



**Xpace
Cultural
Centre**

2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST ENCAMPMENT EVICTIONS FROM XPACE CULTURAL CENTRE:

ATTN:

- Mayor John Tory
- Councillor Ana Bailão
- Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager of Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
- Janie Romoff, General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department

It is with love and rage that we are writing to you to support the demands to immediately halt the encampment evictions, move to repeal the by-laws that make it illegal to camp and focus your time, energy and funds to providing encampment residents with adequate fire safety, survival gear and housing.

We are Alexia, Natalie and Philip and we make up the small staff at Xpace Cultural Centre: a not-for-profit artist-run centre founded in 2004 that is dedicated to providing emerging artists and designers with opportunities to showcase their work in a professional setting. We have been located at 303 Lansdowne Ave, Ward 9 - Davenport for the past 8 years.

We are very concerned for the well-being of people living in encampments, many of which are our neighbours and beloved community members who find this to be their only option: to some, for example, it feels safer and more comfortable than a shelter, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

To evict people from their homes, without providing them with safe, accessible and affordable housing that respects their sovereignty, privacy and basic rights is incredibly dehumanizing and outright cruel.

The destruction of people's camps is violent and unconstitutional, and the 'alternatives' that the City of Toronto is offering as part of their winter plan for unhoused people does not adequately address the needs of many people living in encampments. Not only does it underestimate how many people are living on the streets (it estimates 500 people, while advocates and outreach workers estimate over 1000), it offers settings like The Better Living Centre which - not only fails to abide by social distancing requirements, but completely disregards people's privacy, dignity and access to basic hygiene and nutrition like hot showers and meals.



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Displacing people from their homes and outright refusing to provide affordable, safe housing and food to unhoused community members and people facing homelessness demonstrates a shameful neglect and utter failure of civic service. These are HUMAN RIGHTS. Not privileges that will benefit those who can afford it and ignore the rest.

Unhoused people and people facing homelessness have varying needs and should be allowed to live in the communities of their choosing, close to their families, loved ones, services, harm-reduction facilities and places of work. They should NOT have to choose between the fear of contracting COVID-19 and the fear of freezing to death in a tent. With winter steadily approaching in the light of a pandemic, encampment residents need our support now more than ever. This support should include the provision of fire safety equipment, tents, sleeping bags and access to hot water and bathroom facilities.

In addition, displacing people from their homes during a pandemic is a serious public health concern. The [CDC recommends that](#) cities not clear encampments during the COVID-19 pandemic “unless individual housing units are available,” because “clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread.”

And lastly, we’ve been witnessing incredibly mutual aid led by community volunteers such as Khaleel Selvwright, the man building tiny shelters for people living outside this winter, and the multiple small businesses and groups administering community fridges that provide healthy, fresh food for folks in need. In the absence of permanent housing options from the city, these people are implementing tangible solutions and should be supported - not fined.

On behalf of Xpace Cultural Centre and our communities, we are calling on city council to address these issues immediately and invest in 10,000 units of Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) permanent housing options in the next three years.

Sincerely,

Alexia Breard-Anderson (Director)

Natalie King (Programming Coordinator)

Philip Leonard Ocampo (Programming Coordinator)