

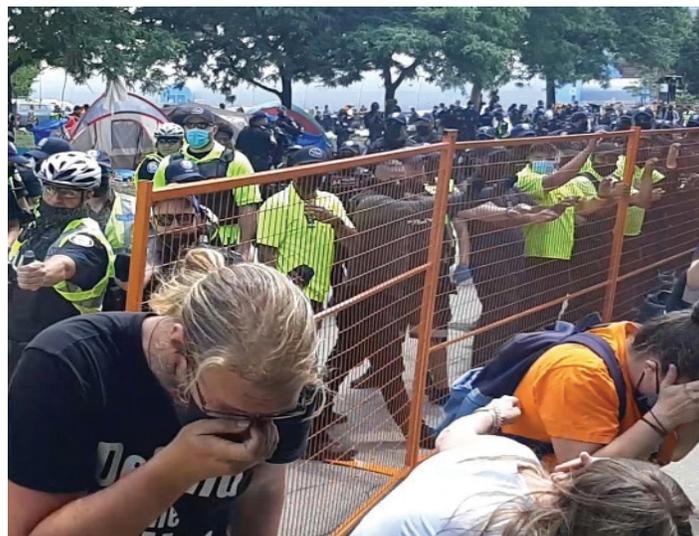
End all evictions

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

The vicious attacks by Toronto police on the encampments in city parks - with the support of a city council majority - is part of a long history of demonization and violence against people experiencing homelessness. It is not an aberration but a pattern. What has changed is the context. The people living in encampments are doing so because they have no other options and the pandemic means more and more people have been pushed onto the streets. All of this is happening after decades of skyrocketing rents and housing prices which give working people even fewer options.

The city justifies the attacks by saying that the encampments are not safe and that they are trying to get people into housing. They could solve those problems by putting some effort into increasing safety and building proper affordable housing but they are not doing either.

If, for example, the issue is fire



safety - governments in cities around the world have solved this problem by having firefighters provide fire safety tips and fire extinguishers on site. That would solve the problem and would save a considerable amount of money. Having police and private security attack the camps is expensive and wasteful.

The city will also say that they are working to find housing for those in the camps. But what kind of housing are they proposing? Given the massive wait times for affordable housing, what they are really doing is pushing people into an already overcrowded and dangerous shelter system. During the pandemic there have

been numerous outbreaks of covid in the shelters. The new hotel shelters are not much better and leave many people feeling that they are still in a state of institutional supervision.

And many of the housing options being offered are far away from the centre of the city in locations that have few services. This just means people will end up back in an encampment soon after being sent to housing.

There is also another equity issue at play. Many in the encampments are people who have experienced trauma - often at the hands of the system - and they are unwilling to be brought into a daily interaction with that very same system. Almost 40% of those in encampments are Indigenous people who have already suffered from the genocide meted out by the Canadian state. The fact that Toronto police are evicting them from their own land just adds insult to injury.

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City arguments about needing the parks for children's programs are bogus. Several days after Alexandria Park was violently cleared, the park was ringed with fences and security guards reserving the area for a film shoot. Money from the movie industry is higher priority than either homelessness or children.

It is absurd that this is the response from the city but it is logical when put into the framework of capitalism.

The capitalist system has no interest in solving the housing crisis. In fact, any long term solution that would provide adequate affordable housing puts the profits of the banks, developers and landlords in danger. Far from being a problem that politicians cannot solve - they are deliberately ensuring it will not be solved.

Doug Ford and John Tory and Justin Trudeau are in league with the capitalists who make money off of the housing crisis. They listen to them and not to us. That's what is behind the opening of the Greenbelt to housing development or the removal of strong rent controls in most cities in Canada

But that doesn't mean we cannot have change. Campaigns

to defund police and have some of the money allocated to them used for affordable housing are growing around the world. The city of Toronto spends \$1.2 billion on police each year. Half of that would be enough to provide housing - thus making the police who attack the encampments redundant.

But ultimately, if we want to permanently solve the housing crisis we need to overthrow the capitalist system that makes housing a commodity rather than a right.



Eyewitness to the Lamport encampment attack

I was a witness outside the gate at Lamport stadium today. I arrived at about 12pm, and the violence I witnessed shortly after was truly horrific. A woman in front of me was pepper sprayed for standing. The police hit people with riot gear, leaving many with cuts and one man

appeared to be concussed. Injured people being treated by medics were taken to a side street, and people standing blocking the gate were violently shoved to the ground and arrested again for simply standing there. So many people were shoved and thrown to the ground by police. There was so much force happening at once, so much screaming, pepper spray in the air, people crying...

I feel so much anger towards the city of Toronto for their violent response to poverty. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent terrorizing people to evict 14-17 people from encampments who will have no where to go. So many community members came out to support and put their bodies on the line, which gives me hope. But the violence displayed today confirms that the police must be defunded and that John Tory is not fit to handle Toronto's houselessness crisis.

Mackenzie Harris, {she/they}
MSc Student | University of Guelph

Take action!

Contact Mayor John Tory and Toronto city councillors. Demand an end to encampment attacks and call for police defunding. Money for housing - not more cops.

John Tory:
416-397-CITY (2489)
Email: mayor_tory@toronto.ca
Twitter: @JohnTory

Find your councillor at:
<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/council/>

Contact the Encampment Support Network for more information about upcoming support rallies

encampmentsupportnetwork.com/
[instagram.com/esn.to.4real/](https://www.instagram.com/esn.to.4real/)
twitter.com/esn_to



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