverty line in Canada. These figures are the most recent figures available (2010) and represent the different poverty measures established by Statistics Canada. The first figure is the **Low Income Cut-Off (LICO)**, the second, higher figure is the **Low Income Measure (LIM)**. The LICO is the income level below which a family would devote at least 20 percentage points more of their income on food, clothing, and shelter than an average family would. People are said to be in the low-income group if their income falls below this threshold. The threshold varies by family size and community size, as well as if income is calculated before or after taxes. For example, a single individual in Toronto would be said to be living in low income if his or her 2009 after-tax income was below \$18,421. The LIM is defined as half the median family income. A person whose income is below that level is said to be in low income. The LIM is adjusted for family size.

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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. **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. The United Nations has described housing and homelessness in Canada as a “national emergency”.⁵ **An estimated 250,000 people are homeless, with another 1.5 million living in inadequate housing, and/or facing a serious financial burden which threatens their housing security.**⁶

6. **Between 3.2 and 4.4 million people in Canada were living in poverty**, including 546,000 children under the age of 17.⁷ **A shocking 1 in 4 Indigenous peoples (Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit), are living in poverty.**⁸ **Close to 15% of people with disabilities are living in poverty, 59% of whom are women.**⁹

7. **According to UNICEF, Canada now ranks 24th out of 35 countries in terms of child poverty.**¹⁰

8. **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.**¹¹ Women are also more likely to be poor¹², and generally earn less than men. This earning gap actually increased between 2007 and 2008.¹³

9. **Racialized communities face high levels of poverty.** The 2006 census (the most recent data available) showed that the overall poverty rate for non-racialized persons in Canada was 11% **but for racialized persons it was 22%**. 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.¹⁴ Across the country racialized women living in poverty outnumbered men by a factor of 52% to 48%.¹⁵ There is a tendency for racialized individuals to be concentrated in less stable, precarious work.¹⁶

⁵ 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.

⁶ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2010.

⁷ Statistics Canada (2012), “Income of Canadians, 2010” <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/120618/dq120618b-eng.htm>

⁸ Collin, Chantal, and Hillary Jensen (2009), “A Statistical Profile of Poverty in Canada”, *Library of Parliament*, p.17.

⁹ Council of Canadians with Disabilities, <http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/poverty-citizenship/demographic-profile/poverty-disability-canada>

¹⁰ 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>

¹¹ Williams, Cara (2010), “Women in Canada, A Gender-based Statistical Report. Economic Well-being”, Statistics Canada p.9.

¹² Ibid p.20.

¹³ Ibid p.10.

¹⁴ Block and Galabuzi (2010).

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Block and Galabuzi (2011), p.10.

10. **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.¹⁷

11. **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.¹⁸

- For example, in **Vancouver, British Columbia** a single mother with two children receives \$1036/mos¹⁹, which includes \$660 for housing and \$376 for basic needs.²⁰ Meanwhile, the current average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Canada's most expensive city is: \$1219/mos,²¹ 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.²²
- In **Toronto, Ontario**, a single person receives mere \$7,878 annually, just 42% of the LICO-AT suggested poverty line of \$18,930 for this category.²³ 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 \$1,123.²⁴
- **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. These amounts are nowhere near enough to afford shared accommodation along with other living expenses.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ National Council of Welfare, “Welfare Incomes 2009”, Vol. 129, Winter 2010, p. viii.

¹⁹ 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

²⁰ Government of British Columbia Ministry of Social Development, “BC Employment and Assistance Rate Tables”, <http://www.hsd.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ia.htm>

²¹ 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

²² Statistics Canada, Table 1 “Low income cut-offs (1992 base) after tax”, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/2010005/tbl/tbl01-eng.htm>

²³ 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.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/publications/social/sarac/recipients_sarac.aspx

²⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, p.51-52.

12. With limited income, individuals living in poverty are forced to make impossible choices – to pay the rent or to feed the kids? To pay for heat or to eat? **Close to 900,000 people in Canada have no choice but to use foodbanks each month in order to make ends meet. This is a 26% 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.²⁵

13. **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%.**²⁶ 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 surprisingly this gap parallels the ever-growing discrepancy between Canada's international commitments and current domestic social policy.²⁷

14. **Beyond the impacts of material deprivation, poverty is recognized by the World Health Organization as the single largest determinant of health affecting both mental and physical health outcomes.** This manifests in a number of adverse health issues including depression, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic conditions. One in five dollars spent on health care is attributed to 'health inequities'. This means that poverty places proportionately greater demands on the health care systems because poor people are at much higher risk of illness and injury than those who are not poor.²⁸

15. **In 2011, the youth unemployment rate (for those aged 15 – 24) was a whopping 14% – double the national average.**²⁹

16. 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.**³⁰

17. Unhealthy housing, hunger and dismal welfare rates that create a poverty trap, are violations of the right to an adequate standard of living and are inexcusable considering

²⁵ Food Banks Canada, "Hunger Count Canada, 2011" (2011), p. 2, 8. <http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/getmedia/dc2aa860-4c33-4929-ac36-fb5d40f0b7e7/HungerCount-2011.pdf.aspx>

²⁶ 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

²⁷ 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

²⁸ Health Council of Canada (2010), "Stepping It Up: Moving the Focus from Health Care in Canada to a Healthier Canada", p.7. <http://www.healthcouncilcanada.ca/tree/2.40-HCCpromoDec2010.pdf>

²⁹ Huff Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/08/23/youth-unemployment-canada_n_933810.html

³⁰ 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

Canada's relative economic health. The Government of Canada is not honouring its obligation to commit the maximum available resources to ensure the enjoyment by the most disadvantaged of their economic, social and cultural rights.

II. Poverty costs the Government of Canada a lot. It would be cheaper to solve it.

18. The Canadian government is facing a simple choice: **spend billions to maintain poverty, or address the issue head on and save billions.** 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."

19. **In dollar terms, this loss to Canada has been estimated to range as high as \$72 to \$86 billion annually, and is estimated to cost every individual over \$2000 annually.**³¹

20. A more conservative estimate of the cost of poverty recently reported suggest that only \$12.6 billion was needed to close the gap between low-income and poverty line.³²

21. Adequate housing not only offers shelter from the elements, but also acts as a pillar of stability for people leaving the streets, fleeing violence, or working to improve their lives. **Each year it costs approximately \$55,000 CDN to leave a homeless person on the street, while providing housing and support services would cost only \$37,000 CDN.**³³

22. **Poverty is both detrimental to the health of Canadians and a heavy cost on the health care system.** 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.³⁴ 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.³⁵ Added to this is the cost to the criminal justice system. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Canada has estimated that four out of five women in prison are there for poverty-related crimes³⁶, and that the cost of incarcerating women in 2009/10 was \$211,093 per woman.³⁷

³¹ Laurie, Nathan (2008), *"The Cost of Poverty: An Analysis of the Economic Cost of Poverty in Ontario"*, Ontario Association of Food Banks, p.19.

³² National Council of Welfare (2011), *"The Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty"*, Vol. 130, Autumn 2011, p.2.

³³ Intraspec (2012), *"Homelessness in Canada"*, online at <http://intraspec.ca/homelessCanada.php#.UGn6cfk-vYU>

³⁴ Laurie (2008), p.12.

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ Calgary United Way (2008), *"Crimes of Desperation: The Truth about poverty-related crime"*, p.2.

www.calgaryunitedway.org/main/sites/default/files/Crimes%20of%20%20Desperation%20Final%20mar08.pdf

³⁷ 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

III. What the UN Human Rights Council recommended to Canada in its first UPR and Canada's response.

23. A number of HRC members expressed concern about poverty and homelessness in Canada, an affluent country. As a result, a number of recommendations were made, only some of which Canada accepted.

24. **The most significant commitment** the GOC made regarding poverty was that it would “**continue to address socio-economic disparities and inequalities that persist across the country**”, stating that it will continue “to explore ways to enhance efforts to address poverty and housing issues, in collaboration with provinces and territories”.

25. More specifically on the issue of housing and homelessness, **Canada agreed to “[c]onsider taking on board the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing**, specifically to extend and enhance the national homelessness programme and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programme”. Canada also committed itself to intensifying the efforts already undertaken to better ensure the right to adequate housing, especially for vulnerable groups and low income families.

26. Canada accepted in part Recommendation 45³⁸, by committing to give appropriate attention to vulnerable groups in policy development and to giving greater prominence to the Market Basket Measure as one of the tools used to measure low income³⁹.

27. **The GOC did not accept the recommendation that it demonstrate more leadership on the issue of poverty by adopting a national strategy to eliminate poverty (Recommendation #17), on the basis that it lacked the jurisdiction to do so because provinces have jurisdiction in this area of “social policy”. This is patently untrue.**

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

28. Provinces and territories have the jurisdiction to enact legislation or policy to address poverty and homelessness. There are, however, no legal barriers to keep the federal government from providing leadership in these areas. The federal government

³⁸ Recommendation 45: Integrate economic social and cultural rights in its poverty reduction strategies in a way that can benefit the most vulnerable groups in society, specially the Aborigines, afro-Canadians, immigrants, persons with disabilities, youth, women with low incomes, and single mothers and adopt all necessary measures, including the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to guarantee Aborigines the full enjoyment of their rights including economic, social and cultural so that their standard of living was similar to that of the rest of the citizens in Canada (Cuba).

³⁹ While the MBM was included in the Statistics Canada 2008 Incomes in Canada survey (released in 2010), the numbers proved to illustrate a skewed perspective of poverty in comparison to the LICO and LIM measurements. This was due to a change in the housing/shelter component of the tool. This change has affected the legitimacy of the MBM. Also note a report on the MBM compiled by the federal government was done through a ‘closed door’ process.

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.⁴⁰

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”.⁴¹ The first recommendation was for the federal government to adopt a ‘core poverty eradication goal’, followed by the call for a federal housing strategy.⁴² 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.*”⁴³ 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 Poverty Caucus** the aim of which is to identify substantive solutions to poverty through collaboration with parliamentarians, civil society and community leaders. Several MPs have also tried to introduce legislation that would allow for federal leadership on these issues.

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 – in addressing poverty and homelessness in this country.

⁴⁰ Collin, Chantal. “Poverty Reduction in Canada – The Federal Role,” Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament. PRB 07-22E. 23 October 2007.

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² Ibid, p.2.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 212.

V. What has the GOC done since UPR1 to address poverty and homelessness in Canada?

33. We have seen no legislative or policy developments to indicate that the government is interested in addressing poverty or homelessness. They have not acted on any of the recommendations found in the above two mentioned reports. **In fact, the GOC has, since the last UPR, undertaken a number of retrogressive measures including:**

34. **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%.⁴⁴

35. **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.

36. **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.⁴⁵ The elimination of the NCW essentially ends national reporting on the depth and breadth of poverty in Canada. **The loss of important**

⁴⁴ 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>

⁴⁵ 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>

information gathering will leave a noticeable gap in the current knowledge regarding poverty in 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.

37. **Refusal to support proposed framework legislation to address poverty and homelessness in Canada in keeping with our international human rights obligations.** 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*, have been reintroduced into this parliamentary session. Both bills have all opposition party support. The Government of Canada has shown no willingness to engage these pieces of legislation in a meaningful way and in the past has instructed its Members not to support these pieces of legislation, despite the broad consensus of support for the Bills amongst opposition parties and NGOs across the country.

38. **Refusal to ensure access to remedies for violations of human rights and refusal to implement international human rights obligations** (See NGO Coalition Statement on Implementation).

39. **Changes to Employment Insurance (EI) as part of the June 2012 budget will force individuals loosely deemed as repeat offenders to accept paid work at 30% less of their current income that is also farther from home.** Seasonal industries across the country fear the loss of skilled workers, while rural regions have apprehension about transportation issues connected to working farther from home.⁴⁶ Also, the “Working While on Claim” **Employment Insurance (EI) pilot project** introduced through the 2012 Budget, **makes the most vulnerable recipients who work while on EI worse off financially than they were prior to the implementation of the pilot project.**⁴⁷ This is the perfect example of the Government of Canada’s failure to consider the implications of its policies for the most vulnerable.

40. Cabinet Ministers have demonstrated active **hostility toward the UN human rights system, in particular by insulting the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food** whilst he was on mission to Canada in 2012, **and impugning the Committee on the Rights of the Child because the Syrian racial heritage of one of its experts.** Canada’s behavior and attitude toward the UN has created a “chill”, no doubt causing the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty to postpone her mission to Canada until she can be guaranteed respectful engagement by Canada.

⁴⁶ Mendelson, Michael and Ken Battle (2011), “*Fixing the Hole In EI: Temporary Income Assistance for the Unemployed*”, the Mowat Centre EI Task Force, Executive Summary.

⁴⁷ See for example: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/10/05/ns-ei-changes.html>

VI. Recommendations

41. Are poverty, homelessness and food insecurity – as described in this submission – reasonable in a country whose economy has “outshone our major competitors,”⁴⁸ as declared by our Minister of Finance just a year ago? Are retrogressive measures reasonable in light of our economic strength? From a human rights perspective, there is only one answer: No.

42. We call on States to put the following 3 recommendations to the Government of Canada:

43. **Canada must show leadership in addressing poverty, homelessness and food insecurity, in keeping with recommendations from the Senate and the HUMA Committee.** The Government of Canada must provide leadership to help coordinate inter-governmentally national strategies to reduce and eliminate poverty, address homelessness and inadequate housing, and promote food security. Each strategy must ensure equality for disadvantaged groups; include measureable goals and timelines; effective consultation with affected constituencies; transparent accountability mechanisms; and accessible complaints procedures.

44. **Canada must restore the mandatory long form census and reinstate funding for the National Council on Welfare** to ensure reliable statistical data is systematically gathered and disseminated, particularly data that will assist in measuring Canada’s compliance with its international human rights obligations.

45. **Canada must promote respect for all human rights and ensure access to effective remedies for violations of rights.** In this regard, Canada must re-establish a respectful relationship with the United Nations human rights system including treaty monitoring bodies and Special Mandate holders; Canada must re-establish funding for the Court Challenges Program to enable the most marginalized groups access to the courts to defend their human rights as protected in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canada must also ratify the Optional Protocols to the ICESCR and the CRPD.

⁴⁸ Hon. Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, Speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, November 2011. http://www.fin.gc.ca/n11/11-114_1-eng.asp