

Top 5 Myths and Facts about the Waterloo Region Encampment Case

1 **MYTH:** This decision means that anyone can set up a tent in your backyard without permission.

FACT: The Charter applies only to government laws and decisions, including those made by municipalities like the Region of Waterloo. It does not apply to private property or disputes between private citizens. For example, no one has a right to set up a tent in your backyard. But when the government makes rules about the use of public property, those decisions must comply with the Charter.

2 **MYTH:** Everyone at the Encampment was offered somewhere to go and is *choosing* to remain at the Encampment.

FACT: The Waterloo Region has 2,371 people experiencing homelessness and only 356 emergency shelter beds. In April 2025, the Region deemed 40 people to be “Residents” at the Encampment. However, the Encampment is a fluid environment where many people come and go, staying for short periods of time as necessary. Of those 40 “Residents”, 6 people were placed in permanent housing and 23 were placed in alternative accommodations (the majority in motels with funding that ends in 2026).

The people sheltering at the Encampment today are not “Residents” as defined by the Region and have not been prioritized for any accommodations. The reality is that there are not enough places for people experiencing homelessness in Waterloo Region to go, which is why an encampment site is necessary.

3 **MYTH:** The Transit Hub can never be built – because 30 people refuse to leave the encampment.

FACT: The Waterloo Region asked the Court for legal guidance and found that, before closing the encampment at 100 Victoria Street, the Waterloo Region must identify another location where people experiencing homelessness can shelter without being ticketed, fined, arrested, or displaced. The Region does not have to choose between building the Transit Hub and providing a legal place for people to shelter; we can do both.

4

MYTH: I believe in housing and think people should be housed, so we shouldn't support encampments.

FACT: There are 11,421 people on the waitlist for affordable housing in Waterloo Region, and the wait for supportive housing is approximately 13.5 months. At the same time, 2,371 people are experiencing homelessness in the Region. While more affordable and supportive housing is urgently needed, people cannot wait months or years for housing to become available.

Until there are enough safe, accessible indoor housing options for everyone, many people will continue to shelter outdoors. Encampments provide a place for people to exist while longer-term housing solutions are developed.

5

MYTH: This is what the Notwithstanding Clause was made for.

FACT: The Charter has existed for 44 years. In 2018, Premier Ford became the first Premier in Ontario to ever use the Notwithstanding Clause. Ontario can choose to use the Notwithstanding Clause to override the important Charter rights of the encampment residents. But this will not solve the problem that 2,371 people in the Waterloo Region have nowhere to sleep at night or stay during the day.

The reality is that low social assistance rates and high rents have forced many people out of the rental housing market and into homelessness. These are issues that the Province can remedy by implementing increases to social assistance rates or creating more affordable or rent geared to income rental units.

The people of Waterloo Region deserve real solutions to homelessness.



For more information about the case, including the decision, evidence, and all documents related to the case, please visit www.wrcls.ca, or use the QR code to the left.