



**PARKDALE
QUEEN WEST**
Community
Health Centre

www.pqwchc.org

December 23, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL: mayor_tory@toronto.ca

Dear Mayor John Tory,

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the affordable housing crisis in Toronto was untenable. With the pandemic, the lack of affordable housing and inadequacy of the shelter system in Toronto has been glaring. Folks without access to safe, stable, and affordable housing have not found safety and comfort in a shelter. Encampments provide this safety and comfort and provide people with agency to choose how and where they want to live.

Encampments allow people to live in the neighbourhoods of their choice where they have community, family, easy access to their places of work and access services that are meaningful to them. Encampments allow this access free of the fear of contracting COVID-19 that arises in communal shelter living situations.

The City of Toronto's winter plan for unhoused people does not adequately address the needs of the many people living in encampments. The plan underestimates how many people are living on the streets (it estimates 500 people, while advocates and outreach workers estimate over 1000), and offers congregate cage-like settings like The Better Living Centre as an option during a global pandemic.

Forcibly relocating people from their homes during a pandemic is a serious public health concern and an affront to their dignity.

The forced clearing of encampments is not a solution. We know the risk to health and life that homelessness creates, and we know that being homeless is not a crime but is a manifestation of failed systems. The City of Toronto should be using its resources to support making encampments safer and to fix this system by finding permanent affordable housing solutions that allow people to remain in the communities where encampments are located instead of using its resources to criminalize those people living in encampment.

The Board of Directors of Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre condemn the city's encampment clearings and stand in solidarity with the encampment residents who are creating their own systems of support and survival. We urge the City of Toronto to use its resources to assist encampment residents in living safely and securely while it develops real affordable housing solutions based on a rent geared to income model, in the communities where these encampments are located.

We are committed to working with you and all levels of government to create these structural solutions to homelessness in our City and beyond.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors for Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre

- cc. Encampment Support Network (report.on.toronto@gmail.com)
- cc. Councillor Gord Perks (councillor_perks@toronto.ca)
- cc. Councillor Joe Cressy (councillor_cressy@toronto.ca)
- cc. Bhutla Karpoche, MPP – Parkdale High Park (BKarpoche-QP@ndp.on.ca)
- cc. Arif Virani, MP – Parkdale High Park (Arif.Virani@parl.gc.ca)
- cc. Adam Vaughan, MP – Trinity Spadina (Adam.Vaughan@parl.gc.ca)
- cc. Chris Glover, MPP – Spadina Fort York (CGlover-CO@ndp.on.ca)

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