

Right to Housing Peel Coalition

Date: March 22, 2023
Regional Chair Nando Iannicca
Region of Peel
10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite A,
Brampton, ON L6T 4B9

RECEIVED

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REGION OF PEEL
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

REFERRAL TO _____
RECOMMENDED _____
DIRECTION REQUIRED _____
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED _____

Dear Members of Peel Regional Council;

Re: Peel Poverty Action Group’s Peel Encampment Study Report

We are writing you today about the study conducted on the growing encampment situation throughout the Region of Peel, by the Peel Poverty Action Group.

Encampments are increasing in communities across the province and the country. The situation is so dire that the Federal housing Advocate is launching a review of ‘human rights crisis’ of Canada’s homeless encampments.

Although courts and human rights bodies are increasingly recognizing unsheltered homelessness as a human rights issue, people living in encampments are in some of the most vulnerable circumstances in our society. Their dignity and rights are frequently ignored. They face harassment and violence from police, bylaw officers, and the public. Most do not have access to basic services like clean water or heat. Some have suffered harm or have died as a result of exposure, fire, overdose, and other threats to life and safety. **(source: Human Rights Commission)**

The recent ruling in Waterloo Region stated that without viable alternatives, people have a constitutional right to shelter outdoors. Removing them without alternatives would be a violation.

All levels of government have an obligation to end this crisis. The conditions in encampments, coupled with the underlying failure of governments at all levels to ensure people can access adequate housing, are a violation of fundamental human rights, including the human right to housing. **(source: Human Rights Commission)**

PPAG’s encampment study and report, analyzed and developed by Homeless Hub, highlights the sentiments of those living in encampments and living rough. It tells a narrative of their experience, including why they lost their housing, some of the barriers that they face in their search for housing and the supports they need improve their situation.

While some of the responses provided by encampment residents are similar in tone, the stories as to how they got there are different, as are their needs. No one case is the same, hence the importance of addressing specific needs in an individual or family’s homeless journey.

Homelessness is complex, there is no question and there is certainly not a one-size-fits-all solution. We commend the Region’s Housing Department staff for the work they do in supporting those experiencing homelessness. They led a successful encampment project during the pandemic, but were not able to continue because funding ceased from the province.

We also commend all the service providers and frontline staff who are serving this population on a daily basis, in a pandemic with limited resources. We know the system is overburdened and underfunded. Advocacy to other levels of government must continue in order to achieve sufficient funding for this crisis and it should be a priority for this council.

This is not just a homelessness and housing crisis, but a human rights crisis. While all levels of government need to better address the issue, so does the community and that requires more community-wide collaboration. We all have a part to play in addressing and solving this crisis.

Based on the qualitative results of the survey, Homeless Hub has provided a set of recommendations, some of which can be addressed in the shorter term and some that require a longer-term approach. We wanted to expand on the recommendations with the following asks/requests:

- Increased funding from the Region for wrap-around supports for those living in encampments as well as services provided with an age, cultural and gender lens.
 - Agencies that specifically work with young people, older adults and women should be brought in
 - This includes multiple intensive case managers and necessary ACT teams to support them.
 - Extending supports to people who get housed to keep them housed
- A policy review of Emergency shelters in Peel Region to ensure more low-barrier access with robust Housing First programs that adhere to the Pathways model of Housing First.
 - This Housing First model is low-barrier, meaning that there are no pre-conditions for someone to be housed. (e.g., medication adherence, substance use).
 - Eliminating sobriety and income requirements and other policies that hinder shelter entry, shelter stay, or access to housing and income opportunities.
- Increased community collaboration to ensure a holistic approach to better address the needs of those living in encampments and living rough.
 - Pooling together resources from agencies across the Region to support those living outside, in the rough and in tents

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sean Keddy



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on behalf of the Right to Housing Peel Coalition