

General Comment No. 4 is an authoritative legal interpretation of the right to housing under international law.

Is the Right to Adequate Housing Limited to Emergency Shelter?

The right to adequate housing is not restricted to emergency shelter. In General Comment No. 4, the Committee explained that “the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one’s head... Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.”

Further, states General Comment No. 4, the right to housing is not just a right to any housing, but to *adequate housing*.

What is Meant by Adequate Housing?

The term adequate means housing that offers: security of tenure; availability of services; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and, cultural adequacy.

The requirement of affordability can be particularly important to low income people. General Comment No. 4 states:

Personal or household financial costs associated with housing should be at such a level that the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs are not threatened or compromised. Steps should be taken by States parties to ensure that the percentage of housing-related costs is, in general, commensurate with income levels. States parties should establish housing subsidies for those unable to obtain affordable housing, as well as forms and levels of housing finance which adequately reflect housing needs...



Friends of the Woodward's Squat | www.woodsquat.net | friends@woodsquat.net

Please note that FWS is a material support group. It does not represent the Woodward's Squat, Woodward's Coalition for Social Housing, or any other of the many groups and individuals currently involved in the DTES housing action.

W.O.O.D.S.Q.U.A.T. #33

“The only way that this sort of movement can be effective is for those groups to act without denouncing each others tactics. Militants should not talk against moderates and moderates should not speak against militants. The only way to win is to keep our mouths shut and not give the tools to the state to create division between us.” - Joey Only

PRESS STATEMENT BY JIM LEYDEN

EXCERPTS FROM THE POVERTY & HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT LAW SHEET

DAY 49 - FRIDAY - 01 NOV 02

PRESS STATEMENT BY JIM LEYDEN

We originally set up a steering committee to facilitate the organizing of the initial Woodward's action.

The goal of this action was to draw attention to the fact that the Campbell gov't was close to selling Woodward's, yet denying it.

Our intention was to put the need for social housing in Woodward's, and indeed across the province, back on the provincial agenda.

We hoped to be able to engage in proper communication with the Campbell gov't around the resolution of these issues.

It was determined at that time that we would incorporate as a society in the near future.

We were surprised, and in fact shocked, by the number of homeless and under-housed people who rallied around the Woodward's building, in support of our call for social housing, and in many instances in a personal effort to find security, housing and community for themselves.

When we saw the homeless encampment grow from 15 people to over 150 in a week, we knew that it was essential to ask the two governments to immediately address the HOMELESS issue in the city, and indeed, across the province, and to come up with a long-term strategy around HOMELESSNESS which includes SOCIAL HOUSING.

Over the past 6 weeks neither Gordon Campbell, George Abbott or other backbenchers have been willing to meet with us and in fact, only Val Anderson has shown enough respect to return our calls.

We have the distinct impression that the Campbell government is hiding behind the homeless rather than being open & accessible.

For this reason we have started procedure to incorporate as a charitable society.

We will be around for a long time. And we would like to take this opportunity to let the Liberal government know that we are willing to meet with them whenever and wherever they choose.

We have further decided to concentrate our efforts on getting the different levels of government to the table to come up with a strategy for providing adequate social housing.

We are looking into legal action which can be taken to force this provincial government to honor its obligations to provide social housing to those who most need it.

We believe these rights are clearly defined in the Law Sheet included in your handouts.

We additionally are intending to compile the record of violations of the rights and bring them to the attention of the International Olympic committee.

We will continue to support the Woodward's Squatters and specifically will help the homeless in their efforts to organize their own community structure, thereby, helping them to become masters of their own destiny.

THE RIGHT TO HOUSING UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW FROM THE POVERTY & HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

Do Canadians Have a Right to Adequate Housing?

Not everyone may realize that governments in Canada are obliged to ensure that everyone has adequate housing. However, Canada is a signatory to international human rights treaties that oblige governments to address conditions of poverty, and to ensure that everyone has an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing.

The central human rights treaty concerning the right to housing is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is known as the ICESCR. Canada ratified the ICESCR in 1976.

Article 11 of the ICESCR commits governments in Canada to take positive steps to ensure that everyone has an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing.

Has the Right to Adequate Housing Under International Human Rights Law Been Interpreted?

In 1991, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted 'General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing.'