

Dear Premier Ford,

Ontario's homelessness crisis has exploded. Last year, 80,000 Ontarians experienced homelessness — more than triple the number since 2018, and nearly three times the number of shelter beds in Ontario. Between astronomical rents, the loss of affordable rentals, and stagnating housing construction, there is almost nowhere affordable left to live in Ontario. Add to this situation American tariffs and threats to our sovereignty, which are endangering people's livelihoods.

Healthy, accessible, appropriate, secure, and affordable housing is the solution to homelessness. It must be protected and expanded to help Ontarians weather the storm of economic uncertainty and American aggression. This should be a core part of your tariff response, including a full suite of protections: rent controls, increased income support and housing benefits, significant investments in deeply affordable and supportive housing, and safe, dignified services and emergency shelter options that people would willingly choose.

Instead, Bill 6, the Safer Municipalities Act, 2025 imposes punitive measures on encampments and their residents. This Bill targets homeless people believed to be in possession of drugs in public as a means to immediately evict them, arrest them, jail them for up to six months, or fine them \$10,000 — or all four. With supervised consumption sites shut down, it leaves nowhere for homeless people to use drugs, and it could make being homeless in itself an aggravating factor in cases of trespass to property. Your government has also threatened the use of the notwithstanding clause to override people's fundamental rights and freedoms should the courts prevent the clearing of encampments. If passed, Bill 6 will impact thousands of Ontarians who are homeless right now, and will continue to impact a projected 300,000 more in the midst of economic instability. Not only is this approach alarming, discriminatory, and a violation of some of the most vulnerable people's Charter rights, *it does not work*.

It also does not have broad political support. The vast majority of Ontario's 444 municipalities want more provincial resources and support — not the punishment of homeless people. The Ontario NDP, the Ontario Liberal Party, and the Green Party of Ontario have all spoken out against criminalizing people forced to live outdoors.

Punishing encampments and their residents, and wrongly suggesting that jails and coercive drug treatment — not housing — are the solution, is a failed policy imported from the United States. It has not made any Americans any less homeless, but it has been shown to cause immense harm, significantly divert police resources, and increase policing costs, all paid for by public tax dollars. It also will increase prison costs: every single homeless person who is incarcerated in Ontario costs the public \$133,955 a year. Punishing encampment residents instead of providing the housing people need costs more than anyone wants to pay — ethically, morally, and fiscally. In Ontario, we can't afford to import this cruel American approach, especially at a time when Canada must assert its distinct values and identity.

Importantly, there is no archetypal homeless person. They are seniors who have lost a spouse and who can't afford housing on their own. They are women and youth, forced to choose between homelessness and an unsafe or violent home. They are Indigenous people

displaced on their own lands, and refugees forced onto the streets after fleeing unimaginable circumstances. They are people with disabilities, unable to afford rent on provincial assistance. They are people who have been displaced from affordable rentals by development, and people who have lost their jobs — a group that is likely to grow. Some, though not the majority, are people at risk of injury and death from unregulated drugs who lack access to care, treatment, and safer indoor spaces and services. Regardless of who they are, everyone deserves housing and support that meets their needs, as they define them.

We are the Encampment Justice Coalition, and we represent a vast range of concerned groups: people with lived experience, grassroots volunteers, front-line agencies, legal clinics, and national and international civil society organizations. We represent communities from across Ontario, and have expertise in housing, homelessness, health care, drug policy and practice, disability justice, human rights, settlement, migrant justice, public transit, and Canadian law. We stand together to affirm that homelessness is not a crime.

With Canada at a precipice, criminal law and policing cannot be invoked to divide Ontarians. Your government must stand together with all Ontarians, including encampment residents, by rescinding Bill 6, upholding human rights, and committing to the evidence-based solutions — including and especially housing — that can end homelessness.

We look forward to speaking with you further and to your response.

Cc:

Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Graydon Smith, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
Vijay Thanigasalam, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Doug Downey, Attorney General
Michael Tibollo, Associate Attorney General

Marit Stiles, Leader of the Official Opposition
Catherine McKenney, Shadow Minister for Housing
Lisa Gretzky, Shadow Minister for Children, Community and Social Services
France G  linas, Shadow Minister for Health
Robin Lennox, Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Addictions
Kristyn Wong-Tam, Shadow Attorney General

Bonnie Crombie, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Adil Shamji, Housing
Lee Fairclough, Mental Health, Addictions and Homelessness

Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario

Signed,

1. [Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario](#)
2. [African Canadian Collective](#)
3. [African Centre for Refugees in Ontario-Canada](#)
4. [Algoma Community Legal Clinic](#)
5. [Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa](#)
6. [Black Legal Action Centre](#)
7. [Butterfly](#)
8. [Canadian Centre for Housing Rights](#)
9. [Canadian Civil Liberties Association](#)
10. [Canadian Drug Policy Coalition](#)
11. Crisis in Our City Network
12. [Disability Justice Network of Ontario](#)
13. [Drug Strategy Network of Ontario](#)
14. Encampment Coalition of York Region
15. [Engage Barrie](#)
16. [Equity Network](#)
17. [Finch Avenue Community Center](#)
18. [Hamilton and District Labour Council](#)
19. [Hamilton Encampment Support Network](#)
20. [Harm Reduction Action Collective \(HRAC\)](#)
21. [Harm Reduction Advocacy Collective Toronto](#)
22. [HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario \(HALCO\)](#)
23. [HIV Legal Network](#)

24. [Kensington Market Community Land Trust](#)
25. [Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County](#)
26. [Live Educate Transform Society \(LET'S\)](#)
27. [Maytree](#)
28. [Mississauga Community Legal Services](#)
29. [Mozia Women's Network Society](#)
30. [National Right to Housing Network](#)
31. [Nellie's](#)
32. [Niagara Community Legal Clinic](#)
33. [Northwest Community Legal Clinic](#)
34. [ODSP Action Coalition](#)
35. [Ontario Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
36. [Ontario Coalition for the Rights of Homeless People](#)
37. [Ontario Disability Coalition](#)
38. [Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre \(PARC\)](#)
39. [Peel Poverty Action Group](#)
40. [Progress Belleville](#)
41. [Progress Toronto](#)
42. [Réseau ACCESS Network](#)
43. [Right to Housing Toronto \(R2HTO\)](#)
44. [Ripple Community Collective](#)
45. [Rwandan Canadian Healing Centre \(RCHC\)](#)
46. [Shelter & Housing Justice Network](#)

47. [Showing Up for Racial Justice Toronto \(SURJ\)](#)
48. [Social Development Centre Waterloo Region](#)
49. [Social Justice & Advocacy Committee, Anglican Diocese of Toronto](#)
50. [Social Planning Toronto](#)
51. [St. Felix Centre](#)
52. [Substance Overdose Prevention and Education Network \(SOPEN\)](#)
53. [The Shift](#)
54. [Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
55. [Toronto Chinatown Land Trust](#)
56. [Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction](#)
57. [TTC Riders](#)
58. [Voices For Unhoused Liberation](#)
59. [Waterloo Region Community Legal Services](#)
60. [Waterloo Region Drug Action Team](#)
61. [Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network](#)
62. [York South-Weston Tenant Union](#)

Organizations working outside of Ontario in solidarity,

1. [Barrier Free Saskatchewan](#)
2. [Truro Housing Outreach Society](#)