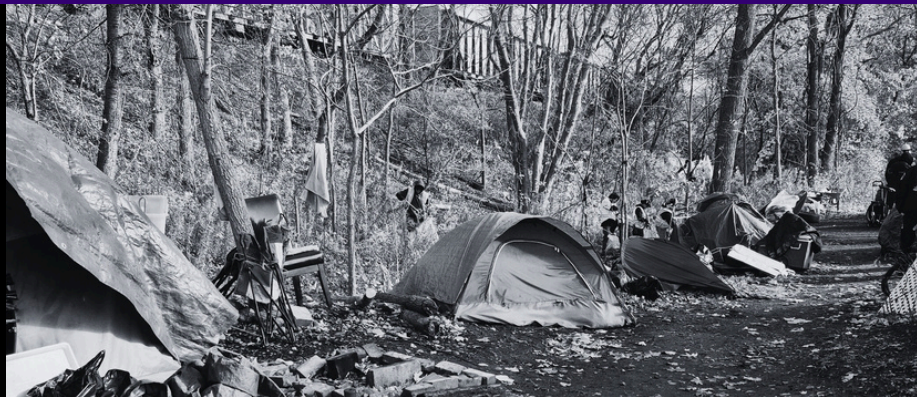


Pillar 2: Addressing Conditions in Encampments and Basic Needs

RETHINKING MUNICIPAL POLICY RESPONSES TO ENCAMPMENTS:
BUILDING A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH IN ONTARIO



A second key element of a human rights approach is addressing conditions in encampments, and taking steps to meet basic needs, including access to safe and clean drinking water, hygiene and sanitation facilities, and resources to support food security. Another area of consideration is whether activities required to meet basic needs are rendered illegal through the application of bylaws.

A human rights approach also requires addressing potentially hazardous conditions in encampments without forcing the displacement of individuals from encampments. This includes providing fire safety resources, supporting harm reduction, and pest mitigation.

Exploratory Questions

We used these questions to assess the extent to which municipalities described taking steps to address basic needs in their encampment protocols.. They show our guiding lens, as applied across the different jurisdictions we observed in Ontario.

- *Do protocols include the provision of services to meet day-to-day needs?*
- *Do bylaws make it illegal to carry out activities that meet basic needs?*
- *Do protocols or bylaws offer guidance on improving conditions in encampments without resorting to forced removal or displacement?*

Report Findings

We found that very few encampment protocols included details on meeting basic needs of people sheltering in encampments.

All municipalities had neo-vagrancy bylaws in place targeting activities of daily life, such as resting, sheltering, sleeping and cooking, which people experiencing homelessness are forced to carry out in public. This effectively criminalizes survival, exposing people to fines, displacement, and contact with law enforcement for actions that are unavoidable in the absence of private space.

Most protocols noted that environmental and safety concerns could lead to eviction, but did not include plans for addressing these concerns. This leads to potential safety concerns becoming a punitive rationale for displacement, rather than acting as a trigger for municipalities to provide support to address these concerns.



REALIZING THE RIGHT TO HOUSING:
MUNICIPAL POLICY RESPONSES TO ENCAMPMENTS