

January 16, 2026

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Dear Colleagues,

We are writing ahead of Canada's upcoming review under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to request a meeting to discuss Canada's interpretation of the right to life under Article 6. This issue has significant implications for communities facing homelessness, inadequate housing, food insecurity, barriers to health care, preventable deaths driven by the toxic unregulated drug supply, and climate-related harms, and it remains a priority concern for all of our organizations.

Canada's position on Article 6 has long been a subject of attention for the Human Rights Committee. In 1999, the [Committee highlighted](#) that homelessness in Canada causes serious health consequences and even death, and urged our governments to take the "positive measures required by article 6" to address this problem. More recently, in [Nell Toussaint v. Canada](#) (2018), the Committee found that Canada violated Ms. Toussaint's right to life and was required to take all steps necessary to ensure access to essential health care for irregular migrants where life is at risk. Nevertheless, governments in Canada have continued to argue that the right to life should not be interpreted as ensuring access to necessities of life such as health care. Canada's position has, in our view, undermined the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights that is a core principle of international human rights law.

Meanwhile, international standards have advanced considerably. The Human Rights Committee's [General Comment No. 36](#), adopted after extensive consultation in 2018, affirms that States must adopt measures to address the general conditions in society that may give rise

to direct threats to life, including homelessness, access to health care, a toxic unregulated drug supply, and addressing climate change. In 2025, advisory opinions from both the [International Court of Justice](#) and the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#) reinforced this understanding. There is a clear expectation that all States will adopt proactive, systemic measures to protect life.

There are also important domestic developments pointing toward a more integrated understanding of the right to life in Canadian law. The *National Housing Strategy Act* (2019) affirms housing as a fundamental human right essential to human dignity and well-being, and the *UNDRIP Act* (2021) incorporates the right to life into federal law in ways that highlight the indivisibility of rights. Several Canadian court cases are now considering whether the *Charter's* right to life must be interpreted in line with the positive obligations recognized in international law.

Against this backdrop, Canada's continued reluctance to fully recognize the interdependence of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights undermines domestic human rights implementation and diminishes Canada's credibility within the global human rights system.

We respectfully request a meeting prior to the ICCPR review to discuss Canada's position on Article 6 and the implications of these international and domestic developments. We appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to the opportunity for meaningful discussion.

Sincerely,

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cc Charlotte-Anne Malischewski, Chief Commissioner, Canadian Human Rights Commission