

Growing Opportunity Together



Dear Mayor Elmslie and Members of the Municipal Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of United Way for the City of Kawartha Lakes, a community organization that has been dedicated to advancing social equity, human rights, and the well-being of all residents of Kawartha Lakes for nearly 60 years. We are deeply committed to supporting initiatives that protect and enhance the dignity, rights, and health of marginalized populations. With this in mind, we respectfully urge you to approve a human-rights centered approach to encampment response in our community.

As you are aware, individuals experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable members of our society. They often face systemic barriers to accessing housing, healthcare, and essential services. Tragically, their voices are frequently marginalized in discussions about their own well-being, which can result in harmful and ineffective policies. This issue is further exacerbated by the challenges presented by encampments in public spaces. While encampments may not be ideal, they often represent the only option for individuals who are left with no alternatives for shelter.

The City's proposal for a human-rights approach to encampment response is a critical step forward in addressing homelessness with compassion, empathy, and respect for the dignity of those affected. This approach ensures that decisions made about encampments prioritize the safety, health, and rights of individuals, rather than simply enforcing removal without offering adequate support. By adopting this approach, we can guarantee that people experiencing homelessness are treated as individuals with inherent rights—rights to safety, health care, adequate shelter, and respect—through solutions that center on collaboration and care.

We recognize that encampment responses are complex and require thoughtful, long-term strategies that involve a range of services, including affordable housing, mental health care, addiction support, and other essential services. It is vital that these responses are guided by the experiences and expertise of those who are most directly impacted, as well as local social service providers like the United Way. Their holistic approach includes offering people support in navigating existing systems of care, and provides a more sustainable pathway toward housing stability and dignity for all.

Supporting the encampment protocol means taking an important stand in support of human rights and demonstrating leadership in the fight for social justice. It reflects a commitment to a society where everyone—regardless of their housing status—has access to the services, resources, and dignity they deserve.

We respectfully ask the council to adopt a human-rights focused approach to encampment response and work in collaboration with local partners, to ensure this approach is effectively implemented.

Our United Way recently joined with United Ways across the province to publish an Op-Ed calling for urgent, evidence-based solutions to homelessness in the lead up to the provincial election. The Op-Ed reinforced the need for supportive housing, expanding mental health care, and strengthening income security—solutions that move beyond short-term enforcement toward lasting impact. You can read the piece here: [OPINION: How Ontario's political parties must deal with homelessness | Toronto Sun](#)

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. We are eager to work alongside you in shaping a more inclusive, compassionate, and just Kawartha Lakes.

Sincerely,



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