



Office of the  
Federal Housing  
Advocate

Bureau du  
défenseur fédéral  
du logement

## 8.2 (b)

March 4, 2025

Her Worship Andrea Horvath and Council  
71 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8P 4Y5

**BY EMAIL:** [mayor@hamilton.ca](mailto:mayor@hamilton.ca)

Dear Mayor Horvath and Members of City Council:

I write to express my grave concerns about the proposed plan to adopt a strict by-law enforcement approach to homeless encampments in Hamilton once the Encampments Protocol comes to an end on March 6, 2025. When you vote later this week on the Coordinated Encampment Response Post-protocol (PED25083), I urge all Councillors to reflect on Hamilton's human rights obligations.

As the Federal Housing Advocate, my mandate to review systemic housing issues across the country was established by the [National Housing Strategy Act](#) (2019), which also reaffirmed housing as a fundamental human right in Canada.

I appreciate that municipalities like Hamilton are on the frontlines of the homelessness crisis and responses to encampments but do not necessarily have the powers and financial resources to address all the systemic factors contributing to homelessness. Nevertheless, municipal governments--just like all other orders of government--have obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights and to adopt a human rights-based approach to encampments.

Just over a year ago, I released my final [report and recommendations following a year-long review of homeless encampments](#) across the country which outlined specific [recommendations aimed at municipalities](#) to fulfill their human rights obligations. I concluded that forced evictions and enforcement approaches do not address the underlying systemic issues and put people at risk of even greater harms. I also called for all governments to adopt a human rights-based approach to encampments.

I heard frequently during my review that people living in encampments believed they offered the safest and most secure option for shelter available. Even when shelter beds exist, they can be inaccessible for a variety of reasons, unsafe and/or associated with traumas which contributed to a person becoming unhoused.

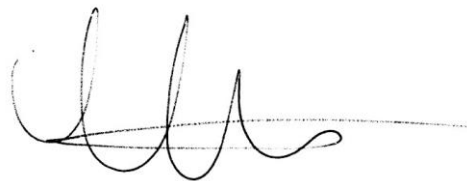
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A human rights-based approach calls on municipalities to ensure that they are doing all that they can to protect people living in encampments from harm and violations of their human rights while also working on solutions that will offer adequate housing and supports.

My final report also highlighted that meaningful engagement is a critical factor in identifying effective solutions to the homelessness crisis. As part of implementing a human rights-based approach to encampments, I recommended: “All governments must implement ongoing and meaningful engagement with people living in encampments and those who support them.”

Before you vote this week, I urge you to review my report and recommendations so that you are fully aware of my recommendations and your human rights obligations. I would welcome an opportunity to engage in further dialogue with you to explore how my office and the findings in my recommendations can contribute to a human rights-based response to encampments in Hamilton.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marie-Josée Houle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marie-Josée Houle  
Federal Housing Advocate

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