

September 16, 2025

John McCash

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Township of Seguin, District of Parry Sound, Ontario

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ATTENTION: Michael Oliveri
Acting Manager of Council & Election Services/Deputy City Clerk
Corporate Services
City of Cambridge

Mayor and Council Members

Re: Opposition to Motion on Preventing Forced Removal of Unhoused Persons During Extreme Weather Events – September 23, 2025, Council Agenda

Dear City Clerk and Members of Council,

For years I have appealed to Council members to assist in addressing the dangerous encampments threatening our shopping centres, and while successful in having two removed, two tragic deaths have occurred. One of the individuals living on the railway property east of our shopping centre died, despite my repeated pleas for help and despite being told repeatedly, “We do not have the resources.”

I am writing to strongly urge Council to reject the motion scheduled for September 23, 2025, entitled ‘Preventing the Forced Removal of Unhoused Persons During Extreme Weather Events’ (moved by Councillor Hamilton and seconded by Councillor Earnshaw). This motion, though framed as compassionate, does nothing to resolve the underlying crisis of addiction and encampments in Cambridge. Instead, it risks entrenching dangerous conditions, enabling lawlessness, and signalling to the public that Council is prepared to normalize encampments rather than eliminate them. In short, it is not a solution but a symbolic gesture that makes the problem worse.

While the motion may appear compassionate on the surface, in reality it is **an enabling measure** that risks entrenching the very problems Council and the community are struggling to address. Rather than correcting the situation, it would normalize and institutionalize outdoor encampments during dangerous weather, exposing vulnerable people to further harm and making future interventions even more difficult.

I am pleased to provide the following, along with a summary of the immediate legislative action I believe is necessary to eliminate drug-driven encampments, for your consideration.

1. The Motion Perpetuates Unsafe Living Conditions

Allowing encampments to remain during extreme weather or exist at all does not protect unhoused persons, it leaves them in unregulated, often unsanitary and hazardous conditions. Fires, overdoses, sexual exploitation, and exposure to the elements are common in encampments. True compassion is connecting people with safe indoor shelter and treatment, not reinforcing the conditions that harm them.

2. It Undermines Public Safety and Rule of Law

The City's public spaces, parks, trails, and river and waterfronts, are held in trust for all residents. Allowing semi-permanent encampments during extreme weather further erodes public access, increases emergency response costs, and undermines consistent enforcement of municipal bylaws and trespass laws. Inconsistent enforcement weakens public trust and encourages more encampments.

3. It Entrenches, Rather Than Solves, the Crisis

Jurisdictions across North America that have taken a hands-off approach, notably in several West Coast cities (Vancouver, Los Angeles, Seattle, Oakland / Berkeley, San Jose / Santa Clara, Portland) now face sprawling, permanent tent cities with skyrocketing costs and crime. Cambridge should not repeat this mistake. By signalling that encampments will be tolerated during extreme weather, the motion invites further entrenchment rather than creating pathways to safe, stable housing.

4. The Real Problem is Addiction and Systemic Support

Most encampments are driven by uncontrolled drug addiction, mental illness, and the lack of coordinated treatment, not simply a lack of shelter beds. Council's energy would be better spent advocating to senior governments for increased detox capacity, recovery-linked housing, and coordinated outreach rather than codifying outdoor encampments as acceptable shelter in any weather.

5. A Better Approach

Council can demonstrate leadership by:

- Ensuring safe indoor spaces are available during extreme weather events.
- Coordinating with the Region, WRPS, and outreach agencies to transport and support individuals in need.
- Advocating for provincial and federal funding for addiction treatment and supportive housing linked to recovery.
- Enforcing trespass and camping laws consistently to prevent encampments from becoming permanent.

Conclusion

This motion, while well-intentioned, will not uphold human rights, it will prolong harm. It signals to vulnerable people and to the broader community that unsafe, illegal encampments are an acceptable default response to extreme weather. Cambridge must not follow the path of West Coast cities where inaction and permissive policies have led to permanent tent cities that threaten the very fabric of their communities.

I respectfully urge Council to **vote against this motion** and instead direct staff to develop policies that prioritize moving people into safe, supportive environments rather than entrenching encampments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John McCash

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[REDACTED]

Township of Seguin, District of Parry Sound, Ontario

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Immediate Legislative Action Needed: Eliminating Drug-Driven Encampments

Most Canadians demand urgent and decisive action on the growing crisis of drug-driven encampments in Cambridge, Ontario and across our country. These settlements, fuelled primarily by fentanyl and methamphetamine addiction, pose a direct threat to public safety, community health, and the rule of law. If left unaddressed, they risk becoming permanent, mirroring the entrenched tent cities of the West Coast of North America, cities where illegal, unsafe encampments have become fixtures, eroding public spaces, community safety, and municipal resources.

This is no longer a problem of bylaw enforcement. It is a societal emergency that requires entirely new legislation and policy frameworks designed not simply to deliver justice after the fact, but to change the trajectory of our communities before it is too late.

The Crisis

- *Open drug markets within encampments are fuelling overdoses, fires, theft, sexual exploitation, and disease.*
- *Many addicted individuals refuse or cannot meet shelter conditions, forcing them into unsafe public spaces.*
- *Private property owners face theft, damage, and liability when trespass laws are inconsistently enforced.*
- *Delayed action allows encampments to entrench, making dismantling exponentially harder and costlier.*

What Must Be Done - New Laws and Policies

1. Comprehensive Statutory Framework

Create provincial legislation empowering municipalities and police to prevent the establishment of encampments, with clear timelines and mandatory interventions.

2. Mandatory, Immediate Addiction Response

Legislate rapid-access detox, stabilization units, and medication-assisted therapy in Ontario. Introduce mandatory treatment pathways for repeat overdoses or criminal activity linked to drug use, modelled on proven international examples.

3. Recovery-Linked Housing Mandate

Pass laws requiring that any public funding for housing the homeless be tied to participation in treatment and wraparound supports, not unconditional street use.

4. Public Safety and Order Measures

Grant municipalities clear, explicit authority to dismantle open-air drug markets and rigorously enforce trafficking and nuisance laws within encampments. Limit supervised consumption sites to programs that are directly integrated with recovery and rehabilitation services.

5. Coordinated Provincial - Municipal Action

Establish a funded, province-wide framework with transparent reporting on encampment locations, enforcement actions, and housing placements.

Conclusion

This is not about criminalizing poverty. It is about preventing Ontario communities from becoming West Coast-style enclaves of permanent, unsafe encampments. Immediate, coordinated, and determined legislative action is needed to:

- *Restore public spaces for their intended use.*
- *Protect vulnerable residents from dangerous living conditions.*
- *Uphold the rule of law and private property rights.*
- *Prevent entrenched encampments that drain municipal resources and threaten community safety.*

The cost of inaction is too high. I urge elected officials to make this crisis a legislative priority and to work across all levels of government to eradicate these encampments and address the underlying addiction problem before it becomes permanent.

John McCash

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Township of Seguin, District of Parry Sound, Ontario

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