



ROUNDTABLE
CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS SEEKING ASSISTANCE AT URBAN
INTERSECTIONS

FSS4004, University of Ottawa — **Thursday, April 30, 2026, at 1:30**

Bilingual Event

In-person and Virtual Participation

<https://uottawa-ca.zoom.us/j/99030379465>

Objective of the Roundtable

This roundtable aims to provide a safe space to talk about the different issues around panhandling at urban intersections in Canada and around the world. It is an opportunity to better understand who is seeking assistance in these spaces, the personal and structural circumstances that may lead individuals there, and the reasons certain intersections become focal points for this activity. It also invites reflection on how the public responds through informal giving, how communities perceive the use of shared public space, and how cities balance compassion, public order, and safety. We hope to consider the legal, policy, and municipal frameworks that shape responses, while learning from approaches used in other jurisdictions. The goal is to foster respectful and evidence-based dialogue and to identify practical next steps for research collaboration, policy discussion, and community action.

Moderator

Mr. Mathieu Fleury

Professional in Residence on Housing Innovation

Alex Trebek Forum for Dialogue, University of Ottawa

Former Ottawa City Councillor

1:00 pm – Networking (refreshments)

1:25 pm – Commencement of the Roundtable (5 minutes)

1:30 pm – Opening Remarks (15 minutes)

- **Cintia Quiroga**, Director, Research and Public Policy, University of Ottawa
 - **Dr. Ian Cooper**, Director, Housing Policy Operations, Infrastructure Canada
 - **Stéphanie Plante**, City Councillor, Rideau–Vanier Ward, Ottawa
 - **Professor Huhua Cao**, Co-President, ICCCASU, Professor, University of Ottawa
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1:45 pm – Overview (5 minutes)

Mathieu Fleury

1:50 pm – Setting the context (35 minutes)

Professor Benjamin Gianni, Vice-President, ICCCASU, Professor, Carleton University

Introduction of Panhandling at urban Intersections

Dr. Ian Cooper, Director, Housing Policy Operations, Infrastructure Canada

Introduction of homelessness statistics in Canada

Douglas Ragan, Managing Director, Turning Tides, Garden Bay, British Columbia

Introduction of homelessness in the Global South, particular focus in Nairobi

2:25 pm – Understanding Panhandling in the Canadian Context: Perspectives from Housing, Health, and Urban Policy (45 minutes)

Moderator: **Mr. Mathieu Fleury**

Introduction of WooClap

Panelists:

- **Kaite Burkholder Harris**, Executive Director, Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa
- **Sandra Clarkson**, President and CEO, Calgary Drop-In Centre
- **Douglas Ragan**, Managing Director, Turning Tides, Garden Bay, British Columbia
- **John Heckbert**, Executive Director, Operation Come Home Ottawa

This session will allow us to explore unasked questions about Panhandling at urban intersections not commonly asked, starting a conversation about this topic in a safe and welcoming space.

Discussion Topics

- Who is panhandling at urban intersections and why?
- Public behaviour and informal donations dynamics: What is the motivation to give assistance at urban intersections?
- Can the reason why individuals panhandle at urban intersections be reduced to structural drivers such as housing affordability, income insecurity, mental health and/or addiction?
- Why intersections attract panhandling activity? Which intersections are popular and why? Are there areas of the city where panhandling predominates and areas where is non-existent?

- What constitutes the public realm? How do we guardrail public behaviour, and distinguish between what constitutes a nuisance versus criminal behaviour?
 - Legal and policy frameworks, including the Ontario Safe Streets Act, municipal bylaws, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?
 - How do cities in Canada and around the world respond to panhandling in urban intersections? Existing outreach and social services responses.
 - What capacity do municipalities have to monitor, enforce and address issues at urban intersections?
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3:10 pm – Coffee Break (15 minutes)

3:25 pm – Animated Discussion (30 minutes)

3:55 pm – Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

Moderators:

- **Mr. Mathieu Fleury**
- **Ms. Luisa Medon**, ICCCASU Panhandling Project Director

Closing Questions

- What research gaps remain?
- What policy or practice issues should be explored next?
- Should this roundtable lead to a formal research and policy network?

Suggested Themes for Future Discussion

- Panhandling vs. organized exploitation — evidence vs myths
 - Youth Street involvement and prevention (Operation Come Home)
 - Indigenous overrepresentation in homelessness
 - Gender dimensions of street involvement
 - Safe Streets Act implications
 - Traffic safety and urban design solutions
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Project Context

This event forms part of the ICCCASU initiative on panhandling and homelessness at urban intersections, launched under its new vision “Global Ideas – Local Solutions.” Building on research led by Professor Huhua Cao and the ICCCASU team, including a field study on intersection panhandling conducted in Toronto in 2025, the initiative seeks to generate evidence-based and community-driven responses to one of the most visible challenges facing contemporary cities. The Ottawa roundtable will contribute to policy dialogue, collaborative research, and practical initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive and humane urban responses, while also informing ICCCASU’s broader international work with partners such as UN-Habitat.

Please register for the event using the link below:

Registration Link: <https://myicccasu.regfox.com/icccasu-2026>

Contact

If you require additional information, please contact:

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Or visit the ICCCASU website:

<https://icccasu.org/>

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