

Public Statements Against Encampment Evictions

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John Tory

Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Mary Ann Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration

The COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated Toronto's housing crisis. We have seen encampments cleared and their residents and advocates criminalized. The city's own self-reported numbers have time and again shown a shelter system at capacity and unable to provide proper COVID-19 precautions. The city's alternatives — places like the

Toronto Plaza Hotel and Delta Shelter Hotel — are far removed from people's communities, and saddled with regulations (curfews, visitation policies and spot checks) that both rob residents of their agency and prevent them from accessing vital social supports and resources. Encampment residents are regularly denied sanitation. Meanwhile, the Landlord and Tenant Board has been escalating its number of evictions.

This is a letter from the city's authors, artists, cartoonists, illustrators, booksellers, publishers and editors calling for a moratorium on all encampment evictions and the repeal of by-laws that make it illegal to camp. Encampment clearings do nothing to keep Toronto's unhoused safe and do nothing to combat homelessness. They are carried out in direct opposition to the Centre of Disease Control's recommendations that cities not clear encampments, because doing so can "increase the potential for infectious disease spread." It is an unconscionably cruel practice that has resulted in injury, trauma and death.

If the city is serious about treating housing as a human right, it must immediately invest in deeply affordable housing and permanent Rent-Geared-To-Income options. It must provide encampment residents with basic survival gear and ensure them unfettered access to sanitation and washrooms. It must stop treating encampment residents like criminals.

Authors and artists are no strangers to a housing crisis that has displaced our communities and the brutal market logic that has left many of us in precarious living situations. We condemn the city's encampment clearings and stand in solidarity with the encampment residents creating their own systems of support and survival.

Signed,

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Aaron Rotenberg

Aamna Muzaffar

Aaron Tucker

Adam Bunch

Adi Berardini

Aeyliya Husain

AGO Youth Council

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Annie MacDonell
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Brendan George Ko
Brendan Lehman
Brennan Kelly
Brett Story
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Bryan Sutherland
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Broken Pencil Magazine
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Cailleah Scott-Grimes
Callum Schuster

Calvin Love
Cameron Lee
Camille Rojas
Canzine
Cara Mumford
Cara Spooner
CARFAC Ontario
Carine Zahner
Carolyn Taylor
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Catherine Fatima
Cathy Crowe
Cayley James
Chaddy-Ann Newton
Chala Hunter
Chandra Melting Tallow
Charlie Tyrell
Charles Bierk
Chip Zdarsky
Chris Curreri
Chris Gehman
Chris Kennedy
Chris Randle
Chris Wiseman
Christopher Willes
Christa Couture
Christian Siroyt
Christine Swintak
Christy Kunitzky
Chrysanne Stathacos
Claire Greenshaw
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Claudia Dey
Claudia Edwards

Clayton Hanmer
Cleopatria Peterson
Cléo Sallis-Parchet
Clare Samuel
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Danielle St-Amour
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Daniel Tahmizian
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Dean Baldwin
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Debbie Ebanks Schlums
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Derek Coulombe
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Emily Hammersley-Ambroise
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Thursday, December 3, 2020

John Tory,
Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão

Musicians Against Encampment Evictions

John Tory,

Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão

Mike Layton & Gord Perks (because you're audiophiles)

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Mary Ann Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration

As musicians and music workers who've been hosted by Toronto's vibrant - yet on hiatus- music community, we know as well as anyone how vulnerable this global pandemic and public health crisis has made many of us. Most of us, however, have a roof over our heads.

We are writing to you today in solidarity with our unhoused neighbours surviving through the pandemic and bitter cold in the encampments around Toronto. We demand the city declare a moratorium on encampment evictions, and stop the seizure of basic survival equipment, including Tiny Shelters, Foam Domes, tents.

Throughout a global pandemic, the City of Toronto has refused unhoused people access to water, basic sanitation and survival gear, and instead made life increasingly difficult for people living in encampments. We know that the city's winter plan offers only 560 indoor spots for people living outside, yet over 1000 people are currently unhoused. The shelter system is at capacity, and yet more people are being evicted from their housing every day.

Now the city is asking some people to make an impossible choice: Go inside and risk dying of COVID in an unsafe emergency shelter or stay outside and freeze to death. While confiscating the only winter shelters the community has come together to provide to the encampments.

Clearing life saving shelters which provide warmth is not a solution. Tiny shelters and tents are people's property. People depend on their social ties and community bonds to survive. This is an abuse of power and direct act of violence. Shelters are full. This means that the city does not have enough spots inside right now for all the people living outside.

We fund the city's housing workers, Parks Ambassadors, and shelter programs. The city cannot commit these acts of violence on our behalf. We want to see the clearings stopped until we have safe shelter developed in consultation with the residents and their advocates.

Even the [CDC](#) still recommends that encampments not be cleared: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

Most importantly, Toronto is built on stolen Indigenous land, on Dish With One Spoon territory. Many of the people surviving outside are Indigenous people, and forcibly displacing them from their land is part of an ongoing legacy of colonial violence. They have an inherent right to live where they feel best.

The undersigned,

Simone Schmidt, Fiver

Simone TB, Partner

Skye Wallace

Nathan Doucet, EDDY, Aquakultre, Scott Hardware, Tica Holiday, Heaven For Real

Nico Elliot-Armstrong

Sara Frank, Lavender Bruisers

Kritty Uranowski, Lavender Bruisers

Inez Genereux, Nezzzy

Jill Harris, The O'Pears, Dwayne Gretzky, Illyin Pipes

Nick Dourado, Budi, EDDY, Aquakultre

Steven Foster, Omhouse

Sameer Cash

Jesse Crowe

Julia Whitmann

Robert Grieve, Blastronaut

Teagan Johnston, (fka Little Coyote)

Charlotte Smith

Scott Harwood, Scott Hardware

Charles Tilden, Delta Will

Brendan Canning, Broken Social Scene
of The Encampment Support Network

With:

Leslie Feist, Feist

Kevin Hearn, Barenaked Ladies

Jon Gallant, Billy Talent

Ben Kowalewicz, Billy Talent

Ian D'Sa, Billy Talent

Aaron Solowoniuk, Billy Talent

Chris Murphy, Sloan, TUNS

Jay Ferguson, Sloan

Andrew Scott, Sloan

Patrick Pentland, Sloan

Kevin Drew, Broken Social Scene

Jim Cuddy, Blue Rodeo

Brian Murphy, Alvways

Alec O'Hanley, Alvways

Molly Rankin, Alvways

Peter Sagar, Homeshake

Chippynonstop

Liz Ball, Dilly Dally

Benjamin Reinhartz, Dilly Dally

Kathleen Monks, Dilly Dally

Jimmy Tony, Dilly Dally

Mike O'Neill, TUNS

Steven Lambke, You've Changed Records/Constantines
Moe Berg, The Pursuit of Happiness
Alaska B, YAMANTAKA // SONIC TITAN
Joanna Delos Reyes, Pantayo and Yamantaka// Sonic Titan
Mike Skwark, smrtdeath
Joshua Wells, Lightning Dust, Destroyer, Autogramm
Ron Hawkins, Lowest of the Low
Lawrence Nichols, Lowest of the Low
Owen Pallett
Jose Contreras, By Divine Right
Geordie Dynes, By Divine Right
Hayden Menzies, METZ
Maylee Todd
Steven Sladkowski, PUP
Stefan Babcock, PUP
Nestor Chumak, PUP
Zack Mykula, PUP
Jay Schwarzer, Cancer Bats
Liam Cormier, Cancer Bats
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Kyle Connolly, Orville Peck/The Highest Order
Torquil Campbell, Stars
Cameron Reed, Arts and Crafts
Serena Ryder
Jason Collett
Tim Darcy, Ought

Tim D'Eon, Wintersleep
Loel Campbell, Wintersleep
Matt Mays
Haviah Mighty
Hannah Georgas, Beetle Bomb Music Inc
Mitch DeRosier, Born Ruffians
Emmett O'Reilly, Pkew Pkew Pkew
Doug MacGregor, City and Colour/Constantines
Marta Cikojevic, Tops
Marta Cikovic, TOPS
David Cariere, Tops
Justin Small, Do Make Say Think
Meg Remy, U.S. Girls
Peter Dreimanis, July Talk
Leah Fay Goldstein, July Talk
Katie Stelmanis, Austra
Anthony Carone, Arkells
Mike Haliechuk, Fucked Up
Sandy Miranda, Fucked Up
Jonah Falco, Fucked Up
Josh Zucker, Fucked Up
Damian Abraham, Fucked Up
Ben Cook, Fucked Up
Ashanti Mutinta, Backxwash
Hayden Desser, Hayden
Ian Docherty, July Talk
Dave Bidini, Rheostatics
Basia Bulat

Chad VanGaalén
Lucy Niles, Partner
Josee Caron, Partner
Kyle Peters, Father Christmas
Mark Grundy, Heaven For Real
Jenn Nucum
Julian Taylor
Robb Johannes, Paint
Niko Stratis, Switchblade Music Group
Joshua Salter, Nap Eyes
Evan Elliot, Penhorn Summer
Sara Frank, Lavender Bruisers
Jon Schouten, Telephone Explosion Records
Joseph Elashuk, Sahara
Andrew Wilson, Sahara
Edan Scime Stokell, Sahara
Matt Learoyd, Motorists
Meg Contini, The O'Pears
Lydia Persaud
Iskwē
Nick Rose, Dwayne Gretzky, Teen Ravine
Tyler Kyte, Dwayne Gretzky
Densil McFarlane, The OBGMs
Brigid Fry, Moscow Apartment
Nigel Chapman, Nap Eyes
Mick Hutchinson, The Bare Minimum
Stefanie Purificati, Agent, APA Canada
Jenna Strautman, Tanblonde, Skye Wallace

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Devon Loughheed, Altered By Mom
Jonathan Pappo, Hooded Fang, Scott Hardware
Scott Grundy, Heaven For Real
Steve Sidoli, Teenanger
Carlyn Bezic, Ice Cream, Jane Inc
Amanda Crist, US Girls, Ice Cream
Joelle, Ten Moon
Kat Burns, KASHKA
Kat Estacio, Pantayo
Halina Katz, HEX
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Kris Rose, El / ƆAg47, nêhiyawak / House Of Trade
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Colin Medley, Long Winter
Phil Hamilton, Beard Closet
Denholm Whale, Odonis Odonis
Dusty Lee Norsworthy, Slash Need
Kieran Adams, Diana / New Nails
Paul Erlichman, Elrichman
Martha M Ramsay, For Esmé
Kristina Ileana Koski, Blonde Elvis, CHANDRA, Praises
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Nik Basset, EVERYSEEKER Festival, Director
Mar Sellars, Mar On Music
Henri Fabergé, Hank the Kid
James Bunton, Producer

Stacey Howchin, STACEY
Will Hunter, Nutrients
Jesse Northey, Victory Pool Music
Adrienne LaBelle, Mint Records
Ryan Dyck, Mint Records
Randy Iwata, Mint Records
Michael le Riche, Fake Palms/Sauna
Vish Khanna, Kreative Kontrol
Paul Mortimer, The Highest Order
Andy Scott, Biblical
Else Gabermichael, Wild Black
Lexi Jay, Featurette
Jon Fedorson, Featurette
Carl Didur, Zacht Automaat/ECH Repairs
Aerin Fogel, Venus Fest/Queen of Swords
Andrew McGill, Glass Sliper/Tess Parks/Bad River
Ed Squires, US Girls, Badge Epoque Ensemble
Trevor Blumas, DoomSquad/ PORCH Media
Steven Lind, Freak Heat Waves
Michelle Cruz, Pantayo
Maggie Smith, Slash Need
Bry Webb, Constantines/Bry Webb
Cindy Li, Ciel
Colin Morgan, Vallens/Cellphone
Rachel Weldon, DEBASER
All members, HEX/No Mean City
Liam Betson, Titus Andronicus
Jane Penny, TOPS

Grant Danyluk, Black Cloud
Max Pittet, Broken Egg
Jensen Fridfinnson, Yes We Mystic
Jill Krajewski, Journalist
Robin Dann, Bernice
Nyssa White-Patterson, NYSSA
Sam Coffey, Sam Coffey & The Iron Lungs
Liam Doyle, Sam Coffey & The Iron Lungs
Connor Glen, Sam Coffey & The Iron Lungs
Richard Thomas Stanley, Sam Coffey & The Iron Lungs
Joel French, Sam Coffey & The Iron Lungs
Dave Tyson, Sam Coffey & The Iron Lungs
Cale Elliott-Armstrong, Lucy Jinx
Julia Wittmann, For Jane
Alex Durlak, Idée Fixe Records
Lysh Haugen, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Amy Gottung, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Linda Paolucci, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
William Andrew Finlay Stewart Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Mikhail Chernov, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Emilia Kayko, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Sameen Mahboubi, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Maya Skarzenski, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Tristan Sauer, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
Marie Sotto, Long Winter Music and Arts Festival
BRETT ZADRAVETZ, BLOB RECORDS/MR.JOY
Adam seward, Musician / Filmmaker
Maximilian Turnbull, Badge Époque Ensemble

Karen Ng
Rane Elliott-Armstrong, LITTLE JUNIOR
Chai Elliott-Armstrong, LITTLE JUNIOR
Zoe Grossman, LITTLE JUNIOR
Jackson Beyer, LITTLE JUNIOR
Anni Spadafora, New Fries
Jay Anderson, BadgeEpoqueEnsemble/Biblical/Lammping/Stonegrass
Katelyn Molgard, Bad Waitress
Nicole Cain, Bad Waitress
Eva Moon, Bad Waitress
Kali-Ann Butala, Bad Waitress
Katie Munshaw, Dizzy
Charles Spencer, Dizzy
Alexander Spencer, Dizzy
Mackenzie Spencer, Dizzy
Francesco Figliomeni, The Elwins
Shaun Brodie, Queer Songbook Orchestra
Jonathan Shedletzky, Arts & Crafts Productions; Boiled Records
Avalon Tassonyi, Inland Island
Noah Reid
Matt Bobkin, Exclaim!
Brooke Morgan, Graceless Lady Management
Cam Laurie, Stuck Out Here
Chris Chin, Edmund Stay,
Liam Cole, LiLi
Alia O'Brien, Blood Ceremony
Dan Fortin, Bernice
Linnea Siggelkow, Ellis

Brandon Williams, Chastity
Jonathan Adjemian, Jennifer Castle Band
Hannah Kim, Luna Li
Josh Korody, Owner, Candle Recording/Beliefs/Nailbiter
Dave Thiel, FOH/Sound
Alex Low, Slash Need
Madeline Link, PACKS
Derek Downham
Peter Elkas
Lance Sampson, Aquakultre
Anna Gutmanis, Ban-Anna Records/Artists 4 Racial Equality
Charlotte Cornfield
Brad Loughead, Nap Eyes/Homeshake/Penhorn Summer
Richard Cureton, Revolver Films
Nathan Lawr, Minotaurs
Akosua Adasi, Club Quarantine
Carena Siera, Club Quarantine
Brad Allen, Club Quarantine
Casey MQ, Club Quarantine
Cheryl Hann, Heaven For Real
Aleda DeRoche, Sound Engineer
Felicity Williams, Bahamas/Bernice
Jenn Kitagawa, Eyeballs
Lukas Cheung, Mothertongues/Hollowfest
Jon Bartlett, Kelp Management/Megaphono Fest
Adam Hanrahan, Retired
Laura Barrett
David Oswald, Bad Hoo

Nick Schofield, Saxyndrum
Krystal Jax, Brigitte Bardon't
Tica Holiday
Paul Saulnier, PS I Love You
Erin Carroll, Manager
Joel Harrower, Highs/Joel in Blue
David Newberry
Sage Kim, Laquer Channel Mastering
Matthew Doc Dunn, The Cosmic Range
Peter Carruthers, Art and Crafts
Heather Kelly, Valeo Arts Management
Joshua Howe, Valeo Arts Management
Aaron Goldstein, Baldwin Street Sound
Zeul Mordasiewicz, Vember
Guillermo Subauste, Producer
Taylor Knox
Sam Bielanski, PONY
David Dacks, The Music Gallery
Trevor Turple, Trevor Turple
Zach Bines, Weaves/Sauna
Jenn Pressey, Manager
Geordie Dynes, By Divine Right
Menno Versteeg, Royal Mountain Records
Adam "Bix" Berger, Royal Mountain Records
Marc Cremonese, Royal Mountain Records
Dina Young, Royal Mountain Records
Conor Mackie, Royal Mountain Records
Brianna Harris, Royal Mountain Records

Christina Zalec, Royal Mountain Records
Tom Avis, Royal Mountain Records
Luka Kuplowsky
Alex McKenzie, Petraglynt
Patrick Grant, Rogue Tenant/Sportsfan/Twist
Meagan Davidson, Tiny Kingdom Music Inc.
Rachael Cardiello, ZINNIA
Paul Ramirez, The Flatliners
Wes Marskell, The Darcys
Jason Couse, The Darcys
Raffa Weyman, RALPH
Jenn Pressy, Bernie Breen Management
John Crossingham, Not Of
Derek Westerholm, Psychic Weapons
Psychic Weapons, Producer/Engineer
Phoenix Pagliacci, TRP.P
Matt McLaren, Biblical/The Big Sound
Niki Prekop, Freelance Sound Engineer
Jaina Tharakan, Madame Psychosis
Leanne Simpson
Anna Edwards, Dusted
Anna Mayberry, Anamai
Pascal Padilla, Moscow Apartment
Ian Daniel Kehoe, The Weather Station/Ian Daniel Kehoe
Graeme Langdon, The Pink Noise
Matt Bod, The Lizard Queens
Kris Haig, The Lizard Queens
Joey McGrath, The Lizard Queens

Dale Semple, The Lizard Queens
Micajah Sturgess, Queer Songbook Orchestra
Brooke Manning, LOOM
Victoria Cheong, New Chance, Healing Power Records
Thom Gill, Queer Songbook Orchestra/Bernice/Thom Gill
Haxan
Graham Van Pelt
Christine Bougie, Bahamas
Tara Kannangara
Katie McBride
Jeremie Albino
Micah Erenberg
Ben Kunder
Dylan Frankland, Tallies
Louis Percival, Onakabazien / The Worst
Graham Walsh, Holy F*ck, Etiquette, Basketball 4 Life
Evan Cartwright
Arianna Rueda
Ansley Simpson
Tim Westberg
Andrea Ramolo
Sophia Katz, Ferrari Garden
Daniel Lee, Hooded Fang/Phedre/Lee Paradise
Yvonne Matsell, Promoter
Thalia Coryn, Prancer
Cass Beau
Johnny Spence, Queer Songbook Orchestra/Composer
Kiwi Jr

Adam Hindle

Mingjia Chen, Mingjia

Alex Martenstyn

Rodrigo-Fernandez Stoll, Fog and Lasers, Actor/Comedian

Carleigh Aikins, Dwayne Gretzky, La Force, Ben Kunder, Jeremie Albino

Mike Duffield, Beams

Anna Mērneiks, Beams

Brian Borchardt, Holy Fuck/Dusted

Tamara Lindeman, The Weather Station

Jamie Kacor, Mindful MCs

Josh Finlayson, The Skydiggers

Brian Cuddy

Shawn William Clark

Romy Lightman, Tasseomancy

Sari Lightman, Tasseomancy

Yves Jarvis

Anna Horvath, Merival

Nicholas McKinlay, Fast Romantics

Dave Plowman, Patchwork Sound

Simon Outhit

Steve Lavery

Jasper Smith

Rich DaSilva

Stefanie McCarrol, Brave Shores, BART

Michael Peter Olsen, Our Founders

Kris Ulrich

Mara Nesrallah, Decoration Day, Anna

Kaïa Kater

Jason Jang, The Beachmen
Bryn Jennings, Green Girl
Ben VanBuskirk, Blackout Orchestra
Iulia ciobanu, Cherry Blaster
Julie Arsenault
Alex Samaras, Tryal/Grex/Queer Songbook Orchestra
David Wall, The Bourbon Tabernacle Choir, The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band
Yoshi Maclear Wall
Michael C. Duguay
Melanie St-Pierre, Casper Skulls
Neil Bednis, Casper Skulls
Aurora Bangarth, Casper Skulls
Fraser McClean, Casper Skulls
Christina Bell, Chrissy
David Macintosh, Kashew Butter
Sydanie
Holly Hudson, Valeo Arts Management
Alisa Gayle
Sharon Nutzati, Caren
Hilary Fong, cutsleeve
Amanda Rheaume
Nirmala Basnayake, controller.controller
Kalyn Fantasia, Somewhereelse
Lee Rose, Ace of Wands
Rollie Pemberton, Cadence Weapon
Lana Mauro
Pat O'Brien, Jaunt
Thomas Helliwell, Jaunt

Caitlin Woelfle O'Brien, Jaunt
Duncan Hood, Jaunt
Nick Nausbaum, Jaunt
Daniel Reardon, Jaunt
Dondrea Erauw, Instinct Entertainment
Belinda Corpuz
Ruhee Dewji
Kate Palumbo
Adam Baldwin
Michael Barclay
Matt Rideout, A&B Sound Studios and Stream Tune
Kevin Black, Fast Romantics
Max Mertens
Thomas Kelly, Tired Kid
Taylor Nelles-McGee
Chris Pruden, Tara Kannangara, ZINNIA, Future Machines
Joshua Cockerill, Animal Parts, Runaway Twain
Lenny Bull
Diana Chan McNally, Automaticamore
Claire Doyle, Claire Davis, YUKA
Tafari Anthony
Maryam Said, Poolblood
Sarah Ford, Leather Jacuzzi
Aimée Claxton
Chaka V. Grier, Journalist (Bandcamp, SOCAN, Musicworks, NOW)
Jacob Morgan
Heather Mazhar, Beams, Fern Tips
Megan Bonnell

Saffron Aldred, Saffron A
Harrison Forman, Mr. Joy, Hieronymus Harry
Jamie Drake, TorQ Percussion Quartet
Adrian C.N. Barry, Ted Leo and the Pharmacists, Gauche
Stefan Hegerat
Lisa Conway, L CON
Parmida Kakavand, Päter
Jonas Bonnetta, Evening Hymns, Port William Sound
Kenny Boothby, Little Kid
Amy Fort
Sally Shaar, MONOWHALES
Jordan Circosta, MONOWHALES
Zach Zanardo, MONOWHALES
Alex Baigent, Westelaken
Rob McLay, Westelaken
Jordan Seccareccia, Westelaken
Lucas Temor, Westelaken
Alexa Dirks, Begonia
Jordaan Mason
Danika Vandersteen
Kate Killet - POSI VIBEZ
Richard Haubrich
Cayley Thomas
Adrienne McLaren, Silver Pools
Todd Macdonald, Silver Pools
Miranda Crabtree, Silver Pools
Jaron Freeman-Fox
Alex Southey

Thom Varey, Varey Sound, Illyin Pipes
Nick Harris, First Base
Fraser Wynne, First Base
Mike Simpson, First Base
Patrick McCormack, First Base
Brad Kilpatrick
Julie Fader
Julie Title
Steve Chahley, engineer, mixer, producer
Mack Longpre, Tara Kannangara, ZINNIA
Sarah Cripps
Devon Pelley
Laura C. Bates, Völur
Gavin Gardner, Wooden Sky, All Day Coconut
Rayna Elizabeth, Imperial Ashes
Andrew Lauzon, Imperial Ashes
Drew Hallenbeck, Imperial Ashes
Greg Olsen, Imperial Ashes
Nick Chiarore, Imperial Ashes
Rob Dickson
Sarah Burke, SiriusXM
Sara Bortolon-Vettor, Bonnie Trash
Emma Bortolon-Vettor, Bonnie Trash
Jessy Bell Smith, Skydiggers
Casey Mecija
Aaron Comeau, Skydiggers, The Trailer
Wolf Saga
Eirene Cola, Pantayo

Claire Whitehead

Dustin Seabrook

Pat Sloan, Cassius Sounds, Good People

Lawyers and Law Students: Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions

December 4, 2020

John Tory, Mayor of City of Toronto
Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão
Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Mary Ann Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration

Re: Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions

Dear Mayor Tory,

We write as lawyers and students in law concerned with the health and wellbeing of members of our community, and we urge against any action to break up peaceful encampments in Toronto. We have learned that the city is seeking to dismantle encampments and forcibly evict individuals who already experience egregious forms of housing insecurity and homelessness. Instead, we hope the city will take this as an opportunity to demonstrate that our city and the administration are serious about addressing the social determinants of health and well-being - including permanent, affordable housing for all.

The rise of encampments in Toronto is a result of decades-long policy inaction that has produced Toronto's housing crisis, including increasing financialization, and a lack of affordable and social housing. Policy inaction at the municipal level has barred many historically marginalized communities, including poor and working class, Black, Indigenous and racialized peoples, people living with disabilities as well as queer, trans, and gender non-conforming folks, from accessing and maintaining safe, affordable housing.

We fundamentally believe that people have the right to be treated with respect, compassion, equality and dignity, including the right to make their own decisions about their health and well being, and to live and build in communities that they aspire to. Encampments are acts of self-determination and community-based responses that mitigate the harms created by these ongoing policy failures. For many, encampments provide a sense of home, security and belonging, and mitigate the unnecessary health risks shouldered by marginalized communities.

The proposed efforts to clear encampments are inconsistent with both Canada's and the city's own commitment to recognizing housing as a human right. At a minimum, this includes the right to be free from forcible eviction - which is how we read the city's proposed plan to clear encampments. We also see encampments as a constitutionally protected means of raising one's concerns with institutional and state inaction on housing issues. We hope that working

with those living in encampments can be the first step in a continued dialogue towards finding permanent housing solutions. This is consistent with the guidelines set out in the [National Protocol on Encampments in Canada](#), which recognizes that individuals living in encampments are rights holders entitled to dignified treatment and self-determination.

Displacing people from encampment communities during a pandemic also presents clear public health concerns. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has issued formal guidance against clearing encampments, as it can cause individuals to disperse throughout the community and break connections with their health care providers. We view the proposed efforts to clear encampments as ineffective and inhumane insofar as they criminalize and harass individuals already experiencing violations of the fundamental right to housing. Policy action placed into ensuring that city workers clear encampments, ultimately diverts resources away from permanent housing solutions. This is compounded by the fact that the city's winter plan does not adequately address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Advocates and social workers estimate that over 1000 people are living on the streets and with the current "eviction blitz" that number is on the rise. The City's winter plan offers only temporary housing in congregate living and shelter hotels with no commitment that individuals will not be released back into homelessness. We cannot, in good conscience, recommend or accept forcing people into a choice between homelessness and congregate living situations, with undue health risks. The COVID-19 pandemic makes it clear that congregate living environments compromise people's health and well-being.

We urge the city to take this as an opportunity to put our resources into permanent housing solutions for all and to engage in meaningful consultation with individuals living in encampments, including providing them with the necessary safety gear and basic necessities. This guidance also flows from recommendations of the [Faulkner and Chapman Inquests](#). It is a public health imperative that encampment communities be provided access to clean water, food, sanitation facilities, and supportive healthcare services, in order to prevent unnecessary harm to health.

We view homelessness and encampment evictions as pressing human rights issues. A humane rights based approach to this crisis would be to first declare a moratorium on clearing encampments and then to meaningfully engage with those living in encampment communities. We look forward to the city's action in this regard.

Signed,

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David Wright, LSO#28715G, Ryder Wright Blair & Holmes LLP

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Lara Koerner Yeo LSO #75765B, Cavalluzzo LLP

November 30, 2020

Attention:

Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto

Deputy Mayor Ana Bailao, City of Toronto

City of Toronto Councillors

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Mary Ann Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration

Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions from 50+ Legal Academics

As scholars and teachers of law, we are writing to express our deep concerns about the criminalization and eviction of unhoused people from encampments by the City of Toronto. We are experts in constitutional law, municipal law, property law, administrative law, access to justice, poverty law, human rights, immigration and refugee law, Aboriginal law, and housing law. We see encampment evictions as part of a larger trend taking place in the City where people face unprecedented levels of housing precarity. Even as we are all told to stay home to help combat the spread of COVID-19, thousands of people are at risk of losing their homes. We urge the City to recognize its legal and moral obligations to uphold and defend the human rights of all residents, including tenants and unhoused persons. Bold action to protect our most vulnerable residents is required to respond to the unprecedented nature of this crisis.

In solidarity with unhoused residents of Toronto who are surviving through the pandemic and the cold of winter in encampments, we call on you to immediately take the following actions:

- Declare a moratorium on encampment evictions;
- Repeal prohibitions against camping and sheltering and involve unhoused persons directly in all decisions about encampments, shelters and shelter hotels;
- Stop the seizure of basic survival equipment, including Tiny Shelters, Foam Domes, and tents from encampment residents;

- Work with unhoused persons and their allies to develop a human rights approach to homelessness;
- Provide basic services such as drinking water and sanitation to encampments until adequate non-congregate long term housing is available to all residents;
- Focus City staff and resources on the provision of safe, non-congregate, long-term housing, instead of criminalizing encampment residents;
- Work with tenants' groups and advocates across the City to protect tenants from eviction and enforce residential housing standards - safe and secure permanent housing is the solution to homelessness in our city.

We base these urgent calls on legal principles, including Canada's commitments under international human rights law, as outlined by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing in the [National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada](#). Canada's international human rights commitments include the *International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, *Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, and the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*. We also note that Canadian courts have expressly recognized that encampment evictions engage s 7 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in the absence of alternative housing or shelter ([Victoria v Adams](#) 2009; [British Columbia v Adamson](#) 2016; [Abbotsford v Shantz](#) 2015).

Residents of encampments are rights holders, but not all residents are being treated equally. As a government for all residents of Toronto, the City is obligated to protect and [uphold the rights](#) of unhoused persons equally with the rights of other residents. However, we know that safe, secure, and permanent housing is [not distributed equally in Toronto](#). Instead, all levels of government and the private housing and rental markets [discriminate against Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities](#) (including immigrants, [migrant workers](#), [and refugees](#)) as well as [youth](#) and [people living with disabilities](#). The [compounded crises](#) of the pandemic, job loss, essential but also structurally precarious work, [anti-Black racism](#), and settler colonialism only further entrench this discrimination. We urge the City to immediately shift from a focus on enforcement and criminalization towards the promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of all residents. This will require that City staff and elected officials listen to encampment residents about their needs and priorities [and meaningfully involve them in decision making](#). In line with the City's stated commitments, [including on anti-Black racism](#), it will require the City to be accountable to encampment residents generally and with respect to any relocations.

Unhoused persons are experts on their own lives and must be directly involved in all decisions affecting them. We urge the City to immediately invite encampment residents and their allies to meaningfully participate in the development of policies and programs related to encampments. This includes the transparent provision of information about housing and shelter programs, as well as the City's policies and practices related to encampments. It includes the provision of adequate resources to support meaningful participation, including free independent legal advice. Most importantly, it includes the possibility of influencing the decision making process. Emergency management measures in many cities have [severely limited public participation in decision making](#) during the pandemic, with particular impacts on Black, Indigenous, and radicalized communities. We urge the City to ensure that those most impacted by decisions are directly and meaningfully involved, even and especially during a public health emergency.

Encampment residents must be fully informed and free to decide where they live. When being asked to relocate or provided with a housing offer, encampment residents must be provided with all necessary information to determine whether the offer meets their needs and time to make an informed decision. Police and private security should not be present when housing offers are made and City staff should never use tactics that intimidate or harass encampment residents. Encampment residents must never be forced to accept an offer that results in removal from family, community, and necessary supports.

Indigenous peoples, including those living in encampments, have constitutional rights. We note that [many](#) of the people [surviving outside are Indigenous people](#) to whom the City has specific constitutional obligations. They have the right to self-determination, including the right to choose where they live and to refuse housing options that do not accommodate their needs. Forced displacement of unhoused Indigenous peoples perpetuates ongoing colonial violence and displacement. As a government [committed to Indigenous peoples](#) and operating on the Dish With One Spoon Treaty territory, the City must take special care to respect and fulfill the rights of Indigenous people in encampments in accordance with Indigenous law and protocols.

Forced evictions are a violation of human rights law and a public health risk. Governments are [not permitted](#) to destroy people's homes and personal belongings even when that home is a tent or an improvised shelter. Such forced evictions are a violation of the human rights and the dignity of encampment residents. They are also a public health risk during COVID-19. The US [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommends that encampments not be cleared: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break

connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread." British Columbia's Public Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, has issued [similar](#) advice.

At this time, COVID rates across Canada, including Toronto, [continue to increase](#). As of November 26, 2020, there are 11 active outbreaks in shelters and congregate settings. Between the start of the pandemic and October 1, 2020, there were [649 cases of COVID-19 in Toronto shelters](#) and five people died. The ability to shelter in place and maintain social distancing is critical in preventing the spread of the virus.

Even absent the COVID-19 pandemic, forcible eviction of homeless encampments perpetuates a cycle of continual displacement that has [well known and severe adverse effects](#) on the mental and physical health of unhoused individuals.

Encampment evictions are occurring at the same time that thousands of housed tenants are facing evictions from their homes in the midst of the pandemic. These mass evictions will [exacerbate](#) the current lack of affordable housing and shelter space in the City. Almost [6,000 applications for evictions](#) were filed between April and August. The Landlord and Tenant Board has embarked on a "blitz" with 2,900 hearings (largely evictions for non-payment of rent) scheduled in October. The virtual proceedings have been [plagued by procedural and technical problems](#), including a lack of notice, access to counsel, and the inability to access legal documents. We have serious concerns about the adequacy of these proceedings, including rights to procedural fairness of those facing the loss of their homes.

Recent changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act*, enacted through Bill 184 during the pandemic, [have exacerbated the vulnerability of tenants](#) despite Toronto's extreme lack of affordable housing and the financial impact of COVID-19. Observers of recent eviction proceedings report that landlords are unilaterally imposing repayment plans and using the new provisions to evict tenants even where substantial repayments have been made. Board members are granting evictions without the tenants being present. Tenants are being denied the opportunity to raise concerns, such as outstanding repairs, in eviction hearings. Tracey Heffernan, director of Ontario's tenant duty counsel program at the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, [bluntly stated "the board has indicated their complete and utter lack of concern" about these issues.](#)

As noted above, the 'eviction blitz' will be [particularly pernicious for racialized Torontonians](#) struggling with housing insecurity [before the onset](#) of the pandemic. Many of these [same communities](#) have been [hardest hit by COVID-19](#). In the context of the pandemic **we urge the city to view these pending evictions as a public health emergency and step in to protect residents from the risk of homelessness.** As the

level of government closest to communities, [the City has both the power and the obligation](#) to act in defense of the health and well being of its residents.

The City of Toronto has inadequate housing alternatives. The city's winter plan offers only 560 indoor spots for people living outside, yet over 1000 people are currently unhoused. This number will grow, as more people are being evicted from their housing every day. In [Montreal](#), roughly 20% of those living in encampments were experiencing homelessness for the first time due to the pandemic. Moreover, existing indoor shelter options are [simply not accessible](#) to many unhoused individuals due to curfews; restrictions on pets, guests, partners or belongings; mental health conditions like claustrophobia, anxiety or PTSD; and past experiences of assault or incarceration. Since people have established themselves in encampments in their communities of choice, they should be allowed to stay until adequate safe housing, close to their communities and supports, is made available.

Encampments are a result of [failed government housing and planning policies](#), including on the City of Toronto's [part](#). Until there is enough housing there will be encampments. While we acknowledge the City has made efforts to offer indoor housing, by focusing on congregate settings the City is failing to meet the needs of encampment residents and forcing them to choose between staying outside or risking infection with COVID-19. The recently opened [Better Living Centre](#) has been [likened to a "detention centre"](#) with cold showers and no privacy. Further, while shelters and shelter hotels have provided an alternative for some unhoused persons, over-policing and surveillance and unilaterally imposed rules and conditions exclude many others. Isolation from social networks and community combined with inadequate supports may even [put some residents at risk](#).

There is ongoing, inhumane treatment of encampment residents. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Toronto has failed to provide unhoused people with access to water, basic sanitation and survival gear despite the [recommendations](#) of the 2018 Faulkner inquest and City Council's [own motion](#) passed on October 27. The City's failures violate a range of human rights, including the rights to water and sanitation and the right health. Indeed, the City has used these failures to provide basic necessities to argue that encampments are [unsafe for residents](#). The City of Toronto, as the frontline government responsible for the safety and security of all city residents, must ensure at a minimum, that basic standards are ensured in encampments while adequate housing options are secured. We note that [San Francisco has established safe sleeping sites](#) with services such as food, social workers, and sanitation, and is currently considering expanding the program.

While communities of volunteers such as the Encampment Support Network have stepped in to fill the gaps, **this does not absolve the City** of its obligations to protect and uphold the dignity and human rights of encampment residents. In fact, instead of working with residents and volunteers, the City is [obstructing and undermining](#) volunteer efforts by [confiscating](#) community-built winter shelters to protect residents from deadly cold temperatures. These shelters, like tents and other belongings, are the property of encampment residents. Their removal is a violation of residents' property rights, and puts their health, safety and lives at risk.

An immediate eviction moratorium is required to protect human rights and public health. We call on the City to enact and implement an immediate and unequivocal moratorium on encampment evictions until the city has safe shelter developed in consultation with residents and their advocates. We note that the City of Montreal has [unequivocally stated](#) that it will not dismantle encampments during the pandemic, and urge Toronto to do the same [or better](#). Further, we call on the City to [protect Toronto residents from evictions](#) from their homes [during COVID-19](#). The lifting of the provincial moratorium in the midst of a pandemic has left many people vulnerable to homelessness. **Tenants and people living in encampments are [organized](#) and [resisting](#) these changes. It is incumbent on the city to support them.**

The City as a representative government and guardian of human rights must take bold action to preserve the health, safety, and lives of its most vulnerable residents.

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December 4, 2020

Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions from Academics and Researchers

Attention: John Tory, Mayor, City of Toronto; Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager Shelter Support & Housing Administration, City of Toronto; Janie Romonoff, General Manager Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Department, City of Toronto; Toronto City Councillors

Toronto, ON - This is a public statement from academics and researchers in support of encampment residents living in parks in the City of Toronto. We call on the City to respect the choice of residents to remain in tents and temporary shelters, and to immediately stop the forced eviction of residents and the removal of their belongings – including ‘foam dome’ and mini-home shelters. In addition, we call on the City to provide permanent, affordable, and supportive housing that meets the needs of encampment residents.

Evicting people from encampments and forcing them into accommodations against their will does not solve the problem of homelessness – it is a punitive approach that harms residents, many of whom will continue to be homeless, but elsewhere. Acknowledging this is an important step in moving forward towards a future in which no one has to live in parks.

Winter has come to COVID-19 encampments

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, people without homes have become more visible in a series of encampments in city parks and public spaces. These encampments are makeshift solutions that many residents find better than staying in shelters, respite centres, and shelter hotels. For many, encampments allow for more dignity and autonomy than city-provided alternatives, and connect residents with community and supports. In the absence of dignified shelter alternatives, some residents wish to remain in encampments. This does not mean that encampments are ideal – no one should have to resort to living in parks. The reality, however, is that for many people this is the best option right now.

Survival in encampments has been made possible by the energy of residents and the support of many groups, including the [Encampment Support Network \(ESN\)](#), which provides daily humanitarian aid (including shelter supplies, food, water, sanitary products, and warm clothing) to residents in six encampments. Recently, volunteers have worked with residents to build “[foam dome](#)” sleeping shelters and [insulated wooden mini-homes](#), which enable survival in the cold.

In late November, 2020, encampment residents and ESN volunteers were told that the City of Toronto is planning to clear encampments in the coming weeks, and that the City has launched an ‘encampment table’ – a dedicated team of city workers to clear encampments. In what appears to be a first stage in these clearances, the City has put stickers on foam domes – informing occupants that the domes are subject to removal. The City has also [threatened to financially punish](#) mini-home builder Khaleel Seiwright, who raised over \$150,000 in donations to build mini-homes for people living outdoors in the winter. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry, and Recreation informed Mr. Seiwright that “the City reserves its right to take legal action and/or employ any and all enforcement tools available” in removing the mini-homes.

We denounce these punitive actions. We call on the City to recognize that while these structures are not replacements for safe and suitable housing, they’re badly needed at this time. In the absence of real shelter, mini-homes and foam domes prevent people from freezing to

death, provide a modicum of security and a regular place to sleep and store items. Removing them makes people less safe, not more. Many people whose structures are removed will continue to be homeless, only without these structures that provide some warmth, security and protection.

In addition, we note that forced evictions of homeless encampments in Canada is [not permitted under international human rights law](#), “even if those homes are made of improvised materials and established without legal security.” These actions are also contrary to the federal National Housing Strategy Act, which states (in Section 5(2)(3)), that the strategy must “provide for participatory processes to ensure the ongoing inclusion and engagement of civil society, stakeholders, and vulnerable groups and persons with lived experience of housing need” and homelessness.

There are not enough shelter beds, and shelters do not work for everyone

According to the ESN, there are over 1,000 people living outside in Toronto – both in ESN-supported encampments and other parks and public spaces in the City. The City of Toronto’s winter plan can accommodate [560 people](#), meaning that people will go without shelter.

In addition, not all options provided by the City work for all encampment residents. While some have had positive experiences in shelter hotels, these spaces [do not work for everyone](#). Shelter hotels are often too distant from communities of support and may impose dehumanizing rules and restrictions.

Certain shelters may not be an option for residents who’ve been harmed or traumatized there in the past. Shelters are also congregate settings that put residents at risk of catching COVID-19, which is spread through the air in indoor spaces. Only after a [lawsuit from advocates](#) did the City’s Medical Officer of Health agree to enforce physical distancing measures in shelters. Many believe they are still not safe.

Many encampment residents are being encouraged to go to the City’s 100-bed [Better Living Centre](#) shelter. Launched in the winter of COVID-19, housing advocates have criticized this space, based on reports that residents are under constant surveillance (separated by plexiglass barriers that provide no privacy), that overhead lights remain on at all hours, that cold showers are available in exterior trailers, and that there is a 2-bag limit on belongings.

Some unhoused people will accept the City’s offer to stay in temporary shelter spaces. These spaces do not work for everyone. Coercing residents into accepting these spaces is not equivalent to providing them with shelter. Until residents can meaningfully consent to housing choices that provide them with dignity, it is inhumane and contrary to international human rights law to remove shelter and possessions that enable them to live outside in encampments.

Evictions in both Encampments and Apartments

The City’s plans to clear encampments are colliding with the crisis of COVID-19 evictions – the wave of evictions of people unable to pay their rent due to pandemic-induced hardship. While evictions were banned in Ontario during the first wave of the pandemic, as of August, 2020 the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) has resumed operations. According to the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), [2,900 evictions](#) were filed in October alone. Tenant organizers [live-tweeting](#) the on-line eviction hearings have described the LTB as an [evictions factory](#). Tenant organizers and their supporters are [demanding an end to evictions](#) and warn that evicted

residents may contribute to the crisis of homelessness already visible in encampments. Notably, the City's Deputy Mayor Ana Bailao and Chief Housing Officer Abi Bond are members of the [Right to Home](#) working group, which commits local governments to ensure that "evictions do not result in homelessness." We demand that the City live up to its commitments, and stop the evictions of housed people during COVID-19, as well as unhoused people living in encampments.

Our Demands

As academics and researchers, we condemn City efforts to evict encampment residents and to remove the possessions of residents – including foam domes and mini-homes that provide crucial protection from the elements. These actions are contrary to the UN Special Rapporteur's [National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada](#), and those outlined by the Right to Housing in Toronto Network's [Encampment Rights Review](#). We demand that the City continue to allow encampment residents to remain in public parks and spaces for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis and until there are sufficient safe, affordable, and dignified shelter options for encampment residents. Importantly, the City must respect the agency, autonomy, dignity, and self-determination of residents. Residents must consent to rehousing, rather than face coercion – be it through threats, harassment, and the destruction of property and temporary shelter.

We echo the calls of encampment residents and other groups – including Encampment Support Network (ESN), the [Shelter and Housing Justice Network \(SJHN\)](#), and the [Ontario Coalition Against Poverty \(OCAP\)](#) – who are speaking out to condemn encampment clearances and promote affordable housing. We add our voices in demanding:

- A moratorium on forced encampment evictions, removals, and clearances
- A commitment not to remove foam domes, mini-houses, and other structures that keep encampment residents warm and more protected
- The provision of survival gear, fire safety equipment, running water, and washrooms to allow people to live more safely in encampments. This should include access to indoor washrooms and showers near to encampments.
- An increase in and improvement to temporary shelter spaces, to house people indoors as more permanent solutions are built. Open at least 2,000 new shelter hotel spaces in the next four months - with half located in the downtown core. Shelter spaces and admission processes must ensure dignity for persons.
- The provision of permanent, affordable housing – including housing with supports – to safely shelter encampment residents and other precariously-housed and under-housed people

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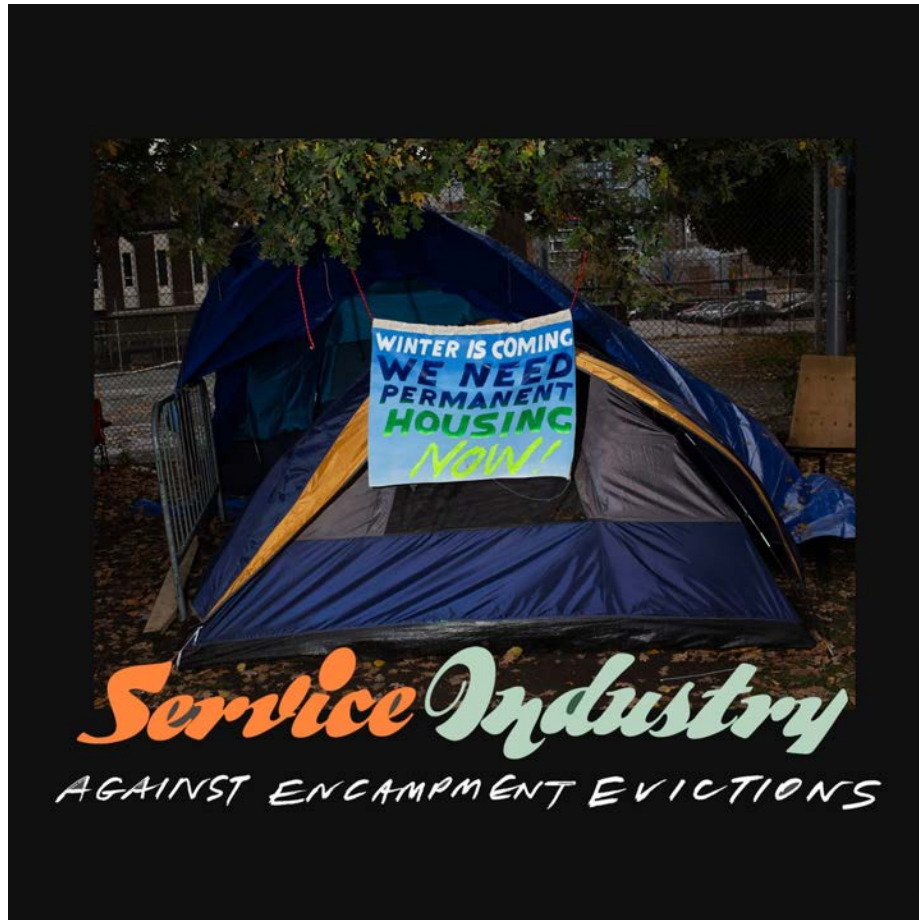
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PUBLIC STATEMENT BY TORONTO SERVICE INDUSTRY AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS



December 4th, 2020

To:

John Tory

Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Mary Ann Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration

We are writing to you today in solidarity with our unhoused neighbours in encampments to demand a moratorium on encampment evictions and seizures of basic survival equipment, including Tiny Shelters, Foam Domes, and tents.

As bar/restaurant/cafe owners and workers, we know as well as anyone how vulnerable this global pandemic and public health crisis has made many of us. Most of us, however, have a roof over our heads. In spite of the precarity we face, a number of the undersigned businesses and individuals have even stepped up to donate coffee, hot water, and/or hot meals, organize boot drives, provide donation storage, and other forms of encampment support that the City refuses to provide.

In response to COVID-19, the City of Toronto sprung into action to launch the CaféTO program. At the same time, the City has consistently denied unhoused people access to water, basic sanitation and survival gear, and has instead made life increasingly difficult for encampment residents. While the City even approved winterizing patios, it has also aggressively policed and opposed efforts to winterize tents and provide safer and warmer dwellings to people in encampments.

We know that the City's winter plan offers only 560 indoor spots for people living outside, yet over 1000 people are currently unhoused. The shelter system is at capacity, and yet more people are being evicted from their housing every day. Now the city is asking some people to make an impossible choice: Go inside and risk dying of COVID in an unsafe emergency shelter or stay outside and freeze to death.

Clearing life-saving shelters which provide warmth is not a solution. Tiny shelters and tents are people's property. People depend on their social ties and community bonds to survive. This is an abuse of power and direct act of violence. Shelters are full. This means that the city does not have enough spots inside right now for all the people living outside.

We fund the City's housing workers, Parks Ambassadors, and shelter programs. The City cannot commit these acts of violence on our behalf. We want to see the clearings stopped until we have safe shelter developed in consultation with encampment residents and their advocates.

Even the [CDC](#) still recommends that encampments not be cleared: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

Most importantly, Toronto is built on stolen Indigenous land, on Dish With One Spoon territory. Many of the people surviving outside are Indigenous people, and

forcibly displacing them from their land is part of an ongoing legacy of colonial violence. They have an inherent right to live where they feel best.

The undersigned,

Toronto Restaurant Workers' Relief Fund

Cherry Bomb Coffee

Swan Dive

Lucky Shrike Bar

Fix Coffee + Bikes

The Federal

Gold Standard

Reunion Coffee Roasters

The Garrison

The Baby G

Get Well

Bang Bang Ice Cream & Bakery

The Embassy Bar

Empire Espresso

Chaveta Coffee

First and Last Coffee

The Little Jerry

Open House

Nina Shaver

Caitlin Emery

Marianna Reis

Elixabeth Ruggeri

Nicholas McKinlay

Jesse Laderoute

Leah Kirkland

Goldie Saljoughi

Kevin Hegge

Jamal Watson

Michael Wyspianski

Sophie Fagan

Ginger Sidnell-Green

Charles Tilden

Kenadi Copland

Izzy Mink

Hannah Leigh-Bell

Hannah Rose Gerry

Brad Casey

Zoë Alexis-Abrams

Jayme Keith

Joel French Desbois

Savannah Pulfer

Danielle Worrall

Cassandra McCann

Danielle Mitrovic

Alexis Marroquin

Grant van Gameren

Sunny Stone

Matt Kopysh

Michael Vu

Alex Jung

Nicholas Di Genova

Shevon Jake Lewis

Ariel Slootsky

Stefan Campbell

Mia Feldbruegge

Sarah Kolasky

James Pottie

Rane Elliott-Armstrong

Calm Elliott-Armstrong

Jena Gogo

Kristina Ileana Koski

Kendall Chandler

Jenny Lesslie

Joshua Cockerill

John Mostyn

Paul James Mortimer

Allie Pearse

Jalil Bokhari

Marcel North Gallant

Nick Prentice

Darcy Finck

Phillip Ly

Jessica Prust

Madeleine Clanfield

Audrey Bankley

Tedde Rae Albertson

Rachel Hoecke

Claudio Gislón

Saad Siddiqui

Lyndsay Siddiqui

Christopher Swimmings

Alex Low

Audrey Kwan

Christina Rampton

Lauren Wilkins

Ashley Craig

Alex Ateah

Alexis Kronwald-deBruyn

Corey Gayadeen

Peter Mahoney

Sierra Holder

Noah Holder

Patrick Grant

Clare O'Leary

Mai Cao

Megan Brady

Michele Galay

Patrick Howell

Alfee Ferrante

Nicole Noël

Sarah McMillan

Michele Galay

Dorothy Progosh

Cathy Waszczuk

Dustin Jones

Brayden Jones

Tia McGregor

Amanda Lee Norsworthy

Jack Comerford

Karen Wielonda

Celine Araujo

Tara Pearce

Nora Langill

Tim Morse

Sofia Shiner

Xotchitl Acevedo Salazar

Zach Sloatsky

Flora Calvert

Hayley Rogers

Laura Squires

Amanda Crist

Kaythi Rossmann

Regina Mierzwa

Katie Hernandez

Sophia Chavez

Carla Di Genova

Riley Martin

Matthew Aldred

Michael Couvillon

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Olivia Gagnon

Adam Pesce

Jordan Gordanier

Sarah O'Sullivan

Juno Blackwood

Jason S. Cipparrone

Rosanne Pezzelli

Jenny Donnelly

Noelle Sawchuk

Ibrahim Abusitta

Jillian Hamilton

Seine Pak

David Sims

Deanna Grant

Adrianna Boni

Alessandro Aureli

Paulina Kubara

Ashley Spiegel

Theadora van Goor

Ian Haworth

Margaret Dancy

Carlyn Bezic

Denise Rose

Melissa Gubins

Matthew Greenwood

Kyle Stevenson

Alistair Bundale

Jack Copple

Ashlynn Foster

Jane Duncan

Ric Pettit

Melody Pomares

Kyle McCrea

Robyn Phillips

Micah Molina

Veronica Ibarra

Michelle Phan

Racquel Pate

Allan Kelley

Danielle Hinchberger

Jessica Walker

Ali Haberstroh

Hannah Ford

Duncan Macneill

Val Sklar

Billy Hamilton

Kimberly Ha

Mark Pincock

Tish Solomon

Arianne Persaud

Jaclyn Walker

Miriam Streiman

Samuel Beaulieu

Colin Lennard-White

Kaelah James

Sophie Weinstein

Micheline Lalonde

Geoff O'Connor

Jill Krasnicki

Oliver Darling

Callan Anderson

Mariam Muharuma

Hassel Aviles

Krysta Oben

Maria Lykouris

Laura Jane Faulds

Shankari Ratnanesan

Rachel Minns

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Matthew Lawrence

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Syd Blum

Jolanda Thomas

Bianca Thompson

Fabrizio DeCicco

Greg Macdonald

Emily Brundle

Isla Booker

Parker Littell

Sharon Nutzati

Will Jones

Jodie Dewald

Saad Qattan

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Nick Kervin

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Nilan Perera

Pamela Hong

Nataly Tchamichian

Lauren Parrott

Mary Elizabeth Di Carlo

Sarah Buckler

Mary Jones

Jacob Gatt

Ashley Wheeler

Brett Erina

December 4, 2020

ON BEHALF OF:
**A COALITION OF
TEMERTY
FACULTY OF
MEDICINE
STUDENTS**

JOHN TORY, MAYOR

ANA BAILÃO, DEPUTY MAYOR

MIKE LAYTON, COUNCILLOR & **TORONTO CITY COUNCIL**

JANIE ROMOFF, GENERAL MANAGER OF PARKS, FORESTRY AND
RECREATION

MARY-ANNE BEDARD, GENERAL MANAGER SHELTER SUPPORT HOUSING
ADMINISTRATION

We are writing this letter as a coalition of medical students from organizations and advocacy groups at the Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto in solidarity with our unhoused neighbours surviving the pandemic outside, cold and exposed to the elements, in Toronto's encampments. **We are asking you, our city councillors and representatives, to publicly declare a moratorium on encampment evictions.** Furthermore, we ask that you intervene immediately to stop City personnel from seizing basic survival equipment, like Tiny Shelters by Khaleel Seivwright, tents and Foam Doams, and forcibly removing people from public spaces.

Toronto's encampments are a reflection of policy and planning failures to develop affordable housing, compounded by an inadequate and unsafe COVID-19 response strategy for people who are underhoused and homeless. Even before COVID-19, Toronto was in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. A 2018 ACORN Report found that the majority of people living on low-incomes in our city, which include single people living on minimum wage and people receiving the Ontario Disability Support Program Benefit, are paying unaffordable rent (1). Prior to COVID-19, shelters in Toronto operated at close to 100% capacity (2). In the spring and summer of the COVID-19 crisis shelter capacity was substantially reduced (3).

In March 2020, the city created "shelter hotels" as an alternative to crowded congregate shelters where COVID-19 was spreading. However, when shelter hotels or individual rooms are available, they are often located far away from people's support networks and social services, including lifesaving services like safe consumption sites and harm reduction services. As a result, **people are dying in our city's shelter hotels from preventable and reversible overdoses.** A recent report in the Local suggests that at least 5 overdose deaths have occurred in shelter hotels since May, although the city does not keep track of official numbers. Every death is one too many.

ON BEHALF OF A COALITION OF TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE STUDENTS

The City's current plans to create new shelter space for the winter does not meet the needs of all those needing shelter. According to the Encampment Support Network, over 1000 people are currently living outside in Toronto. The City's winter plan only creates 560 new beds. The Encampment Support Network as well as the City's own shelter bed tracker suggest that the shelter system is nearly full.

Finding appropriate housing is a priority, and we understand that the City does offer options for people to shelter indoors if they are willing to relocate. However, forced evictions of those who refuse to relocate pose a serious risk to encampment residents' safety and security. People may be forced into congregate settings where they risk contracting COVID-19, or may be stripped of life-saving community and peer support networks. If encampment residents refuse to relocate to a shelter, they may seek out hidden spaces where they are less likely to be evicted, but also less likely to access services, get help in an emergency, and survive safely.

We know already that clearing encampments and depriving people of survival equipment puts them in danger—the City's actions are in direct opposition to the 2018 Ontario Coroner's Inquest into the death of Grant Falkner, and the 2020 UN National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada, both of which recommended that the City provide survival equipment, supplies, and safety information to people who choose to stay outside instead of accessing City shelter services. People living in encampments have a right to choose for themselves where they live and what their 'safest option' is. The City must respect encampment residents' right to self determination as well as their individual needs, circumstances, health supports, social bonds and community of choice.

Forced evictions are also in direct opposition to the advice of public health officials. CDC clearly recommends against the forced clearance of encampments like the ones in the City of Toronto: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

On top of evictions, the City is seizing community-built winter shelters that protect people against the increasingly colder temperatures outside. Tiny Shelters as made by Khaleel Seivwright, foam domes, and tents are life-saving survival gear, and they belong to the encampment residents. Streets to Homes, Park Ambassadors and parks workers should be meaningfully engaging and consulting residents about options that suit their unique needs, not stripping people of their survival gear, shelter and property.

Therefore, we ask you to follow the evidence and recognize the rights of our unhoused neighbours, and declare a moratorium on evictions from encampments until the city has safe shelter options developed in consultation with residents and their advocates. Please demand that City personnel stop all efforts to forcibly remove people from public spaces, destroying their belongings and seizing survival equipment.

ON BEHALF OF A COALITION OF TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE STUDENTS

Furthermore, we ask that the funding originally designated to the planned forced removal of residents from encampments be re-allocated towards efforts that will support encampments residents by, for example, providing residents with survival gear, access to sanitation, warm showers, and other supports in consultation with residents. We also ask that the City cease legal actions against organizations created to support encampment residents, such as the Tiny Shelters initiative run by Khaleel Seivwright.

Additionally, we remind you that Toronto is on Dish With One Spoon territory. Many people surviving outside are Indigenous people—a reflection of ongoing colonial violence and oppression. Forcibly displacing Indigenous people from encampments is yet another act of violence and oppression. Indigenous peoples living in Toronto have an inherent right to live on these lands, and to refuse options for re-accommodation that do not meet their needs.

Encampments are a result of the City's failed housing policy and the ongoing neglect of unhoused Toronto residents. Encampments will persist until there is enough adequate, safe, and dignified housing for all Toronto residents.

Written by:

Paige Homme, Mia Kibel, and Seth Kibel

Signed and endorsed by:

Calandra Li: University of Toronto Medical Society (2T3)
Kenneth Williams: University of Toronto Medical Society (2T3)
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Rachel Currie: Out in Medicine (2T3)
Andrew David Mazzanti: Out in Medicine (MD/PhD Program)
Sarah Hyett: U of T Office of Indigenous Health (2T3)

(1) For information on proportion of Toronto residents with affordable housing, see pages 5–6 of the [2018 ACORN report, Affordable for Who?](#)

(2) For information about shelter capacity in Toronto prior to COVID-19, see page 41 of [Chapter 2 of the Toronto Foundation 2019/20 Vital Signs Report](#)

(3) For information about reduction in shelter capacity during COVID-19, see page 29 of [the motion by housing advocacy organizations against the City of Toronto](#)

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Sharu Kunasekaran (2T4)
Samantha Rossi (2T2)
Misha Dhuper (2T4)
Anna Jiang (2T3)
Asia van Buuren (2T1)
Jennifer Parker (MD/PhD Program)
Nicholas LeBel (2T4)
Andreea Damian (2T3)
Maryam Golafshani (2T3)
Nishila Mehta (2T2)
Grace Grafham (2T4)
Matthew Hacker Teper (2T3)
Hunter Warden (2T3)
Christine Wu (2T3)
Fahmeeda Murtaza (2T3)
Jessica Wong (2T3)
Bolade Shipeolu (2T3)
Sabrina Cancelliere (2T4)
Beverley Osei (2T4)
Evan Strom (2T3)
Patrick Gorges (2T3)
Lauren Beck (2T2)
Bernice Ho (2T3)
Yi Tao Chan (2T3)
Jacob Ferguson (2T3)
Yousuf Ahmed (2T2)
Christine Wang (2T2)
Chantal Phillips (2T3)
Justin Lu (2T3)
Natalie Pitch (2T3)
Matthew Yip (2T3)
Rachel Wine (2T3)
Helen Zeng (2T2)
Vincent Tang (2T1)
Haley Dupont (2T4)
Becca Chilvers (2T4)
Zarian Shahzad (2T4)
Thrmiga Sathiyamoorthy (2T4)
Jamie Kim (2T4)
Zuhal Mohmand (2T4)

Nicholas Mikolajewicz (2T4)
Nelson Saddler (2T2)
Grace McAlpine (2T4)
Kelti Smith (2T4)
Anas Samman (2T4)
Katerina Othonos (2T4)
Aarabi Thayaparan (2T4)
Stephanie Schwindt (2T1)
Madeline McDonald (2T1)
Vinyas Harish (2T1)
Anthony Botros (2T4)
Victoria Suwalska (2T4)
Taylor Mehta (2T1)
Mohamed Adam (2T4)
Amy Park (2T4)
Daksh Datta (2T4)
Kelsey Yang (2T4)
Eliot Winkler (2T4)
Renee Sharma (2T1)
Annie Yu (2T2)
Nikki Nathanielsz (2T3)
Alex Beomju Bak (2T4)
Madeleine Harris (2T4)
Ashmita Singh (2T3)
Caitlin Monaghan (2T4)
Avery Ohman (2T4)
Sebastian Jurga (2T3)
Jonah Latsky (2T1)
Everett Claridge (2T1)
Shrey Sindhwani (2T1)
Chantel Lim (2T4)
Mansur Naeem (2T4)
Erin Grennell (2T4)
Emily Bellicoso (2T1)
Alison Wong (2T4)
Courtney Hardy (2T2)
Jack Su (2T3)
Reenika Aggarwal (2T4)
Megan Wheatley (2T1)
Kathleen Trought (2T1)
Amna Majeed (2T4)
Nikki R. (2T3)
Fanny Cheng (2T2)
Kohilan Selvakumaran (2T1)

Amanda Lien (2T4)
Jim TC Chen (2T3)
Jillian Macklin (2T1)
Alex Liu (2T2)
Tega Ebeye (2T4)
Sushmitha Srinivasan (2T4)
Onella Charles (2T2)
Alexandra Chirila (2T3)
Harsh Naik (2T4)
Shannon Leung (2T4)
Rakshith Gangireddy (2T2)
Prajay Shah (2T1)
Mary Ollier (2T4)
Mian-Mian Cindy Kao (2T3)
Imaan Kherani (2T3)
Jacqueline Lim (2T4)
Samuel Wier (2T4)
Emily Vecchiarelli (2T3)
Maxwell Tran (2T1)
Jessie Zhang (2T4)
Emily Tam (2T3)
James Saravanamuttu (2T3)
Sauliha Alli (2T4)
Xinran Liu (2T3)
Kwasi Jnr Nkansah (2T3)
Leah Bennett (2T3)
Shereen Khattab (2T4)
Sonia Igboanugo (2T4)
Lisa Klotz (2T1)
Alexandra Spivak (2T3)

Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions

December 4, 2020

Mayor John Tory
Deputy Mayor Ana Bailao
Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Mary Ann Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration

We write to you on behalf of Anakbayan Toronto, a Filipino youth and student organization mobilizing Filipino youth on issues affecting Filipinos in Canada and in the Philippines. We have a membership of more than 50 youth ages 13-35 across Toronto.

We express solidarity with our unhoused neighbours trying to survive the cold winter in encampments around Toronto, in the midst of a pandemic. We call on you to decriminalize homelessness and encampments. We urge you to declare a moratorium on encampment evictions. Basic survival equipment, including Tiny Shelters, Foam Domes and tents should not be seized, nor should their providers be prosecuted. Rather than stifling their efforts, the City should collaborate with these community organizers to come up with meaningful solutions.

These encampments are a result of the City's prioritization of the financialization of housing and lack of investments in affordable housing, which shows how unsustainable this plan for housing is as it did not sustain the city through a pandemic. The rapid development and revitalization of several neighbourhoods creates a barrier to affordable housing for many, yet the city encourages the development of higher wealth neighbourhoods.

Clearing encampments and forcibly removing people from their communities increases the risk of spreading COVID-19. In fact, according to the CDC, clearing encampments causes the dispersion of people throughout the community and may break connections with service providers. Being outdoors and not in a congregate setting increases the ability to maintain distance from others. The CDC's guidelines say that people living unsheltered or in encampments should be allowed to remain where they are.

As winter approaches, it is the City's responsibility to ensure its residents have a warm, safe place to live and sleep along with the necessary amenities (i.e. public washrooms) and basic hygiene products (i.e. soap and water). On October 28, 2020 city councillors voted in favour of giving out survival gear such as tents and heat sources, but the city has yet to do so. They have done the exact opposite and taken away their equipment.



ANAKBAYAN TORONTO

*Anakbayan Toronto
2482 Dufferin St
Toronto, ON M6B 3R1*

Outreach workers on the ground estimate over 1000 people are currently unhoused while the City's plan intends to add only 560 beds. The shelter occupancy rate was already 98% prior to the pandemic with poor conditions within the shelters such as beds piled in side by side. Shelters like the Better Living Respite Centre are high risk for COVID-19 outbreaks. The entire design of the Better Living centre was created without consulting any of the population it seeks to assist. The City has consistently neglected the traumatic factors that cause homelessness in the first place, offering band-aid solutions instead. Asking vulnerable people to choose between living in a glass cage or freezing outside is inhumane. Many centres also lack trained professionals to handle mental illness and overdose protections.

Funds are being misallocated. The City is using money to deploy workers to clear encampments and criminalize those living in them. These funds could be used to create individualized housing and provide resources for vulnerable populations to survive this pandemic and the winter.

Finally, Toronto residents have the right to self-determination. The government attempted solutions without consulting the people they are trying to help. People know what is best for them and have the right to choose where they want to live. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing says that it is a human rights violation to forcibly evict people and remove them from their homes without consulting them on what living arrangements are acceptable to them. People in encampments have created a chosen community and it is unfair to remove them from that.

We stand with the Encampment Support Network and other concerned groups and organizations against the forcible relocation of people from their communities of choice.

Signed,

Anakbayan Toronto

Waynes Manalang, Ward 3
Mia Ines Rivera, Ward 4
Rosetta Lucente, Ward 4
Aisha Kaalim, Ward 6
Caryl Yucor, Ward 8
Shayne Hontiveros, Ward 8
Julianne Guevara, Ward 9
Margarita Bartholomew, Ward 10
Fatima Barron, Ward 14
Dani Magsumbol, Ward 18
Myka Jaymalin, Ward 18
Elvin Velasco, Ward 21
Richmond Uy, Ward 21
Gabrielle Aquino, Ward 25
Robyn Lapuz, Ward 25

JOINT STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM UNIVERSITY-ROSEDALE'S NDP RIDING ASSOCIATIONS



Dear Mayor Tory,

The NDP Riding Associations of University-Rosedale are writing to you to strongly condemn the City's efforts to clear encampments, and to call on you to instead ensure that encampment residents have access to sanitation and basic survival gear.

The City's policy of clearing encampments is short-sighted and needlessly punitive. It endangers lives. It does nothing to end homelessness. It refuses to meet people where they are, and instead attempts to corral them into compliance with the city's inadequate shelter measures.

The shelter system is demonstrably full. Night after night, in spite of the City's self-reported numbers, advocates and outreach workers who call central intake are told that there are not enough beds. With the Landlord and Tenant Board's current eviction blitz, the number of unhoused people will only grow. When encampments are cleared, many people have nowhere else to go, and remain sleeping outside regardless, but without the supportive communities they've created over the past many months.

In addition to the system being at capacity, there are many other reasons people are choosing to live in encampments over the options provided by the City. Many encampment residents do not want to risk getting COVID-19 in a congregate setting like the Better Living Centre.

Facilities like the Toronto Plaza Hotel and the Delta Shelter Hotel are located far from people's communities, families, jobs, friends, social services and overdose prevention sites, and stays are contingent on arbitrary rules and dehumanizing regulations such as curfews, spot checks, and no-visitor policies. People know what works best for them, and are choosing to remain where they have autonomy, dignity, and supports.



In light of the City's continued failure to provide adequate housing or shelter, or to engage in meaningful consultation with unhoused people as to how to improve their programs, we would expect the City to applaud community efforts to assist unhoused neighbours.

Instead, we've seen Khaleel Selvwright, the man building tiny shelters for people living outside this winter, served notice by the General Manager of Parks to stop this vital project. Rather than being thanked, he is being threatened with the cost of their removal.

The City should not be punishing people for their pragmatism. Until the City can provide adequate shelter, it should let people take care of themselves in the best way they can. Unhoused people have the same right to self-determination, and deserve the same respect and consideration, as any other city resident.

We are calling for a moratorium on encampment clearings, and for you to move to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp. We also echo the calls of the Encampment Support Network for city council to invest in 10,000 units of Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) permanent housing options in the next three years.

People are struggling and dying, Mayor Tory. It will be a long, harsh winter. Now is not the time to tout your record, or your previous efforts. It is time to listen. It is time to meet people at their level of need.

Unhoused people are clearly and repeatedly saying that these encampments offer more than just a crisis solution. Community isn't only built by the housed. Residents of encampments are creating their own systems of communal support and they deserve to remain where they can survive and thrive. Instead of standing in their way, the City should provide the tools to help them do so.

Sincerely,

**UNIVERSITY-ROSEDALE'S
NDP RIDING ASSOCIATIONS**

647-484-2900 | Provincial: unirosemail@gmail.com | Federal: ridingassociations@unirosemail-ndp.com



Bike Brigade

926 College Street
Toronto, ON M6H 1A4
info@bikebrigade.ca
www.bikebrigade.ca

December 3, 2020

TO: Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

mayor_tory@toronto.ca

AND TO: Ana Bailão, Councillor
1240 Bloor St W
Toronto, ON M6H 3S5

councillor_bailao@toronto.ca

AND TO: Mary-Anne Bedard
General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

mary-anne.bedard@toronto.ca

AND TO: Janie Romoff
General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Janie.romoff@toronto.ca

Greetings:

Re: Statement Against Encampment Evictions

The Toronto Bike Brigade pairs volunteer cyclists with community organizations that serve isolated and/or vulnerable people, seniors, and health care providers to deliver food and other essential supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The Bike Brigade offers free delivery service for equity-seeking organizations and individuals disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic, our volunteer cyclists have delivered \$16,000 in groceries, 3000+ boxes of donated food, 1000s of menstrual products and 1000s of hot meals to folks in need.

We have worked closely with, and in support of, the Encampment Support Network and the citizens of this City that they serve. We echo and support their calls to not proceed



Bike Brigade

926 College Street
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with any evictions of residents of encampments around Toronto. For the following reasons, we call upon the City of Toronto to not evict any encampments residents:

- 1) These encampments are a result of housing policy failures;
- 2) Indigenous people should not be displaced from their land: to force out Indigenous encampment residents is a very real example of ongoing colonial violence;
- 3) Clearing encampments spreads COVID-19;
- 4) Encampments are the safest option for many people, providing them with essential and life saving community supports;
- 5) Congregate settings are dangerous;
- 6) The City's winter plan falls short on providing enough space for people;
- 7) Shelter and hotels don't work for everyone and often there is not adequate space for the over 1000 and growing unhoused people of this city;
- 8) The resources invested in the campaign of displacement could cover housing;
- 9) Threatening Khaleel Seivwright with legal action for creating Tiny Shelters is malicious; and
- 10) People have the right to self-determination.

The City should provide encampment residents with basic survival gear and access to sanitation. Long-term policy solutions must be made by consulting with the residents of these encampments to determine safer shelters and rent-geared-to-income housing. This crisis will not be solved by forcefully displacing our neighbours and putting them in dangerous and unstable circumstances.



Bike Brigade

926 College Street
Toronto, ON M6H 1A4

info@bikebrigade.ca

www.bikebrigade.ca

We demand that the City impose a moratorium on encampment evictions.

In solidarity and support of our communities.

Dave Shellnutt - The Biking Lawyer

On behalf of the Toronto Bike Brigade logistics team, organizing committee, and hundreds of people on bikes.



FAIR CHANGE

145 Queen St E • Toronto ON, M5A 1S1

fairchangeccs@gmail.com • www.fairchangeccs.wordpress.com

PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS

November 27, 2020

Fair Change Community Services, a legal clinic committed to supporting street involved people address their provincial offences, is demanding that the City of Toronto immediately cease clearing encampments and forcibly relocating people from their communities. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, living in an encampment remains the only option for some as the City has failed to adequately prepare and provide for those experiencing homelessness.

Existing community resources and shelters have been pushed beyond their capacity, putting those who are already vulnerable at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other health concerns. The City's winter plan for people living on the street does not properly reflect the needs or numbers of those who are affected, and congregate settings like the "Better Living Center" are not safe or dignified solutions.

Living in an encampment allows many to leave near their communities, supports, services, places of work, and without concern of being at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Displacing people from their homes poses serious public health concerns, and it is wrong to clear encampments without appropriate housing options available. Those forcibly moved will be dispersed into the community, disconnected from essential supports, and will inevitably increase the potential for infectious disease spread.

Individuals living in an encampments are not the problem - the housing crisis in Toronto and the failure of the City to adequately respond are. Encampments should not be cleared, but instead provided with fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and access to water and bathroom facilities. Those supporting individuals by constructing shelters should be commended, not condemned. Encampments and the communities they contain must be respected and protected.

We are calling on the City to use the urgency of COVID-19 and the attention it has brought to existing challenges to motivate action towards lasting change, not to justify displacement.

Sincerely,

Fair Change Executive Team and Fair Change Advocates of Osgoode Hall Law School

Statement Against Encampment Evictions

Gallery TPW



Gallery TPW stands with the Encampment Support Network @esn.to.4real and is against the city's clearing of encampments. We must stop criminalizing actions that are necessary for many people. Housing is a basic human right and these laws make it impossible to live with dignity and respect. Everyone should feel welcome to utilize public space and to create community.

As rents in Toronto continue to rise and wages stagnate or disappear altogether, many of our neighbours are being deprived of the dignity and stability of a permanent home. **Gallery TPW** strongly opposes the City of Toronto's harsh response to dismantling encampments. This only further destabilizes the lives of people who have been forced into an untenable situation due our heightened housing crisis. For many people, living in an encampment is the only option.



While the right to shelter is critical for ensuring the safety of all citizens, municipal shelters have proven to be very difficult—and often dangerous—places to live. Many have lived in shelters or other institutional settings before, and their frustration borne of these often-discriminatory experiences, only reinforces doubt and distrust. Quarters are tight and accommodations are poor. COVID-19 exacerbates the situation, as the congregate design of shelters is not conducive to social distancing.



**Gallery TPW stands in solidarity
with the encamped residents,
Encampment Support Network
and advocates for greater support
for all unhoused residents,
including sustained investments
in social services and public
housing by:**



- ♦ Repealing by-laws that make it illegal to “camp”
- ♦ Ensuring that individuals who are unsheltered have access to basic hygiene supplies—including masks, face coverings, and hand sanitizer—and facilities, as well as outdoor survival gear and safety equipment
- ♦ Providing increased crisis-intervention programs to help the unhoused including overdose prevention and harm reduction services
- ◀ ♦ Ending the practice of cluster-site shelters by replacing them with purpose-built facilities that would keep people closer to their support networks and communities ▶
- ♦ Placing a moratorium on utility and rent payments
- ♦ Offering rent arrears grants and free legal services for tenants facing evictions
- ♦ Creating an affordable housing plan that involves moving individuals directly into subsidized housing and providing access to job and educational training

• • • • •

We must stop criminalizing actions that are necessary for many people. Housing is a basic human right and these laws make it impossible to live with dignity and respect. Everyone should feel welcome to utilize public space and to create community. Eradicating encampments is dehumanizing and only further serves to isolate communities who need support. This must stop immediately.





Open Letter against Encampment Evictions from Building Roots

Dear
Mayor John Tory
Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam
Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department
Christine Elliot, Minister of Health,

December 3, 2020

I'm writing to you from Building Roots, a progressive grassroots social venture that began in 2013 in response to a lack of fresh food access and agricultural growing space across Toronto, more specifically, Moss Park and downtown Toronto East. We work primarily to build resources for social cohesion and co-create targeted interventions with communities. We collaborate closely with partner agencies, volunteers, community leaders, and local businesses to deepen and expand our reach. We develop innovative solutions to some of the city's lowest income neighbourhoods and social disparities such as poverty, social isolation and inadequate housing.

Thus far, we have provided the Moss Park encampment with over 200 warm meals, weekly cases of fresh fruit, and 100 winterized sleeping bags and emergency blankets. Although a necessary and meaningful offering, this is not enough.

We care deeply about the encampments and our unhoused neighbours for multiple reasons and urge against encampment evictions. Folks in the encampment should be permitted to stay where they are until better and more dignified alternatives are available.

Firstly, we know encampments are the result of a decades-long housing crisis caused by public policy that encouraged the financialization of housing while cutting investments in affordable housing and Rent-Geared-to-Income options in the downtown core.

Secondly, clearing encampments spreads COVID-19. This is a public health issue. The CDC still recommends that encampments not be cleared: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."



The City's winter plan falls short on providing enough space for people. The plan provides space for 560 people but advocates and outreach workers estimate that there are over 1000 people sleeping on the streets and with the current 'eviction blitz' that number is going to grow.

Thirdly, The shelter system is full. People calling central intake every night are not able to get beds. People will be sleeping outside regardless of whether or not encampments are cleared, but without the communities they've created over the past months and years. Additionally, shelter hotels don't work for everyone. Facilities like the City Plaza at Jane & Wilson hotel are far away from people's communities, families, jobs, friends, social services and overdose prevention sites, and don't all have robust overdose prevention programs, which can result in death. One death is too many.

Lastly, at this time, it is critical that the City provide encampment residents with basic survival gear and access to sanitation, while also opening recreation centres and public washrooms 24/7 for encampment residents to stay safe, including during the day.

The City should follow the recommendations of the inquest into the death of Grant Faulkner, and provide survival gear, including fire safety, to those sleeping in tents. While City Council voted in favour of handing out survival gear on October 28, 2020, we have yet to see City workers do this on the ground. Thus far, City staff and police have confiscated people's heat sources and destroyed people's tents.

As an organization, we will continue to do what we can to support our unhoused neighbours. We support the Encampment Support Network, and our unhoused neighbours in seeking shelter in encampments, and advocate against encampment clearings.

Thank you for your time,

Building Roots Team
Animal Liberation Kitchen
Community Matters Toronto
Jim Keenan, Minister, Saint Luke's United Church

STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS

As a grassroots group fighting for affordable housing and racial justice in Chinatown, FOCT is alarmed by reports from local community service agencies that a growing number of Chinatown residents, many of them racialized, are being forced to seek assistance with basic necessities. As freezing cold conditions set in for the season, **we are dismayed that the [City of Toronto's 2020-2021 winter plan for unhoused people](#) remains woefully and dangerously inadequate to address the needs of Toronto's unhoused residents.**

In our communications with the City, they have emphasized the importance of finding long-term solutions that cater to each individual's unique needs. While we couldn't agree more, this should not absolve them of the urgent imperative to listen to and act on the immediate needs of unhoused people. The reality is that despite the City's efforts to increase shelter capacities, frontline workers estimate that [around 1,000 people will be left outside during the coming cold months](#). With indoor spaces unavailable, unsafe, or otherwise unsuitable, many of our unhoused neighbours find that living in an encampment is the most acceptable choice they have in an unacceptable situation.

Despite these realities, the City continues to sit on its hands and do nothing to provide support to encampments, [despite promising to do so last month](#). Consequently, the work of countering the City's negligence has largely fallen to grassroots, volunteer-led initiatives like the [Encampment Support Network \(ESN\)](#), which has been providing encampment residents with basic necessities like water, food, and shelter for months.

Beyond merely withholding support, the City has pursued [an aggressive regime of evictions](#) and intimidation. Just in the past few weeks, we've seen stories emerge about the City demanding [the dismantling of life-saving "foam domes"](#), [threatening legal action against a carpenter](#) who dared to volunteer his time building shelters, and [forcing the removal of a vital community fridge in Parkdale](#).

If the City is going to continue escalating its efforts to further marginalize unhoused people, it's up to the rest of us to step up and fight back. That's why ESN is calling on others to let the City know that their callous and misguided refusal to support encampments is unacceptable. **We**

join them in demanding that the City of Toronto immediately and indefinitely end encampment evictions, and provide survival gear and fire safety equipment to encampment residents.

Individuals are urged to contact Mayor Tory and their City councillor using [ESN'S email template](#). Or, if you are part of a union, organization, or other group, you can email report.on.toronto@gmail.com for guidance on how to craft your own public statement against encampment clearings.

People fighting to survive a housing crisis, pandemic, and harsh winter deserve to be helped out, not kicked out. **End encampment evictions now!**



&

Street Nurses Network
Toronto



DECENT WORK &
HEALTH NETWORK



December 3, 2020

To: Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto Council Members, Mary Anne Bedard, General Manager of of Shelter Support & Housing Administration, and Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

Health Providers Against Poverty, the Decent Work and Health Network, the Shelter & Housing Justice Network, and the Street Nurses Network call for a Moratorium on Encampment Evictions

Health Providers Against Poverty urgently calls on the City of Toronto to end efforts to clear encampments across the city. As healthcare and social service providers, we are gravely concerned that the City's continued eviction efforts will, in effect, condemn encampment residents to preventable suffering and needless death this winter.

In the absence of safe, dignified alternatives, forcing unhoused people out of their communities of choice in the midst of twinned overdose and COVID-19 crises, represents an unconscionable threat to the health and wellbeing of our clients, patients, friends, family members and neighbours living in encampments. Although an October court decision granted the City the right to clear encampments, this decision reflected an assumption that enough shelter spaces existed to meet the needs of unhoused people in our city. The 560 additional shelter spaces that the city will open as part of the 2020-21 Winter Plan are insufficient: demand for shelter spaces already outstrips supply most nights, and with winter coming and more people in our city facing eviction, this nightly crisis will only escalate. Moreover, many of the shelter spaces the City has made available, take individuals out of their communities and away from vital health services. This represents particular life-threatening danger to encampment residents who rely on harm reduction services concentrated in the downtown core, and goes against the 2020 CDC recommendations to stop encampment clearances in the COVID19 pandemic as a means of controlling the spread of infection (9).

Instead of criminalizing encampment residents, or the community members volunteering to provide them with supplies to survive the winter, the City must recognize encampments as a symptom of their own inaction in the face of Toronto's housing crisis. The right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, affirmed in Canadian and international law, and the formation of encampments reflects the City's failure to provide its people with adequate, permanent housing. Ample evidence underscores the relationship between access to safe, dignified housing and health (11) and as healthcare providers, we are gravely concerned for the health and wellbeing of encampment residents. We therefore call on the city to take action accordingly by:

1. Immediately implementing a full moratorium on evicting encampment residents from their homes, including Toronto Tiny Shelters (TTS);;
2. Providing encampment residents with services, supplies, and support that facilitate their self-determination, safety, and wellbeing, including the urgent provision of winter survival gear;
3. Immediately implementing robust harm reduction supports and overdose prevention services in shelters and transitional housing;
4. Creating permanent housing options for encampment residents;
5. Developing and implementing policies that address the structural origins of Toronto's housing crisis.

“Any decision that does not lead to the furthering of inhabitants’ human rights, that does not ensure their dignity, or that represents a backwards step in terms of their enjoyment of human rights, is contrary to human rights law.”

- 2020 United Nations National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada

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November 30, 2020

Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions

We write in solidarity with over 1000 unhoused people in the City of Toronto and the countless number of outreach workers and agencies advocating for their right to shelter in the city. We condemn the woefully inadequate response put forth by city officials, and we call on Mayor John Tory, Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, Janie Tomoff (General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation) and Mary Ann Bedard (Shelter Support Housing Administration) to immediately place a moratorium on encampment evictions, and halt the seizure of basic survival equipment, Tiny Shelters, foam domes, and tents.

The City of Toronto has failed the residents of this city by refusing to utilize its emergency powers to ban all evictions. The encampments under threat today are a last resort for those seeking shelter, and their necessity is a direct result of a series of decades-long social policies that have consistently cut investments to affordable housing in this city. The city's winter plan offers only 560 indoor spots for people living outside is grossly insufficient when over a 1000 people are currently unhoused.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city's plans to evict encampment residents from their communities flies in the face of evidence-based public health measures and basic human rights principles. The dispersal of unhoused persons not only risks increasing the community spread of COVID-19, but also severs their connection with service providers and supports in their communities. Encampment evictions also defy the recommendation of the National Protocol For Homeless Encampments by failing to engage in any meaningful consultation with encampment residents on their needs, thus dismissing their right to dignity, respect, and self-determination.

City employees have a duty to consult with encampment residents about their needs, rather than expending public funds to harass them and push them into untenable situations. As public servants, city employees also have a duty to provide basic survival gear and basic sanitation as per the recommendations of the 2018 Faulkner inquest and City Council's motion passed on October 28, 2020.

Toronto is on Dish With One Spoon territory, which teaches us that the land should be shared to the mutual benefit of all its inhabitants. The forced displacement of Indigenous encampment residents through the city's policies further intensifies the ongoing legacy of colonial violence.

We want to see a moratorium on encampment evictions and the provision of clean drinking, working and sanitation facilities, and an immediate end to all threats of legal action against those actively supporting unhoused individuals in this city.

Sincerely,
CUPE 3903

Parkdale Legal Opposes Encampment Evictions

December 2, 2020

Mayor John Tory

City Councillor Gord Perks

Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

Dear Mayor Tory, Councillor Perks, Mary-Anne Bedard, and Janie Romoff:

Re: City of Toronto's Encampment Evictions

Parkdale Community Legal Services staff and Board is made up of lawyers, community legal workers, administrative staff, law students, professors, and Parkdale community members. Here at PCLS, we work to support low-income people with poverty law issues regarding housing, workers' rights, immigration, and social assistance, violence and health. We stand in solidarity with the Encampment Support Network to demand the City of Toronto stop evictions of encampments in Parkdale and the city.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put an increased strain on our housing division, where the staff of lawyers, community legal workers, and law students are working daily to support Parkdale tenants facing mass evictions and harassment by landlords at the Landlord and Tenant Board. This eviction blitz will only result in more need for encampment space, given the full shelter system and lack of safe living options provided by the City. For many people, encampments are the safest option to be able to live and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We know that encampments are the result of housing policy failures that systemically target Indigenous, Black, racialized, and working class people. We urge the City of Toronto to impose a moratorium on encampment evictions, provide encampment residents with basic survival gear and access to sanitation, and stop threatening Khaleel Seiwright with legal action for creating Tiny Shelters for residents. The resources spent on clearing encampments and legal action can be redirected to provide support for affordable housing and anti-gentrification policies.

Sincerely,

Parkdale Community Legal Services
Board of Directors and Staff



Monday November 30, 2020.

Dear: Mayor John Tory,
Mary Anne Bedard, Shelter Support Housing Administration
Janie Romoff, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

Japanese Canadians for Social Justice is a community-based group that fights for social justice and human rights. Our history as Japanese Canadians is one of mass displacement by systemic government forces. We were forced from our homes into homelessness and insecurity, warehoused on the exhibition grounds of Vancouver, and shipped to internment camps, so we understand what it means to be without a home.

We stand in solidarity with all those who are currently without a home and who are forced to sleep outside in encampments, parks and unsafe shelters. We are writing you today to demand that you keep your hands off the encampments across this city.

We are aware of the dismal situation facing people who are homeless in this city. We are also aware of the inadequate winter plan being proposed by the city to address the current housing and homelessness crisis.

The shelter system is already full with more than 1000 people sleeping outside. The city's plan to provide 560 shelter spaces for the winter is irresponsible. The majority of these 560 spaces are in congregate living sites, such as the building on the exhibition grounds (the "Better Living Centre"). People will be warehoused in an open space and forced to share common areas or stay in their beds located just 6 feet from the next cot, with no privacy and only a few shared bathrooms. The rare motel spaces being offered are often located far from the downtown core where all of the necessary services and supports are found. The motels also employ tight control with rules and regulations that are not appropriate for health and well-being or dignity.

Although the city claims they will expand their winter response if there is a need, this has not been the case to date. At present people are being turned away daily from access to basic shelter. Even the general shelter system is full. Housing for most people seeking it is impossible to find.

Given the current crisis, we, like the CDC, demand that encampments not be cleared:

"Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

Hands off encampments.

Sincerely,

Japanese Canadians for Social Justice
jcforsocialjustice@gmail.com

Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions from DMG

November 26, 2020

Dear Mayor John Tory and Councillor Ana Bailao,

DMG is a grassroots arts non-profit based in West Queen West, just east of Parkdale in the Toronto Media Arts Centre creative hub. We serve a membership of over 650 marginalized artists in Toronto who are working to obtain skills, resources and community support for creative expression through playful media.

A significant number of our members are or have been unhoused, or have faced housing precarity and income insecurity. We have heard their frustrations with the inadequate and burdensome systems they're subjected to as they seek solutions for themselves. As an organization serving people who are at various intersections of marginalized identities and experiences, including people who are gender-marginalized, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+, who have faced systemic barriers to employment housing and the basic necessities of life, we strongly believe that people have the right to determine the safest housing situation for themselves.

Community and mutual aid efforts to protect the lives of people living in encampments should guide the city's resources. Instead, the City is choosing to invest staff time and effort in dismantling homes and destabilizing people who are acting in response to a decades-long housing crisis caused by failures of public policy.

In our 6-year-long involvement in the TMAC project, we have seen firsthand how the City's aversion to legal risk jeopardizes communities, strips supports from marginalized groups, and undermines grassroots organizing around the health and wellbeing of individuals on the margins. In the case of this campaign of displacement, this aversion will cost lives.

Stop evicting people from encampments. Provide residents with survival gear, heat sources, and access to sanitation facilities. Then, let's work on real long-term solutions for safe shelters and rent-geared-to-income housing. Follow the lead of the unhoused – they're the most vulnerable people in the City's heartless campaign, and also experts on their own needs.

We await the City's response to our collective demand for a moratorium on clearing encampments.

DMG board of directors
Izzie Colpitts-Campbell
Soha El-Sabaawi
Santo Aveiro-Ojeda
Jayd Matyas
Kaitlin Tremblay
Natalie Zina Walschots
Shel Kahn

Jennie Robinson Faber, executive director

**PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM
MIDWIFERY AND TORONTO COMMUNITY HEALTH (MATCH) -
SOUTH RIVERDALE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE**

To: Mayor John Tory
Councillor Paula Fletcher
Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

Dear City of Toronto Representatives;

My name is Shezeen Suleman, co-lead midwife at the Midwifery and Toronto Community Health (MATCH) program. On behalf of MATCH, I am writing this public statement against encampment evictions.

The MATCH Program offers a wide variety of services related to pregnancy, labour and birth, as well as postpartum care for infants and adults, well-gynecological care and pregnancy options counselling. Our team is made up of four midwives and a social worker. We also work closely with family doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physiotherapists and harm reduction workers at the CHC. We are a program offering essential services to those living in the Regent Park neighbourhood, some of whom experience homelessness and live in encampments.

We are against encampment clearings for many reasons which are listed below:

- **Clearing encampments spreads COVID-19**

This is a **public health** issue. The [CDC](#) still recommends that encampments not be cleared: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

- **Encampments are the safest option for many encampment residents**

People are living in encampments because it is their safest option, and they don't have many. The options given by The City are:

- **Congregate settings:** Many encampment residents do not want to risk getting COVID-19 in a congregate setting like the Better Living Centre respite.
- **Shelter hotels,** like the City Plaza at Jane & Wilson hotel are far away from people's communities, families, jobs, friends, social services and overdose prevention sites.

- **People have the right to self-determination**

Just like housed people, all city residents should have the right to choose where they live. City staff have not engaged in any meaningful consultation with encampment residents, as per the recommendations on the [National Protocol on Encampments](#). People are experts on their own needs, and know what will work best for them. There are many reasons why people are choosing to live in encampments over the options provided by the City.

- **The City's winter plan falls short of providing enough space for people**

The City's winter plan provides space for 560 people but advocates and outreach workers estimate that there are over 1000 people sleeping in encampments, which doesn't include the people sleeping in stairwells, on grates and in trains. With the current 'eviction blitz' that number is going to grow. **The shelter system is full.** People call central intake every night and are not able to get beds. See this CBC report: [City has far fewer homeless shelter beds than it claims it has, street pastor says](#). As a result, people will be sleeping outside regardless of whether or not encampments are cleared, but without the communities they've created over the past many months.

We believe the City of Toronto should be taking more actions to address the issue of homelessness in Toronto and clearing encampments is not one of them. The City of Toronto should:

- **Provide people with basic survival gear and access to sanitation**

The City should follow the recommendations of the [Faulkner inquest](#) and provide survival gear, including fire safety, to people in encampments. While city councillors voted in favour of giving out survival gear on October 28, 2020, we have yet to see city workers do this on the ground. Up until now city staff and police have confiscated people's heat sources and destroyed people's tents.

- **Provide housing**

The City should provide people with rent subsidies sufficient to cover the [actual cost](#) of an apartment while it works to create new Rent-Geared-to-Income units in the downtown core.

The City of Toronto must act now to ensure that more lives aren't lost this winter.

Thank you for reading.

Best Regards,

Shezeen Suleman RM
#1833

Dear Mayor Tory and Ana Bailão,

We are writing on behalf of [InterAccess](#), a charitable arts organization in Davenport (Ward 9) that supports new media production. In service of our mission to provide full-cycle support to all artists we actively work to reduce barriers disproportionately experienced by members of diverse communities. The intersectionality of class, race, access to housing, and disability factors directly into the under-representation and under-resourcing of important cultural communities.

As winter approaches, it is urgent that the City of Toronto provides adequate housing for the 1000+ people living outside. We call on the City to stop spending taxpayers' money on clearing encampments, impose a moratorium on encampment clearings, and move to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp.

The City of Toronto's winter plan for people living on the street [doesn't adequately address the needs of many people living in encampments](#). The plan underestimates how many people are living on the streets (it estimates 500 people, while front-line workers estimate the number to be over 1000), and proposes poor living conditions (such as the [Better Living Centre](#) and [shelter hotels](#)) as solutions. All people should have the right to live in communities of their choosing, close to their families, services and places of work, without increased risk of contracting COVID-19.

"Unless individual housing units are available," the [CDC recommends](#) that cities not clear encampments during the COVID-19 pandemic because that can break connections with service providers and increase the risk of infection. Without adequate housing solutions, people living in encampments need urgent support, including the provision of fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and access to water and bathroom facilities. Most importantly, the city must stop policing people living in encampments and treat them with respect. Following the [Faulkner Report recommendations](#) constitutes a good first step. However, such efforts won't matter if city workers continue to evict people from their communities.

In the absence of permanent housing options from the City, those working to improve survival outcomes for people should be supported, permitted to continue, and not reprimanded. The City should withdraw the [injunction](#) against [Khaleel Selvwright, the person building tiny shelters for people living outside this winter](#), and either allow him to continue or offer a better solution.



It's time to stop treating those living in encampments as a problem, and recognize that encampments are the result of the housing crisis in Toronto. Given the City's failure to provide adequate housing support, we are calling on City Council to invest in 10,000 units of Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) permanent housing options in the next three years.

Sincerely,

Susan Kordalewski, Executive Director
Belinda Kwan, Education & Outreach Coordinator
Megan MacLaurin, Programming Coordinator



Civic Tech
TORONTO

Public Statement Against Encampment Evictions

From: The Civic Tech Toronto Co-organizing Team, November 2020

To: Mayor John Tory
Mary-Anne Bedard, *General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration*
Janie Romoff, *General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department*
Barbara Gray, *General Manager of Transportation Services*

Date: November 30, 2020

Dear Mayor and public servants,

[Civic Tech Toronto](#) is a diverse community of Torontonians interested in better understanding and finding solutions to civic challenges through technology, design or other means. We are a volunteer-run organization that meets weekly to come together to listen to awesome speakers, build community capacity, and work together on projects that aim to build *with* not *for*. This August, we celebrated our fifth anniversary.

As an organization, we support projects and initiatives that address real needs and respond to urgent civic issues. We've been watching the work the [Encampment Support Network](#) (ESN) has done to support Toronto residents who are experiencing homelessness over the last months with admiration and respect. We've also seen the City fail to provide the basic necessities to these same people—water, washrooms & sanitation facilities, and safe shelter.

We stand with ESN against encampment evictions.

It's upsetting and absurd to write this sentence, instead of writing in support of adequate and affordable housing. The situation we are in now is a result of poor policy decisions—not just over the last year, but over many decades. The City's housing crisis, while exacerbated by COVID-19, is nothing new. However, with COVID-19, the city's homeless population faces even more challenges in accessing safe shelter, with inadequate capacity continuing to be a significant concern.¹

The actions the City has taken, and plans to continue to take, **against and without the meaningful consent and input** of encampment residents are:

- **Against CDC recommendations.** "If individual housing options are not available, allow people who are living unsheltered or in encampments to remain where they are" as clearing encampments "increases the potential for infectious disease spread."²

¹ [CBC](#), November 19, 2020

² [CDC](#), August 26, 2020

- **Against the recommendations of the National Protocol for Homeless Encampments.** Among many other applicable principles:
 - *Principle 3: Prohibit forced evictions of homeless encampments*
International human rights law does not permit governments to destroy peoples' homes, even if those homes are made of improvised materials and established without legal authority. Governments may not remove residents from encampments without meaningfully engaging with them and identifying alternative places to live that are acceptable to them. Any such removal from their homes or from the land which they occupy, without the provision of appropriate forms of legal protection, is defined as a 'forced eviction' and is considered a **gross violation of human rights**.³
- **Malicious and demoralizing.** Threatening Khaleel Seivwright with legal action, including holding him "responsible for the costs of removal of"⁴ the Toronto Tiny Shelters, is discouraging to mutual aid efforts that residents across the City have contributed to and relied on throughout the pandemic. Mutual aid practices make our communities more resilient in times of crisis, and strive to do justice to our interconnection and shared humanity. The City should be celebrating communities supporting their neighbours by providing services the City is unable to provide.

Today we are writing to demand:

A moratorium on encampment evictions.

The City should make a public statement that they will not clear encampments. Addressing major structural issues at such a superficial level does nothing to address underlying causes catalysed by this pandemic and creates more suffering as encampment residents are abused. Displacing people from their communities through the use of force is cruel and dehumanizing.

Provision of basic survival gear and access to sanitation to encampment residents.

The City should provide survival gear, including fire safety, to people in encampments, and open up recreation centres and public washrooms, including access to showers, 24/7 for encampment residents to use this winter.

Meaningful and ongoing engagement with encampment residents to ensure a fair and equitable solution.

Toronto is home to numerous renowned public policy analysts, consultants, researchers, and experts. The City can and should respond to tough problems by bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, and by seeking involvement and consent from those that are adversely affected.

Signed,

The Civic Tech Toronto Co-organizing Team, November 2020

³ [UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing](#), April 30, 2020

⁴ [CBC](#), November 21, 2020

“No encampment clearings”: CUPE Ontario sends message of solidarity to unhoused Torontonians

It's getting cold in Toronto and there are unhoused people who are doing the best they can to cope with and survive in this weather. CUPE Ontario therefore strongly opposes the City of Toronto threatening to clear encampments.

The Mayor of Toronto must use his emergency powers to ban evictions and prevent any more people from becoming unhoused. The City of Toronto must make the conditions in the encampments as safe as possible, like providing access to water and basic sanitation. The City of Toronto must act immediately to build real affordable housing. But instead of supporting community members who have provided unhoused people with necessities and with foam domes to keep warm, the City has stood by. The City then used unfounded concerns about the very conditions they allowed to worsen to call the encampments unsafe, illegal, and therefore subject to potential clearings.

Clearing these encampments would disconnect people from their existing supports, provided by their community. It would leave them even more vulnerable than ever. It would leave them with nowhere to go.

Now's not the time to make the lives of the over 1,000 and growing unhoused Torontonians any harder. We need real action and real supports for people. We need governments to provide housing as a basic right – and to ensure the best and safest possible conditions for those who are still unhoused. And we need robust investments, from all levels of government, in the chronically underfunded public services that our members deliver in support of the most vulnerable people.

It's time to stop all threats to criminalize and clear the encampments. It's time to demand that elected representatives do their job and act to support and protect people without homes.



From: Shelter & Housing Justice Network
SHJToronto@gmail.com

December 4, 2020

To:

Mayor John Tory

Members of Toronto City Council

Mary Ann-Bedard General Manager of Shelter Support & Housing Administration

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

CC: Encampment Support Network

The Shelter and Housing Justice Network (SHJN) is a collective of homelessness and housing advocates, shelter providers, healthcare professionals, faith leaders, legal workers, and researchers.

We are writing in support of the people who are currently living in encampments throughout the City.

Currently, Toronto is losing affordable housing faster than it is being built¹ and tens of thousands of people risk eviction.² Encampments are a result of housing policy failure and policies of deprivation and eviction do nothing to address this ongoing policy failure.

¹ Goldstein, M., & Dwelling Room Preservation Policy Working Group. (2020). *Fixing the Leaky Bucket: A Comprehensive Policy & Program Framework to Preserve Toronto's Supply of Deeply Affordable Housing*. http://www.pnlt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Fixing-The-Leaky-Bucket_Full-Report_V1.pdf

² Toronto Foundation. (2020). *The Toronto Fall Out Report: Half A Year in the Life of COVID-19*. <https://torontofoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Toronto-Fallout-Report-2020.pdf>

Mayor Tory: you made (inadequate and insufficient) commitments to “taking concrete actions that will improve the day-to-day lives of Indigenous, Black and other marginalized Torontonians” in June.³ Residents of the encampments are disproportionately Indigenous, Black and racialized people. The dispossession of Indigenous people from Indigenous land is an act of colonial violence.⁴ Evicting homeless people from public space further criminalizes this already over-criminalized population. Several encampment residents have publicly spoken about the negative impact that the City’s criminalization of their lives is having on them.⁵

Evictions also dislocate people from their communities, including their supports and safety networks. Providing TTC tokens for pre-scheduled appointments - sometimes 90 minutes away or more - is not an acceptable solution. Only an eviction moratorium and more downtown shelter-hotel spaces can help ensure people can remain attached to their communities.

Many of the encampment residents are concerned about the safety of shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic. Toronto is currently in “lockdown” and housed people are told by Toronto Public Health to avoid congregate settings, not have visitors in our home and not meet in groups larger than 10 outdoors.⁶ Yet people residing in encampments are told to go into congregate settings with large numbers of people and that this is safe. There have been 660 cases of COVID-19 in the shelter system⁷ but there are no known cases in the encampments.⁸ There is also new evidence that the City’s existing social distancing strategy of 2m⁹ within the shelter system is insufficient.¹⁰ Given the choice between COVID-19 and the cold, some people encampment residents have

³ Tory, J. (2020, June 23). *CC22.2 Changes to Policing in Toronto: Report from Mayor John Tory*. City of Toronto.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getCouncilAgendaReport&meetingId=18760>

⁴ Also see: Also see Farha and Schwan, 2020. *A National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada*. <https://www.make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/A-National-Protocol-for-Homeless-Encampments-in-Canada.pdf>

⁵ November 8, 2020. Encampment Support Network Press Conference. Toronto; Pabani, A., & Rotsztain, D. (2020). *Dismantling Stubborn Structures*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE54h6TTYf0&feature=youtu.be>

⁶ City of Toronto. (2020, December 4). *COVID-19: Lockdown Guide for Toronto Residents*.
<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-reopening-recovery-rebuild/covid-19-guide-for-toronto-residents/>

⁷ City of Toronto. (2020). *Active COVID-19 Outbreaks in Toronto Shelters, December 2, 2020*.
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/8b49-Toronto-Active-Shelter-Outbreaks-December-2-2020.xlsx>

⁸ According to encampment residents, multiple front line workers who are engaged in COVID testing in encampments.

⁹ The City had to be taken to court to have this implemented: *Sanctuary et al v. Toronto (City) et al.*, 2020 ONSC 6207.

¹⁰ Boisvert, N. (2020, December 2). Shared dorms in Toronto shelters put users at risk of airborne COVID-19 transmission, critics warn. *CBC News*.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-homeless-shelters-airborne-risk-1.5823896>

weighed their options and chosen the cold. The City has an ethical duty to help mitigate the potential harms from the elements and fire risk by supplying survival supplies and fire safety information.¹¹

We, therefore, call on the City of Toronto to:

1. Implement an immediate moratorium on forced evictions of encampment residents and temporary shelters from public spaces.
2. Open at least 2,000 new shelter-hotel rooms in the next 4 months. This is the only way people will have a safe alternative to living outside in encampments, given that shelters are currently full. For these sites to be successful and truly safe for people:
 - All sites must have overdose prevention services and support on-site that is provided by experienced harm-reduction staff.
 - Half of the sites must be located in the downtown core, to ensure people aren't disconnected from critical services and their communities.
3. Provide services to people in encampments.
 - Provide \$1 million to community agencies to distribute survival supplies and fire safety equipment to encamped individuals.
 - Ensure people have access to indoor facilities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – including access to winterized bathrooms and showers for encampments adjacent to City sites.
4. Build 10,000 units of rent-geared-to-income housing to be built in the next 3 years.

We recognize that all levels of government have an important role to play in housing policy. It is, however, unacceptable to continue to pass the buck to the province and the federal government. You have the power pass these four motions at City Council and to take emergency action to implement an interim moratorium on all encampment evictions of people and shelters today.

Survival supplies not evictions!

Sincerely,
Shelter & Housing Justice Network

¹¹ Coroner, O. of the C. (2018). *OCC Inquest Faulkner 2018: Verdict of Coroner's Jury*. <https://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/Deathinvestigations/Inquests/Verdictsandrecommendations/OCInquestFaulkner2018.html>

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**Parents For Better
Beginnings**

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Fax: 416-362-5899

Diabetes Education Program

Suite 203,
468 Queen Street East
Toronto, ON M5A 1T7
Phone: 416-603-0336
Fax: 416-603-8068

www.regentparkchc.org



Regent Park Community Health Centre **Public Statement against Encampment Clearings**

Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC) is deeply concerned for the well-being of people living in encampments and without access to housing this winter. Instead of clearing/evicting encampments, we believe that the City must immediately impose a moratorium on encampment clearings, repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp and that encampment residents must be provided with winter survival gear, tents, fire safety equipment, and access to water and bathroom facilities.

People are sleeping outside because of the failure to provide housing as a human right. Beyond the housing crisis, we also know there is a shelter crisis and that there are not enough shelter beds in this city. It is common for us to call central intake and be told to call back in two hours as there are no available beds. On the rare occasion that a shelter bed is secured, often times it is not ideal, such as a congregate setting with over 100 people where isolating due to COVID is impossible, or a shelter location that is far from services and supports. We also know that the City's winter plan is deeply inadequate and provides only 560 beds, when we along with many others working in the sector, know that there is a need for over 2000 rooms. To clear/evict encampments will not change the fact that the people that are being forcibly removed from these encampments do not have other safe alternatives to go to. In addition, people will lose their warm survival gear and tents that they have built over the past months, putting them at increased risk.

RPCHC operates a Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) and we are well aware of the importance of this life saving resource and the need for people who use the CTS or OPS sites in general to be able to access these services nearby to where they are living. Many of the shelter sites are far from these services and supports and therefore are not a safe or appropriate option. Many people are living in encampments out of necessity and due to the fact that they are in the areas that they need to be, in order to be close to their work, communities, family, friends, resources and services to survive this pandemic.

Encampments are the result of the housing crisis in Toronto. The solution to the housing crisis is not to evict/clear encampments and force people to move with no suitable, safe options of where they can go. In the context of the intersection of the overdose crisis and homelessness crisis, exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the City must impose a moratorium on encampment clearings and address the dire state of housing and shelter across the City by investing in affordable housing and ensuring emergency shelter for all.

Sincerely,

Paulos Gebreyesus
Executive Director



**Xspace
Cultural
Centre**

2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xspace.info

PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM XSPACE CULTURAL CENTRE:

ATTN:

- Mayor John Tory
- Councillor Ana Bailão
- Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
- Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

It is with love and rage that we are writing to you to support the demands to immediately halt the encampment evictions, move to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp and focus your time, energy and funds to providing encampment residents with adequate fire safety, survival gear and housing.

We are Alexia, Natalie and Philip and we make up the small staff at Xspace Cultural Centre: a not-for-profit artist-run centre founded in 2004 that is dedicated to providing emerging artists and designers with opportunities to showcase their work in a professional setting. We have been located at 303 Lansdowne Ave, Ward 9 - Davenport for the past 8 years.

We are very concerned for the well-being of people living in encampments, many of which are our neighbours and beloved community members who find this to be their only option: to some, for example, it feels safer and more comfortable than a shelter, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

To evict people from their homes, without providing them with safe, accessible and affordable housing that respects their sovereignty, privacy and basic rights is incredibly dehumanizing and outright cruel.

The destruction of people's camps is violent and unconstitutional, and the 'alternatives' that the City of Toronto is offering as part of their winter plan for unhoused people does not adequately address the needs of many people living in encampments. Not only does it underestimate how many people are living on the streets (it estimates 500 people, while advocates and outreach workers estimate over 1000), it offers settings like The Better Living Centre which - not only fails to abide by social distancing requirements, but completely disregards people's privacy, dignity and access to basic hygiene and nutrition like hot showers and meals.



2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

Displacing people from their homes and outright refusing to provide affordable, safe housing and food to unhoused community members and people facing homelessness demonstrates a shameful neglect and utter failure of civic service. These are HUMAN RIGHTS. Not privileges that will benefit those who can afford it and ignore the rest.

Unhoused people and people facing homelessness have varying needs and should be allowed to live in the communities of their choosing, close to their families, loved ones, services, harm-reduction facilities and places of work. They should NOT have to choose between the fear of contracting COVID-19 and the fear of freezing to death in a tent. With winter steadily approaching in the light of a pandemic, encampment residents need our support now more than ever. This support should include the provision of fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags and access to hot water and bathroom facilities.

In addition, displacing people from their homes during a pandemic is a serious public health concern. The [CDC recommends that](#) cities not clear encampments during the COVID-19 pandemic “unless individual housing units are available,” because “clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread.”

And lastly, we’ve been witnessing incredibly mutual aid led by community volunteers such as Khaleel Selwright, the man building tiny shelters for people living outside this winter, and the multiple small businesses and groups administering community fridges that provide healthy, fresh food for folks in need. In the absence of permanent housing options from the city, these people are implementing tangible solutions and should be supported - not fined.

On behalf of Xpace Cultural Centre and our communities, we are calling on city council to address these issues immediately and invest in 10,000 units of Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) permanent housing options in the next three years.

Sincerely,

Alexia Breard-Anderson (Director)
Natalie King (Programming Coordinator)
Philip Leonard Ocampo (Programming Coordinator)

PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM TORONTO YOGA AND MOVEMENT BUSINESS OWNERS

November 30, 2020

TO:

Mayor John Tory

City councillors Ana Bailao, Brad Bradford, Joe Cressy, Paula Fletcher, Mike Layton, Josh Matlow, and Kristyn Wong-Tam

Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

FROM: Toronto Yoga and Movement Business Owners

We are a group of Toronto based Yoga and Movement Studio Business Owners. Collectively, we are concerned for the well-being of all people living in Toronto encampments.

We are writing to demand that the city stop spending taxpayers' money on clearing encampments. Instead, encampment residents should be provided with fire safety and survival gear. Furthermore, we ask that you impose a moratorium on encampment clearings, and move to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp.

Encampments are the result of a decades-long housing crisis caused by public policy that encouraged the financialization of housing while cutting investments in affordable housing and Rent-Geared-to-Income options in the downtown core. We are calling on city council to invest in 10,000 units of RGI permanent housing options in the next three years and to **impose a moratorium on encampment evictions**. We are calling on the city to make a public statement that they will not clear encampments.

This is a public health issue. The CDC still recommends that encampments not be cleared: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

The City's winter plan falls short on providing enough space for people. Their plan provides space for 560 people but advocates and outreach workers estimate that there are over 1000 people sleeping on the streets and with the current 'eviction blitz' that number is going to grow. The shelter system is full. People calling central intake every night are not able to get beds. See this [CBC report: City has far fewer homeless shelter beds than it claims it has, street pastor says](#). Because of this, people will be sleeping outside regardless of whether or not encampments are cleared, but without the communities they've created over the past many months.

The City must provide encampment residents with basic survival gear and access to sanitation. The City should follow the recommendations of the Faulkner inquest and provide survival gear, including fire safety, to people in encampments. While city councillors voted in

PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM TORONTO YOGA AND MOVEMENT BUSINESS OWNERS

favour of giving out survival gear on October 28, 2020, we have yet to see city workers do this on the ground. Up until now city staff and police have confiscated people's heat sources and destroyed people's tents. The city should also open up recreation centres and public washrooms 24/7 for encampment residents to use this winter.

In light of the pandemic, people living in encampments need our support now more than ever. **Most importantly, the city must stop criminalizing people living in encampments, and it must begin to treat them and their property with respect.**

We recently learned that the General Manager of Parks issued a letter to Khaleel Selvwright, the man building tiny shelters for people living outside this winter, threatening to charge him for the cost of their disposal. People who are finding pragmatic solutions for people's survival in the absence of permanent housing options from the city, like Khaleel, should be applauded, not reprimanded.

Sincerely,

Ruby Knafo, Owner, Director
Union Yoga + Wellness
956 Bloor Street West

Kathryn Beet, Owner, Director
Yogaspace & Wellness
148 Ossington Avenue

Morgan Cowie, Owner, Director
Mosaic Yoga Toronto
225 Sterling Road

Karen Parucha, Owner
Downward Dog Yoga Centre
30 Ossington Avenue

Darcie Ladd, Owner, Director
Octopus Garden Holistic Yoga Centre
967 College Street

Keri O'Meara, Owner, Director
MuseMovement Studio
180 Shaw St

Silvia Vukadinovic, Director
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center
77 Harbord St

Andre Talbot and Catalina Moraga
Owners, Directors
Spirit Loft Movement Centre
290 Carlaw Ave. Unit 201

Jen Howard, Manager
Modo Yoga Uptown
1498 Yonge St

Paul McQuillan, Owner
BeHot Yoga Toronto
43 Colborne St.

Leslie Parker, Owner
Mindful Movement Centre
68 Scollard St #301

Rachelle Wintzen
Chi Junky Studio
70 McGee St.

Stacy Chong, Owner
Toronto Yoga Co.
1768 Danforth Ave.

Debbie Fung, Co-founder, Owner
Yoga Tree Studios
123 Dundas Street West

Olivia Hill, Owner
Kula Yoga Studio Annex
304 Brunswick Ave.

Jacqueline DiRenzo, Owner,
Director
SĀANA Yoga King West
577 Wellington St W

Nicky Poole, YuMee Chung,
David Choy, Owner/ Directors
Leelapod Digital Yoga Collective
Toronto and Vancouver

Felicia Pavlovic, Ante Pavlovic,
Owners
Yoga Therapy Toronto
892 Bloor St West

Hana Lukac, Owner
Mula Yoga
80 Mitchell Avenue



PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS

To Mayor John Tory, Mary-Anne Bedard, and Janie Romoff:

The Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project (TPRP) is a grassroots organization of formerly incarcerated people, people with loved ones inside prisons, front-line workers, artists, researchers, educators and students. We are committed to prison abolition, advocating for the rights of criminalized and incarcerated populations, and advancing public education about the violence of imprisonment. We recognize that we are on the traditional territories of the Mississauga's of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinabe on Treaty 13 lands, which are also subject to the Dish With One Spoon Treaty. Indigenous peoples should not be displaced from their land. As we are committed to working alongside and taking direction from the original caretakers of this land in all of our calls for justice and freedom, we loudly join the call for the City to place a moratorium on encampment evictions.

Our vision for a world without prisons and other carceral settings is focused on transformative justice and community care. We recognize how imperative community bonds are for both individual and community safety and well-being and believe that communities can keep each other safe without relying on policing and prisons. We know that the City's plan to evict those living in encampments will sever vital community ties and weaken networks of care. People will be separated from their families, jobs, friends, social services, and overdose prevention sites.

Our vision for a carceral-free future also recognizes the need for direct government investment in community members' well-being. We call on the City to use the resources allocated for the displacement campaign to provide encampment residents with basic survival gear and access to sanitation until safe, permanent housing is available for all.



PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS from SURJ TORONTO

Dec 4, 2020

An open letter to:

Mayor John Tory

**Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing
Administration**

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

Dear Mayor Tory and public servants,

Showing Up For Racial Justice Toronto (SURJ TO) supports the rights of encampment residents to safely exist in Toronto. We are witnessing with horror the City of Toronto's treatment of encampment residents. We write in solidarity with encampment residents and demand: an immediate moratorium on encampment clearings, the repeal of City by-laws that make it illegal to camp, immediately provide encampment residents with fire safety and survival gear, and make available public washrooms and shower facilities that are regularly cleaned and maintained.

SURJ TO is a local chapter of 90+ and a broader support network of thousands. SURJ TO moves white people and communities into action in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour-led racial justice movements. We organize as part of a broader, multi-racial majority to end white supremacy and racial and economic injustice.

These encampments are the result of a decades-long housing crisis caused by public policy that encouraged the financialization of housing while cutting investments in affordable housing and Rent-Geared-to-Income options in the downtown core. The City's winter plan provides space for 560 people, but advocates and outreach workers note that there are over 1000 people sleeping on the streets, and with the current 'eviction blitz' happening across Toronto, that number is going to grow. The shelter system is full and has been for years. Our members work in housing and shelters and see this first-hand. We know that residents calling central intake every night are not able to get beds. See this CBC report: City has far fewer homeless shelter beds than it claims it has, street pastor says. Because of this, people will be forced to sleep outside even if encampments are cleared, but without the security of the communities that have

been created over the past many months. This is not a “plan,” this is an attempt to push the consequences of bad policy out of sight.

Displacing people from their homes during a pandemic is a serious public health concern. The CDC recommends that cities not clear encampments during the COVID-19 pandemic because “clearing encampments can cause people to disperse and break connections with essential service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread.” On top of this, encampment residents should not be put in a position to risk getting COVID-19 in a congregate shelter setting like the Better Living Centre respite. It is egregious that the City disregards these recommendations. In doing so, you are putting the health of unhoused people and Torontonians at large at risk. The solution is clear: allow people to stay in encampments at this time, and take immediate steps to consult with encampment residents about the best and safest ways forward.

SURJ TO knows that racism and settler colonialism are violent systems to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities, and are interlocked with other systems, such as capitalism. In 2018, the City of Toronto’s own Street Needs Assessment study reported that 38 percent of people living outside were Indigenous, and 31 percent were Black. Ongoing criminalization and use of police force against encampment residents must end. The forced relocation of encampment residents - particularly through police and bylaw raids - is part of ongoing racial and colonial violence.

The work that the Encampment Support Network has done as unpaid labour, and continues to do, is vital for the survival of people living in encampments. This is work that *should be* done by the City -- instead, the City viciously blocks efforts by Toronto citizens to support their neighbours, such as threatening Khaleel Seivwright with legal action for creating Tiny Shelters. There is no logic in this; it is malicious. The City should celebrate when neighbours assist each other, especially during a global pandemic, when helping each other is even more integral to our collective well-being.

We are calling on those that support this statement to do the following:

1. Contact city officials with a statement of solidarity of your own.
2. **Tweet, Post, and tag** public officials and city councillors on social media demanding a **moratorium on encampment evictions** with hashtags #NoEncampmentEvictions and #TOpoli
3. **Donate** to the Encampment Support Network and **follow them on social media**.
Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/esntoronto>
Instagram: @esn.to.4real
Twitter: @ESN_TO

Sincerely,
SURJ Toronto

Forced encampment clearings are *not* the answer

Posted by Lisa Ferguson on December 04, 2020

[Home](#) / [Updates](#) / [Forced encampment clearings are not the answer](#)

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, encampments and temporary dwellings have increased at an unexpected rate in Toronto and many cities across the country. Encampments are not a suitable long-term housing solution for those most in need. However, for more than 1,000 homeless people in Toronto, encampments have provided a sense of community and security, especially during the pandemic.

As the winter worsens and we grapple with the second wave of COVID-19, encampment residents are at risk of forced removal by the City of Toronto. **Forcible clearings of encampments are *not* the answer.** They are harsh and unfair. More so, encampment evictions can have negative social and health consequences by [dispersing homeless residents throughout the community and breaking connections with service providers](#).

At the same time, **Toronto has struggled to provide adequate emergency, transitional, supportive or permanent housing options for those in need.** To date, there have been [five deaths](#) and [650 cases of COVID-19 linked to outbreaks](#) in city shelters. Many people feel unsafe staying in shelters, a large portion of which include dorm-like shared spaces. Crowded and enclosed spaces make it difficult [to social distance, heightening the risk of airborne spread of coronavirus](#). Lack of capacity is also an ongoing [challenge for the City's shelter system](#). And while [the City is working to increase the supply of emergency shelter and transitional housing](#), there still isn't enough. Some encampment residents are being offered accommodation in temporary shelter-hotels an hour or more away from their own communities, connections, and supports.

We urge **the City to work hand-in-hand with encampment residents**, and the volunteers and service providers who support them, to find suitable housing alternatives. Meaningful and ongoing engagement with encampment residents is important for creating a fair and equitable city that upholds the [human right to housing](#).

The key to ending homelessness is permanent, affordable housing. That will take time. Until then, the City must do more to support the growing number of homeless individuals in our city.

Social Planning Toronto is a nonprofit, charitable community organization that works to improve equity, social justice, and quality of life in Toronto through community capacity building, community education and advocacy, policy research and analysis, and social reporting. We are dedicated to raising the voices of underrepresented communities in City decision-making.

Social Planning Toronto is joining the [Encampment Support Network](#) and many others to call on **the City of Toronto to not forcibly displace encampment residents and to take a bottom-up approach to finding acceptable solutions to the housing crisis.**

Dec 1, 2020

Dear Mayor John Tory and Councillor Joe Cressy, Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department,

SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) is a non-profit, artist-run centre in Canada dedicated to increasing the visibility of culturally diverse artists by curating and exhibiting their work, providing mentorship, facilitating professional development and creating a community for our artists. SAVAC was founded to be an organization staffed by people of colour, committed to support the work of artists of colour. We promote self-representation by developing artistic practice that is often informed by cultural identity through a range of mediums, aesthetics, forms, and techniques. We support work that (in)directly addresses the ways histories of people of colour are represented alongside the story of ongoing colonialism on Turtle Island and post-colonial histories of the global south.

As an organization, our work hinges on the twin concepts of self-representation and self-determination. Artistically, we believe that all people have the right to represent themselves in their own language, on their own terms. We believe the stories that come directly from the people who are telling them. Socially, we strongly believe that people are experts on their own needs, and know what will work best for them. We have heard from people who are directly speaking to and supporting people in the encampments that those residents know that encampments are the safest option for them because of the dangers of congregate settings under the current conditions of Covid-19. There are many valid reasons why people are choosing to live in encampments over the options provided by the City and as an organization- we are committed to listen and believe in people's lived experiences.

We believe that stories that emerge from lived experiences are the most potent testimony and should determine how support should be allocated. Just like housed people, all city residents should have the right to choose where they live. We know that City staff have not engaged in any meaningful consultation with encampment residents, as per the recommendations of the National Protocol on Encampments.

As an organization working with people who are at various intersections of marginalized identities and experiences, who have faced systemic barriers to employment, housing and the basic necessities of life, we strongly believe that people have the right to self-determine the safest living situation for themselves. Over the course of the pandemic, we have seen members of the SAVAC community participate actively in supporting their neighbours who live in encampments. We have seen them fundraising, gathering and delivering supplies, organizing various kinds of support and public education campaigns.

We urge the City officials to end encampment evictions and meaningfully listen to the voices of the unhoused, the most directly affected, to determine the best solutions to the housing crisis that exists in Toronto.

Sincerely,

Indu Vashist (Executive Director)

Toleen Touq (Artistic Director)

Sophie Sabet (Communications Coordinator)

SPRING OPPOSES THE CITY OF TORONTO'S MOVE TO CLEAR ENCAMPMENTS

The City of Toronto should stop all threats to criminalize and clear the encampments. The City should focus on providing real supports and housing for the over 1,000 unhoused Torontonians.

Spring stands in solidarity with The Encampment Support Network

 **Follow The Encampment Support Network @ESN.TO.4REAL**



A Call for a Moratorium on Encampment Evictions

December 3, 2020

To:

John Tory, Mayor of the City of Toronto

Mary-Anne Bédard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, City of Toronto

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry & Recreation, City of Toronto

Dear Mayor Tory, Ms. Bédard and Ms. Romoff,

The Right to Housing Toronto has been hearing from organizations working on the ground with residents of encampments that the City of Toronto is planning to clear some encampments in the coming weeks.

As a network committed to ensuring that the City of Toronto honours its commitment to the progressive realization of the right to housing, we are writing to voice our grave concern with this approach. As outlined in R2HTO's recent [Encampments Rights Review](#), the City should not be forcibly evicting encampment residents under any circumstances.

We urge the City to provide safe, adequate housing for all encampment residents and, where that is not possible, safe and adequate shelter that respects the human rights and dignity of encampment residents. In the absence of that, the City must not forcibly evict encampment residents and instead ensure the safety of all residents in a way that respects their human rights and promotes the human right to housing by providing winter survival gear, water, sanitation and other necessary services. We also encourage the City to consult and work with encampment residents to find appropriate and permanent housing solutions for them.

As always, we are available as is helpful to meet with City staff to provide any assistance and advice regarding working with encampment residents in a way that respects their rights and promotes the right to housing.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the Right to Housing in Toronto

Alyssa Brierley
Executive Director
Centre for Equality Rights in
Accommodation

Emily Paradis, PhD
Maytree Fellow, Housing and
Homelessness Researcher

Geordie Dent
Executive Director
Federation of Metro Tenants'
Associations

Joy Connelly
Housing Advocate

Judy Duncan
Head Organizer
ACORN Canada

Kenn Hale
Director of Legal Services
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario

**PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM
PLEASURE DOME**



We are concerned about the well-being of our neighbours living in park encampments. We demand that the city of Toronto stop spending taxpayers' money on clearing encampments. Instead, these funds ought to be diverted to include the provision of fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and access to water and bathroom facilities. Displacing people from their homes during a pandemic is immoral, and a serious public health concern. We implore a moratorium on encampment clearings and urge the city to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp. The city must stop criminalizing people living in encampments.

Nov. 27, 2020

Dear Mayor John Tory, Councillor Ana Bailão, Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration and Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department,

Pleasure Dome is an artist-run presentation organization and publisher dedicated to experimental media operating in Toronto since 1989.

We are concerned about the well-being of our neighbours living in park encampments. We demand that the city of Toronto stop spending taxpayers' money on clearing encampments. Instead, these funds ought to be diverted to include the provision of fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and access to water and bathroom facilities. Displacing people from their homes during a pandemic is immoral, and a serious public health concern. We implore a moratorium on encampment clearings and urge the city to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp. The city must stop criminalizing people living in encampments.

For many people, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, living in an encampment is their safest option, compared to overcrowded shelters often far from community and support services, including the dehumanizing glass prison-like 'shelters'. Pleasure Dome asserts unhoused people should be allowed to live close to their families, services, and places of work, free from the fear of contracting COVID-19. Clearing these encampments pushes citizens into more vulnerable hidden spaces like ravines.

The government must stop treating those living in encampments as an eyesore or legal risk, and recognize that encampments are the result of the decades-long housing crisis in Toronto. We need the city to uphold everyone's right to affordable housing, particularly to create long-term solutions in the downtown core including the development of permanent Rent-Geared-To-Income housing, and better conditions in safe shelters.

Sincerely,

Pleasure Dome Board of Directors
Shahbaz Khayambashi (Co-Chair)
Andrea Creamer (Co-Chair)
Rupa Morzaria (Secretary)
Jennifer Laiwint
Katie Connell
Clare Samuel
Miles Rufelds

and
Theresa Slater, Operations and Development Manager



WORKMAN ARTS
STANDS IN
SOLIDARITY WITH
ENCAMPMENT
RESIDENTS AND
THOSE WHO ARE
FIGHTING FOR
HOUSING THAT
MEETS THEIR
NEEDS.



December 2, 2020

Dear Mayor John Tory, Councillor Ana Baillão, Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration and Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department,

Workman Arts is a charitable multidisciplinary arts and mental health organization supporting 475+ artists with lived experience through peer-to-peer arts education, public presentations and partnerships with the broader arts community since 1987. We have recently relocated from Dundas and Dufferin in St. Anne's Parish Hall to the brand new McCain Complex Care and Recovery Building at CAMH at Queen and Ossington.

A large number of our members are or have been unhoused, underhoused and/or have lived with housing precarity and income insecurity. While we do not inquire, we know from our close interactions that majority to 3/4 of these artist members live week to week on meagre social assistance programs. We have heard their frustrations with the inadequate and burdensome systems they're subjected to as they seek solutions for themselves.

As a charitable arts organization serving persons with lived mental health and/or addictions experiences at various intersections of marginalized identities and experiences, we believe that people have the right to determine the safest housing situation for themselves. We are concerned about the well-being of neighbours living in park encampments.

We demand the City of Toronto stop spending taxpayers' money on clearing encampments. Instead, these funds must be diverted to include the provision of fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and access to water and bathroom facilities. Displacing Torontonians from their homes during a pandemic is immoral and a serious public health concern.

We are requesting a moratorium on encampment clearings and urge the city to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp. The city must stop criminalizing people living in encampments. Community and mutual aid efforts to protect the lives of people living in encampments should guide the city's resources. Instead, the City is choosing to invest staff time and effort in dismantling homes and destabilizing people who are acting in response to a decades-long housing crisis caused by failures in public policy.

We are asking the City of Toronto to stop evicting people from these encampments. Instead, kindly provide residents with survival gear, heat sources and access to sanitation facilities. Then, we can work together on actual long-term solutions for safe shelters and rent-geared-to-income housing. Follow the lead of the unhoused – as some of the most vulnerable people in the City's heartless campaign and also experts on their own needs.

We look forward to your response to our collective demand for a moratorium on clearing encampments.

Sincerely,
Workman Arts
info@workmanarts.com

PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS

To:

John Tory, Mayor of Toronto

Ana Bailao, Deputy Mayor of Toronto, Councillor Ward 9 Davenport, Right to Home Working Group

Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager, Shelter Support and Housing Administration, City of Toronto

Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City of Toronto

CC:

Encampment Support Network

Planners Network Steering Committee

Winter is here, and people are still living in encampments in Toronto's parks and in other public spaces. In responding to encampment residents, we face a choice between coercion and consent. The response by the City of Toronto so far has been contradictory – while inconsistently tolerating encampments, offers of shelter have often been paired with the threat of eviction. There are many reasons why people experiencing homelessness may choose to remain in a tent. Shelters can include surveillance, dehumanizing conditions, potential exposure to COVID, and a lack of privacy. Shelters can prevent people from accessing the supports they need, whether that be a neighbourhood network, pets, partners, harm reduction and other life supports. There are also not enough shelter spaces available for those experiencing homelessness. This will likely worsen, as many more people are facing evictions from their homes in the months ahead.

We stand with residents. They are our neighbours, and right now, these tents are their homes. We all agree that it isn't permanent or ideal for people to live in parks and other public spaces. In working with encampment residents, we ask the City to commit to a process of full, free and informed consent without violence or coercion. This will enable our neighbours experiencing homelessness to negotiate spaces that meet their need for privacy, safety and community support.

Planner's Network

The Organization of Progressive Planning

<http://www.plannersnetwork.org/>