

**Key messages to support local conversations related to two AMO papers:**

- **The Opioid Crisis: A Municipal Perspective**
- **Homeless Encampments in Ontario: A Municipal Perspective**

*Municipalities are encouraged to use the messaging below related to AMO's papers on homeless encampments and the opioid crisis – challenges that are increasingly felt in all parts of Ontario. Note that template social media posts are available in a separate document.*

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**General**

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has released two important papers that offer the municipal perspective on homeless encampments in Ontario, and the opioid crisis.

These papers highlight how these complex challenges are playing out in our communities and some of the steps we can take to address them.

More and more, municipalities are asked to take on health and social challenges that they do not have the resources and tools to address. The results are unmet needs that hurt our communities and Ontario's social and economic prosperity.

Local parks becoming homeless encampments and increasing numbers of opioid-related deaths across the province are not the best we can do for Ontarians.

In a place as prosperous as Ontario, we can solve big problems. It's time for the provincial and federal governments to take a leadership role in finding the right solutions.

AMO continues to ask the provincial government to sit down with municipalities and work together on a social and economic prosperity review. The goal is to update the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship to support strong economic foundations, sustainable communities and quality of life.

**Homeless Encampments in Ontario: The Municipal Perspective**

In 2023 there were at least 1,400 homeless encampments in communities across the province. Many of the residents of these encampments suffer from mental health or substance abuse challenges.

Homeless encampments are symptoms of deeper system failures that hurt Ontario's social and economic prosperity. They are the result of long-term underinvestment by successive provincial governments in key areas, including income security, deeply affordable housing, and mental health and addiction supports and services.

In many cases, the realities of the local resources available to address encampments are at odds with the rights of groups and individuals. There is an urgent need for clear provincial guidance on how municipalities should manage encampments. Asking the courts to solve complex social problems is not the answer.

Municipalities are responsible for local public health and safety and that often means that removing encampments is necessary. Calls from advocates to end all encampment removals do

not reflect the complex situations that many communities are forced to manage.

Normalizing encampments is not a sustainable long-term solution for communities or encampment residents.

### **The Opioid Crisis: A Municipal Perspective**

More than 2,500 Ontarians died from opioid-related overdoses in 2023 in communities across the province.

In addition to lives lost, the opioid crisis has significant social and economic impacts on municipalities across Ontario, putting increasing financial pressure on key municipal services such as emergency response, homeless prevention and affordable housing, and public health.

This is a complex problem. It won't be solved by simple, short-term solutions. We need comprehensive action across several areas, including prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement.

These actions must include long-term, sustainable, and substantial prevention programs; expanding access to voluntary and evidence-based with same day access; scaling up 24/7 crisis centres, and ensuring local say on the harm reduction approaches need within local communities.