

**Bates, Tamara**

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**Subject:** FW: Shelter Health Network Statement on Encampments in Hamilton  
**Attachments:** SHN Encampment letter signed.pdf

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**From:** Rachelle Sender <>

**Sent:** Monday, November 15, 2021 10:07 PM

**To:** Office of the Mayor <[Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca](mailto:Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca)>; Wilson, Maureen <[Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca](mailto:Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca)>; Farr, Jason <[Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca](mailto:Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca)>; Office of Ward 3 City Councillor Nrinder Nann <[ward3@hamilton.ca](mailto:ward3@hamilton.ca)>; Merulla, Sam <[Sam.Merulla@hamilton.ca](mailto:Sam.Merulla@hamilton.ca)>; [lucy.finelli@hamilton.ca](mailto:lucy.finelli@hamilton.ca); Jackson, Tom <[Tom.Jackson@hamilton.ca](mailto:Tom.Jackson@hamilton.ca)>; Pauls, Esther <[Esther.Pauls@hamilton.ca](mailto:Esther.Pauls@hamilton.ca)>; Ward 8 Office <[ward8@hamilton.ca](mailto:ward8@hamilton.ca)>; Clark, Brad <[Brad.Clark@hamilton.ca](mailto:Brad.Clark@hamilton.ca)>; Pearson, Maria <[Maria.Pearson@hamilton.ca](mailto:Maria.Pearson@hamilton.ca)>; Johnson, Brenda <[Brenda.Johnson@hamilton.ca](mailto:Brenda.Johnson@hamilton.ca)>; Ferguson, Lloyd <[Lloyd.Ferguson@hamilton.ca](mailto:Lloyd.Ferguson@hamilton.ca)>; VanderBeek, Arlene <[Arlene.VanderBeek@hamilton.ca](mailto:Arlene.VanderBeek@hamilton.ca)>; Whitehead, Terry <[Terry.Whitehead@hamilton.ca](mailto:Terry.Whitehead@hamilton.ca)>; Partridge, Judi <[Judi.Partridge@hamilton.ca](mailto:Judi.Partridge@hamilton.ca)>; [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Cc:** Richardson, Elizabeth <[Elizabeth.Richardson@hamilton.ca](mailto:Elizabeth.Richardson@hamilton.ca)>

**Subject:** Shelter Health Network Statement on Encampments in Hamilton

Attached is a letter from the Shelter Health Network opposing the dismantling of encampments in Hamilton; its is signed by 25 health care providers.

Rachelle Sender MD, CCFP, FCFP

Shelter Health Network Clinic Lead

 <p data-bbox="462 163 738 352"><b>Shelter Health Network</b></p>	<p data-bbox="1063 147 1372 357">82 Stinson Street Hamilton, Ontario L8N 1S2 P: 905-526-7137 F: 905-526-7969 Shelterhealthnetwork.ca</p>
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## STATEMENT ON ENCAMPMENTS

The Shelter Health Network is concerned about the dismantling of encampments in Hamilton; we believe that this is endangering the health of the vulnerable people that we work with. We urge Council to find other ways of addressing the crisis of homelessness in this community.

The Shelter Health Network is a group of 38 health care professionals (including doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and midwives). For over 15 years we have been collaborating with social service organizations in Hamilton to serve a high risk population with complex health problems and with no stable housing.

Everyday we see the adverse impact of homelessness on the health of the people we serve. It is well known that there is a lack of affordable housing in Hamilton, particularly housing with the supports needed for many in this population. In addition, living in shelters is not always an option: for one, there is a lack of shelter beds in the city, particularly for women and couples. Some people have had their access to shelters suspended because of past behaviors linked to their health problems. Still others have been assaulted or robbed in or near shelters and feel unsafe there. Therefore, for many of our patients, living in tents in encampments may be their best and safest option.

Providing health care is far easier if people live in encampments than if they live scattered in the woods on the escarpment (as some are urging them to do). If someone tests positive for COVID and needs to be cared for appropriately, we first need to be able to find them; this would be difficult if they live hidden in the woods. The same is true for other types of health care, for example, people with serious wound infections. Amputations have resulted when we are unable to locate patients for follow-up of such infections. Individuals evicted from encampments have lost their medications and been forced back into abusive relationships. Finally, people are less likely to die of overdoses when living in groups than if they overdose alone, without access to Narcan treatment from their friends.

In summary, we, as health care professionals with many years of experience working with the homeless population of Hamilton, urge Hamilton City Council to pause the dismantling of encampments and look for more constructive answers to the problem of homelessness in our community. The members of Shelter Health would be happy to lend their expertise and work with Council to come up with alternate solutions.

Signed by

Health Care Providers of the Shelter Health Network (names listed alphabetically on the following page)

<http://shelterhealthnetwork.ca/>

Gina Agarwal, MBBS, PhD, MRCP, FCGP, dip CAPM  
Rabia Bana, MD, CCFP, FRCPC  
Kerry Beal, MD  
Karen Bushe MD, CCFP (EM)  
Siobhan Callaghan, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
Zoë Del Bel Belluz, MD, CCFP  
Rachel Erstling, MD, FRCPC  
Eric Fifield, MD, CCFP  
Dale Guenter, MD  
Shayna Henry MD, CCFP  
Robin Lennox, MD, CCFP  
Crista Maes, NP-PHC  
Tim O'Shea, MD, MPH, FRCPC  
Rose Patterson, NP  
Lori Regenstrief, MD  
Adrian Rocci, MD, CCFP (AM), FCFP, ABAM  
Erica Roebbelen, MD, CCFP  
Haider Saed, MD, MSc, CCFP, FCFP  
Rachelle Sender, PhD, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
Myles Sergeant, PEng, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
Elizabeth Shaw, MD, CCFP (AM), FCFP  
Kyla Sorensen, MD, CCFP  
Hailie Streith, NP  
Frank Vona, MD  
Jill Wiwcharuk, MD, CCFP (EM), dipISAM