



Written Delegation Submission – Cambridge City Council

Re: Motion to Pause Encampment Evictions During Extreme Weather Events

Dear Mayor Liggett and Members of Cambridge City Council,

This written submission is on behalf of Sanguen Health Centre and is intended to express our strong support for the motion calling for a pause on encampment evictions during periods of extreme weather. As an organization that provides outreach, health care, and harm reduction support directly to individuals living unsheltered in Cambridge and across Waterloo Region, we are deeply concerned by the human impacts of eviction and displacement, particularly during periods of extreme heat or cold.

Our frontline outreach teams have actively supported multiple encampments in Cambridge over the spring and summer months of 2025 as residents received eviction notices and were compelled to dismantle their living spaces. These evictions frequently occurred during or immediately adjacent to heat waves, creating unsafe conditions for residents, outreach workers, and city staff alike.

Our teams witnessed the following realities firsthand over the past several months:

- Multiple evictions were initiated during periods of extreme heat. While technical enforcement was occasionally delayed, residents were still required to complete physically demanding labour to remove or pack up belongings, often with little time to prepare.
- Mixed messaging from bylaw, police, and city staff created confusion and fear. Evictions were started, stopped, and restarted multiple times, leaving residents dysregulated and disrupting ongoing case management efforts.
- Outreach capacity was diverted away from essential health and housing support. Time spent on eviction support reduced our ability to provide critical supplies like water and electrolytes and connect residents to cooling centres, which are not within walking distance of many encampments.
- The harm was lasting. In some cases, residents we were actively supporting became unlocatable after eviction, resulting in missed CHAC applications, lost referrals, and interrupted care.

Criminalizing and punishing people who are experiencing homelessness is not only cruel, it is ineffective. The current housing and homelessness crisis is deeply tied to affordability. While research has consistently shown that housing-first models lead to better health outcomes for

people living with mental health challenges or substance use, we are woefully behind in being able to provide stable and supportive housing for the thousands who need it in Ontario.

In Waterloo Region, more than 2,300 individuals are currently known to be experiencing homelessness, yet there are approximately 589 emergency shelter spaces available across the entire Region. Quite simply, the math does not work. It is understandable that people are living in parks, wooded areas, and other public spaces when they cannot afford housing and there are no shelter beds available. The Ontario minimum wage is currently \$16.55 per hour, yet recent studies show that workers in Waterloo Region would need to earn more than \$25 per hour to afford a one-bedroom apartment at market rent without falling into core housing need. For many of the people we serve, even full-time employment does not guarantee the ability to secure and maintain housing.

Given these realities, encampment evictions only serve to push people further into crisis. They do not solve homelessness, they merely relocate it, often fracturing relationships between service providers and the residents we support.

We urge Council to adopt this motion without requiring a staff report or further delay. It is already well-documented that encampment evictions cause harm and increase risk of morbidity and mortality. Best practice, as well as basic human rights principles, dictate that residents should not be forcibly displaced and especially during extreme weather events when their health and safety are already in jeopardy.

Cambridge has an opportunity to take a compassionate, evidence-informed approach that prioritizes dignity and health. We ask that you vote in favour of this motion, pause encampment evictions during extreme weather, and work collaboratively with community partners to create long-term solutions that address the root causes of homelessness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Sanguen Health Centre - Leadership Team

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