



Economic & Community Development Committee  
City of Toronto  
100 Queen Street West, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, West Tower  
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

May 29, 2024

Attention: Councillor Alejandra Bravo  
Chair, Economic & Community Development Committee  
By Email: [ecdc@toronto.ca](mailto:ecdc@toronto.ca)

Re: EC13.8 – The City’s Encampment Approach and Strategy

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

The Toronto Shelter Network (TSN) is writing in support of Item 13.8 – The City’s Encampment Approach and Strategy.

Shelter use is at an all-time high with 10,000 people in the shelter system and another 2,200 people accommodated outside the shelter system. Refugees make up 53% of those accommodated. Over 200 people per day cannot access a shelter bed. There are currently over 250 encampments in the City.

TSN feels that the recommendations in the Encampment Approach and Strategy are a good start as a plan of action is being taken. The plan recognizes that encampments are a complex issue that requires a multi-divisional and sectoral approach as well as the commitment of all levels of government, community, and other stakeholders to invest in comprehensive supports is encouraging. Evictions are still being proposed but a human rights approach will be used in service delivery including continued outreach and support.

The Dufferin Grove and Allan Gardens approach of relationship building with people in those encampments, using community partners at advisory and operational levels and bringing comprehensive supports to the parks are great examples of best practices and should continue to be the approach of supporting people and moving them out of encampments and into indoor space or hopefully, housing. These approaches can be modified/improved on a case-by-case basis with enhanced outreach and services

including harm reduction and links with other providers who can better support people. We have a model that has worked, and it can support people's dignity and safety.

The focus of this report is on encampment prevention not systemic prevention. This report though, combined with the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (building smaller purpose-built shelters and rehabilitating existing ones as well as opening the door to other models that will work for people living in encampments such as low-barrier micro-shelters) and the recent CAMH Shelter Safety Study (need for models for those with significant service restrictions many of whom end up in encampments) as well as the collaboration of people with lived experience and the homelessness sector, can together be more effective in preventing the need for encampments. And of course, building more supportive, affordable housing is key to reducing and ending homelessness.

The Province and the Federal governments will need to provide more financial support for housing, poverty reduction, harm reduction and mental health including the extension of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit and an increase in social assistance rates.

TSN urges the Economic and Community Development Committee to adopt the recommendations of the General Manager of the Toronto Shelter and Support Services and approve the recommendations in EC13.8.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Gash".

Leslie Gash

Executive Director

Toronto Shelter Network

leslie@toshelternetwork.ca