**Statement on Encampment Evictions – June 2021**

The Toronto Shelter Network (TSN) believes that housing is a human right and we envision a city where everyone has a home that enables them to live with dignity. As such all solutions to homelessness need to be founded on human rights principles and a human rights approach.

Decades of racist and colonialist policy have created and continue to perpetuate discrimination and barriers to human rights, including housing - first and foremost for Indigenous people - and for many other historically marginalized groups. These inequities have been magnified and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We applaud the extraordinary measures that shelter providers and the City of Toronto’s Shelter Support and Housing Administration have undertaken to provide safe indoor spaces for all encampment residents who want them. Toronto's shelter system has opened hundreds of shelter beds specifically for encampment residents in hotel programs, and vital services and supports are available at these sites to meet residents' needs. The results speak for themselves: a recent study by TSN found that only 16% of those who had moved from an encampment to a shelter felt that their experience staying in an encampment was better than their shelter experience. Nevertheless, encampments have provided peace of mind regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus, refuge, and access to resources, social support and community for many homeless people during the pandemic. Given these realities, we are deeply concerned about the ongoing eviction of people living in encampments. While the right to housing is not the right to encampment, forcibly evicting people from their homes is not just, nor is the lack of affordable, appropriate and supportive housing for those most vulnerable among us. As such, we stand beside many of our member agencies and partners and call upon the City of Toronto to end the eviction of people from encampments.

We fully appreciate that homelessness and its solutions are complex; however we do not believe that encampments offer a solution to homelessness. The City has embraced a vision of homelessness with the Housing TO Action Plan. We strongly encourage the City to move forward with its implementation, recommit to Housing First principles; and work authentically with people living outdoors so that they can fully exercise their rights and make informed choices about their housing and support services. Further, as the lack of sustained and progressive investment in housing and social policy by federal and provincial levels of government largely created the current homelessness crisis in Toronto, we call upon all orders of government to move beyond rhetoric and actualize the commitments that each has made to ending homelessness.

We envision a pathway forward that is based on principles of equity and justice. The TSN will support and facilitate collective efforts to problem solve and negotiate across differences and find solutions that work for all people. We believe that this effort will require evictions to end and for people to come together, listen to each other across differences, discuss options, make concessions and reach compromise. We have a real opportunity to move forward together and create a city where we all have the right to safe, adequate and appropriate housing.

Toronto Shelter Network