

# Homelessness Encampments and the Opioid Crisis

## AMO Position

- Municipalities do not have the tools or financial resources to effectively manage complex health and social challenges. This hurts people, communities and Ontario's social and economic prosperity.
- Complex matters like homeless encampments and the opioid crisis underscore the critical need for a social and economic prosperity review. We need a municipal fiscal relationship that supports the foundations of a strong economy, sustainable communities and quality of life.
- AMO has called on the provincial government to provide more funding to expand the shelter system, cost-match the federal encampment funding stream and establish homeless encampment guidance for municipalities.
- The federal government needs to establish a national encampments response plan and increase investments for the Reaching Home program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness.
- Similarly, the opioid crisis won't be solved through simple, short-term solutions. AMO has called on the province to implement a comprehensive response, including significant, long-term, investment in prevention programs; expanding access to voluntary, evidence-based treatment with same day access; scaling up 24/7 crisis centres; and ensuring harm reduction supports are available for those who need them.

## Context

*Preventing and managing homelessness and opioid addictions is beyond municipal capacity*

Homeless encampments are symptoms of deeper system failures that hurt Ontario's social and economic prosperity. They are the product of decades of successive provincial governments that failed to invest in key areas, including income security, deeply affordable housing, and mental health and addiction supports and services.

The opioid tragedy has significant social and economic impacts on municipalities across Ontario. In addition to its enormous human toll, it has increased financial pressure on key municipal services such as emergency response, homelessness prevention, affordable housing, and public health.

## Key Facts

- In 2023 there were at least 1,400 homeless encampments in communities across the province.
- Many of the residents of these encampments suffer from mental health or substance abuse challenges.
- More than 2,500 Ontarians died from opioid-related overdoses in 2023 in communities across the province.
- In 2020, more than \$250 million in police and paramedic costs could be fully or partially attributed to opioids, which are services municipalities are primarily responsible for funding.
- Addiction and substance use was found in 2018 to be the most commonly cited reason for housing loss.

## Other Resources and Reports

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario released two important papers that offer the municipal perspective on homeless encampments in Ontario, and the opioid crisis. These papers highlight how these complex challenges are playing out in our communities and some of the steps that can be taken to address them. They outline detailed policy recommendations for the provincial and federal governments requiring leadership and urgent action.

- [Homelessness Encampments in Ontario: A Municipal Perspective](#)
- [The Opioid Crisis: A Municipal Perspective](#)
- [Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#)

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