

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Please STOP Dismantling Homeless Encampments!

From: Melissa Govindaraju

Sent: July 30, 2020 8:14 AM

To: Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>; Farr, Jason <Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca>

Cc: hclc.cjch@gmail.com; info@keepingsix.org

Subject: Please STOP Dismantling Homeless Encampments!

Hello,

My name is Melissa Govindaraju and I am a resident of Ward 2 and a resident physician providing healthcare in Hamilton.

It has been brought to my attention that the City of Hamilton is planning to dismantle the encampments at the First Ontario Centre and the Ferguson Street encampment on July 31, 2020, all without any plan to provide encampment residents with access to safe indoor spaces, as an interim of solution for permanent housing with appropriate supports.

As a physician, local community member and advocate for the health of our community, I am appalled by this!

It is well-known and well documented that housing is an incredibly important determinant of health. Encampments for those who are homeless is not a long-term solution, however taking them down with no immediate plan for access to safe indoor space will have a significant impact on their health. Many of the folks living in these encampments are our patients and we care for their health holistically, but cannot do this without your help.

At this time, I am urging you to do the following:

1. The City not dismantle homeless encampments
2. The City provide interim and permanent housing for encampment residents with necessary supports
3. The City prioritize individuals experiencing homelessness for urgent housing placement
4. The City engage encampment residents in assessing their needs prior to dismantling
5. The City remove barriers in shelters and hotels in order to accommodate the individual needs of encampment residents
6. The City allow for sanctioned encampment sites and/or designate specific parks/public lands where individuals are allowed to set up tents/temporary structures
7. The City allow for a streamlined, low-barrier, accessible process of issuing permits allowing for tents and temporary structures

Dismantling homeless encampments will cause harm to encampment residents, which is now further heightened by our current pandemic. I urge you to please take a reasoned and compassionate approach to encampments now.

I look forward to hearing from you soon about your plan to protect the health of our community members.

Sincerely,
Melissa Govindaraju, MD