



May 16, 2025

Hon. Premier Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Via email: premier@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford;

Re: Bill 6, An Act to enact the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2025 and to amend the Trespass to Property Act respecting sentencing (Short title: *The Safer Municipalities Act, 2025*)

We are writing to express urgent concerns with the punitive and harmful measures contained in [Bill 6, *The Safer Municipalities Act, 2025*](#). Bill 6 is not a meaningful solution to the affordable housing and drug toxicity crises ravaging Ontario communities and, if passed, will only serve to create additional pathways to criminalize vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness and substance use disorders. We urge the government of Ontario to withdraw this proposed legislation and instead implement solutions that are evidence-based and focused on health and housing, rather than criminalization. If Bill 6 is not withdrawn, we urge MPPs to vote against the passing of Bill 6 into law.

Impacts of Bill 6

The Safer Municipalities Act, 2025 impacts fundamental rights and freedoms of some of the most marginalized and vulnerable residents in Ontario. It will give police the power to:

- Remove an individual from their encampment dwelling should the police have reasonable grounds to believe that person has consumed an illegal substance;
- Arrest an individual without a warrant who does not comply with a police officer's direction to vacate their encampment dwelling, regardless of whether or not they have somewhere else to go;
- Subject individuals experiencing homelessness of fines of up to \$10,000 and/or incarceration of up to six months if charged with an offence under the *Act*.

The *Act* further creates a regulatory pathway for police to take an individual into custody who they reasonably believe is guilty of an offence for the purposes of escorting them to community and health services.

Impacts of Bill 6 on Homelessness

A recent report by the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#) states that there were over 81,500 people experiencing homelessness in Ontario, an increase of over 25% since 2022. By 2035, this number could triple without significant intervention.

Criminalizing and removing those who have no choice but to live in public space does not represent a meaningful solution to the homelessness crisis. Incarceration and fines that unhoused people may never be able to pay only serve to further marginalize individuals and have a detrimental impact on the social determinants of health. These “solutions” do not address the underlying issues that have caused this crisis, such as the elevated cost of housing, low rent control, and extremely low social assistance rates. Criminalization serves to prolong the cycle of poverty and erect barriers for individuals trying to access facets of stable living such as employment, housing, or government statuses, such as citizenship.

Instead of resorting to criminalizing homelessness, the government of Ontario should invest in long-term human rights-based solutions that respect *Charter* rights, federalism, and domestic and international human rights obligations. The [National Housing Strategy Act](#) (NHSA) enshrines the right to housing in domestic law. The NHSA recognizes that “the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law” and that “housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities”. Ontario courts [have found](#) that where there are no adequate alternative options available to individuals, the ability to occupy public space through encampment and provide shelter for oneself is protected by s. 7 of the *Charter*.

Impacts of Bill 6 on Public Health and Addiction

The ongoing overdose crisis has claimed the lives of over [26,000 Ontarians since 2016](#). Ontario’s recent [Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, 2024](#) shuts down most of the province’s 17 supervised consumption sites. It also bans municipalities and local boards from applying to Health Canada to obtain approval for future safe consumption sites without the approval of Ontario’s Minister of Health.

This law, in tandem with the measures proposed by Bill 6, will leave individuals with few safe spaces to use substances. This will drive individuals to use substances more quickly



and in isolated, dangerous settings, increasing the risk of overdose. Substances will also have to be consumed in public spaces or semi-private spaces like restrooms, exacerbating tensions with community members and increasing social discord. The use of illegal substances is already criminalized under both the *Criminal Code* and the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. Bill 6 only serves to further stigmatize and criminalize unhoused and vulnerable populations; this doesn't contribute towards addressing solutions for addiction.

Rights Respecting Solutions

Governments of all levels need to work together to find human rights-based solutions that respect the dignity and autonomy of encampment residents. The approach to combating homelessness should not be to criminalize and override fundamental rights and freedoms, but rather to find meaningful long-term solutions that are rights-respecting.

We urge the government to focus on evidence-based solutions to the affordable housing and addiction crises rather than punitive measures. Bill 6 serves to criminalize the most vulnerable in our communities and it does so in a way that is unconstitutional, and shows little respect for human rights, public health, or community well-being.

Sincerely,

Abby Deshman
Executive Director and General Counsel
Canadian Civil Liberties Association

Harini Sivalingam
Director, Equality Program
Canadian Civil Liberties Association

Aaden Pearson
Staff Lawyer
Canadian Civil Liberties Association

Cc: Marit Stiles, Leader of the Official Opposition - MStiles-QP@ndp.on.ca
Bonnie Crombie, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party - bonnie@ontarioliberal.ca
Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario - leader@gpo.ca

CANADIAN
CIVIL LIBERTIES
ASSOCIATION



ASSOCIATION
CANADIENNE DES
LIBERTES CIVILES

Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing - rob.flack@pc.ola.org

Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing -
graydon.smith@pc.ola.org

Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health - sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

Vijay Thanigasalam, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions -
vijay.thanigasalam@pc.ola.org

Doug Downey, Attorney General — doug.downey@pc.ola.org

Robin Lennox, Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Addictions with
responsibility for Primary Care - rlennox-qp@ndp.on.ca

Catherine McKenney, Shadow Minister for Housing - cmckenney-co@ndp.on.ca

France G  linas, Shadow Minister for Health & Shadow Minister for Francophone
Affairs - gelines-qp@ndp.on.ca