

May 28, 2024



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TO:
Councillor Alejandra Bravo
Chair
Economic & Community Development Committee
City of Toronto
ecdc@toronto.ca



FROM:
Downtown Toronto BIAs

RE: EC13.8 – the City’s Encampment Approach and Strategy

Dear Councillor Bravo and members of the Economic & Community Development Committee,

Our six Downtown Toronto Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) meet regularly to coordinate advocacy and support for issues that impact the entire downtown. We support: the growth of Toronto as a destination and as a visitor economy; addressing safety and inclusion; downtown recovery; and advocating for safe, reliable transit.

In that spirit, this letter is submitted by the six of us in response to **Item EC13.8 - the City’s Encampment Approach and Strategy**. While we see the Strategy as a step forward towards improved community safety and well-being, there are also some concerns we would like to raise.

We specifically support:

1. **The recognition that encampments can have a negative impact on safety**, not only for encampment residents but also for the surrounding community of residents, families, businesses and visitors. For downtown Toronto, a sense of safety is foundational to economic vibrancy and recovery.
2. **The commitment to communicating with Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) as part of the Interdivisional Protocol for Encampments in Toronto**. As Toronto’s six large downtown BIAs, we represent over 10,000 businesses; some \$47 billion of commercial real estate and employ more than 400,000 people. As stewards of our downtown neighbourhoods, we will continue to advocate for safe and vibrant communities and the well-being of everyone who lives, works, studies and visits here.
3. **The request that the Province fund urgently-needed 24/7 crisis stabilization spaces for people experiencing mental health or substance use crisis**. This is a vital step in providing access to services for people currently living in encampments.

However, we also have some concerns, specifically:

1. Much of the Strategy depends on financial support from the Federal and Provincial governments. What is the City of Toronto's plan if those funds are delayed – or, worse – are not forthcoming at all?
2. There is little mention of performance metrics to measure the effectiveness of the Strategy. What metrics will be used for tracking success or failure? What are the stated goals that the Strategy aims to achieve?

We also believe that there are quick wins that allow us to work together more effectively. One example would be the ability to report encampments that are not in parks, something that is not currently possible on the 311 app or website.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in response to Item EC13.8 - the City's Encampment Approach and Strategy.

Best regards,

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