

Statement on Homelessness and the Encampment at County Fair

October 12, 2021

Thunder Bay should be a welcoming and safe place for individuals and groups regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, class, creed, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, education, marital status, source of income, same-sex partnership status, family status or disability.

In 2019, the United Nation Human Rights Council said, *“Homelessness is a profound assault on dignity, social inclusion and the right to life. It is a prima facie violation of the right to housing and violates a number of other human rights in addition to the right to life, including non-discrimination, health, water and sanitation, security of the person and freedom from cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment.”*- Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (A/HRC/43/43, para.30)

In recent weeks, homelessness in Thunder Bay has come to the forefront of public awareness with the escalating situation of the homeless encampment at County Fair. Nobody wants to or should have to live in such an un-safe situation. However, with emergency shelters close to capacity, restrictions on time an individual may spend in detox facilities, inadequate access to mental health and addiction supports and housing availability and affordability issues, there are some members of our community who feel they have no other options available to them.

Housing is a basic human right. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) declares that all signatory states (which includes Canada) must “*recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions*”.

There are many contributing factors to homelessness but according to the data collected in the 2018 Point In Time Count, 66% of the homeless population in Thunder Bay identify as Indigenous. Therefore the historical and on-going impacts of colonial, structural and societal racism cannot be overlooked and are of particular relevance in this era of truth and reconciliation.

All levels of government need to consider this urgent issue with equity, innovation and compassion in mind. Diversity Thunder Bay and the Anti-Racism and Respect Advisory Committee applaud the collaborative approach recently undertaken by the City of Thunder Bay and partnering organizations to do just that and we support the continued efforts to implement the recommendations made in the District of Thunder Bay Point-In-Time Count 2018 of People Experiencing Homelessness Report, which are as follows:

- Advocacy: Address the Service Gaps in Child Welfare Systems and Individuals Aging out of Foster Care
- Expansion of Culturally Competent Supports and Housing for Indigenous People
- Expansion of the High Needs Homeless and Home for Good Systems
- Research on Migratory and Transient Homelessness
- Advocacy: Support for Addiction Treatment
- Coordinated Access System

The dignity and safety of all people living in Thunder Bay must be respected and protected.

Signed by:

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