

The Governance of Homeless Encampments in Canada

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The proliferation of homeless encampments in cities across Canada represents both a housing and a governance emergency, resulting in a human rights crisis. This paper describes the legislative context of municipal encampment governance in Canada and examines various court decisions related to encampments. The authors discuss traditional municipal responses to the crisis (such as their removal), identify barriers to improving encampment strategies, and highlight how rights-based responses can produce outcomes that are more dignified and efficient than the status quo.

Read the full report: bit.ly/3XI1hEX

Opportunities for Reform:

Implement a human rights framework to proactively align municipal policies and practices with human rights norms.

Institutionalize human rights within local governance via independent oversight bodies or human rights impact assessments of proposed encampment responses.

Pursue new intergovernmental partnerships that clarify roles, establish long-term funding, and enable coordinated planning.

Shift public funds toward more effective and cost-efficient responses, such as supportive housing.

Reframe homelessness as a systemic failing rather than an individual choice to foster the political support needed to pursue long-term solutions.

Partner with Indigenous governments, organizations, and service providers to develop culturally appropriate housing and shelter options.