

31. The Committee notes that Bill 22, entitled "An act to prevent unionization", was adopted by the Ontario Legislative Assembly

on 24 November 1998. The Act denies to workfare participants the rights to join a trade union, to bargain collectively and to strike. In response to a request from the Committee, the Government provided no information in relation to the compatibility of the Act with the Covenant. The Committee considers the Act to be a clear violation of article 8 of the Covenant and calls upon the State Party to take measures to repeal the offending provisions.

32. The Committee is concerned that the minimum wage is not sufficient to provide an adequate standard of living for a worker and his or her family.

33. The Committee is perturbed to hear that the number of food banks almost doubled between 1989 and 1997 in Canada and that they are able to meet only a fraction of the increased needs of the poor.

34. The Committee is concerned that the State Party did not take into account the Committee's 1993 major concerns and recommendations when it adopted policies at federal, provincial and territorial levels which exacerbated poverty and homelessness among vulnerable groups during a time of strong economic growth and increasing affluence.

35. The Committee is concerned at the crisis level of homelessness among youth and young families. According to information received from the National Council of Welfare, over 90 per cent of single mothers under 25 live in poverty. Unemployment and under-employment rates are also significantly higher among youth than among the general population.

36. The Committee is also concerned about significant cuts in services on which people with disabilities rely, such as cuts in home care, attendant care and special needs transportation systems, and tightened eligibility rules for people with disabilities. Programmes for people who have been discharged from psychiatric institutions appear to be entirely inadequate. Although the Government failed to provide to the Committee any information regarding homelessness among discharged psychiatric patients, the Committee was told that a large number of those patients end up on the street, while others suffer from inadequate housing, with insufficient support services.

37. The Committee views with concern the plight of thousands of "Convention refugees" in Canada, who cannot be given permanent resident status for a number of reasons, including the lack of identity documents, and who cannot be reunited with their families for a period of five years.

38. The Committee views with concern that 20 per cent of the adult population in Canada is functionally illiterate.

39. The Committee is concerned that loan programmes for post-secondary education are available only to Canadian citizens and permanent residents and that recognized refugees who do not have permanent residence status, as well as asylum seekers, are ineligible for these loan programmes. The Committee views also with concern the fact that tuition fees for university education in Canada have dramatically increased in the past few years, making it very difficult for those in need to attend university in the absence of a loan or grant. A further subject of concern is the significant increase in the average student debt on graduation.