

Ontario **Taking Action** to Protect Parks and Public Spaces

The Ontario government is protecting communities by re-introducing legislation that will provide municipalities and police with the enhanced tools they need to end encampments and clean up our parks and public spaces. The Safer Municipalities Act will, if passed, put protecting the safety of all residents first by helping clear public spaces and end the public use of illegal drugs.

"We have heard loud and clear from the people of Ontario: They want their parks and public spaces to be protected and safe for everyone to enjoy," said Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "Municipal leaders have asked for more tools and support to end encampments and public illegal drug use, and we will do whatever is necessary to help municipalities get the job done and help those facing addiction and mental health challenges."

Ontario is investing \$75.5 million to further support homelessness prevention and provide people living in encampments with access to reason-

able alternative accommodation. This includes:

\$50 million to help create 1,239 additional housing units, including 815 long-term affordable and supportive housing units across the province.

\$20 million to create 971 additional shelter and temporary accommodation spaces, including modular units, which provide people living in encampments with accessible alternative options.

\$5.5 million to top up the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) to immediately free-up emergency shelter spaces for people living in encampments by helping approximately 1,000 people living in shelters move into longer-term housing. These funds build on the nearly \$400 million Ontario and the federal government invested in COHB between 2023 and 2024.

These investments are in addition to the province's annual investment of nearly \$700 million in homelessness prevention programs, as well as investing nearly \$550 million to create 28

Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs, nine of which have already opened as of April 1, 2025.

To protect community safety in parks and public spaces, the legislation introduced today includes amendments to the Trespass to Property Act, which, if passed, would help clear encampments by enhancing penalties for people who deliberately and continually break the law by adding the new aggravating factors of continuous trespassing and the likelihood to reoffend.

The government is further protecting communities by also re-introducing the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act that will, if passed, allow police officers and other provincial offences officers to direct individuals to stop using illegal substances or to leave the public space. This will allow them to issue a ticket or arrest someone who does not comply, providing an important additional tool to stop the consumption of illegal drugs in public spaces.

People found guilty of violating this legislation, including those doing so in encampments, could face fines of up to \$10,000 or up to six months in prison.

As part of the province's focus on long-term treatment and recovery, the government is exploring new judicial approaches that provide the option of rehabilitation as an alternative to incarceration in the event of minor or non-violent drug crimes. As of March 2025, service managers reported approximately 1,826 people in about 703 encampment locations across Ontario.

Service managers who received funding are required to report back to the province on the number of people moved from encampments into new accommodations to ensure the province's investments are being used effectively.

The Trespass to Property Act, which applies to private business, offices, stores, hotels, parks and vacant land, provides property owners and occupiers with tools to deal with trespassing on their prop-

erty. "We have clearly heard the calls from our municipal partners about the need to help make our communities safer by ending encampments and illegal drug use in parks and public spaces. These amendments to the Trespass to Property Act will provide additional tools to support restoring public order, and are part of a balanced broader strategy to address public safety and the safety and well-being of people currently living in encampments." - Doug Downey

Attorney General of Ontario "Using illegal drugs in public is completely unacceptable. Everyone should feel safe when going to a park, riding transit, or walking through their neighbourhoods. Public safety remains our top priority and that is why we are supporting police services by providing them with the tools they need to confidently keep our communities safe, knowing that our government stands with them and has their backs every day."

- Michael Kerzner
Solicitor General of Ontario

"Illicit drugs and particularly opioids such as fentanyl used in public spaces in encampments are a serious community safety threat. There is a clear risk to families and children that live around the growing number of encampments in Ontario. I am very pleased Premier Ford is taking bold action to address this." - Patrick Brown

Mayor of Brampton "We thank the Government of Ontario for its decisive actions and meaningful investments in addressing the complex and pressing issue of homelessness and encampments. This significant funding will provide much-needed support for those experiencing hardship — enabling us to create safer and more vibrant communities for the benefit of all residents, visitors and businesses. We are committed to working with the province to ensure these vital resources are used effectively to help people transition into stable housing and access the essential support services they need."

- Kevin Ashe
Mayor, City of Pickering

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