

# ESN DONOR NEWSLETTER

Week of May 23 2021 • Keep up with us • Instagram [@esn\\_to\\_4real](#) • Twitter [@ESN\\_TO](#)

On Wednesday May 19th, the City of Toronto sent a massive force to clear the Lamport Stadium encampment and displace the people living there. What the media coverage largely overlooks is that residents and community supporters successfully defended the majority of the encampment. Read our full statement on the clearing below, including some important fact checks.

The Mayor will repeat “camping in parks is illegal” ad nauseum, but the by-law that prohibits camping in parks could be repealed by our very own municipal government. It used to be illegal for restaurant patios to extend over the sidewalk and into the street, but those bylaws were repealed with #CafeTO and that is no longer the case. Nobody’s hands are tied here: instead of establishing an adequate supply of rent-gated-to-income housing so that people can live in dignity and safety, the City has chosen violence.

We expect the City will issue trespass notices to other encampments this week, and it has indicated that it will return to Lamport Stadium to attempt another clearing. When it does, we’ll be ready. **It’s time to stand with your unhoused neighbours.** Keep up with us on Instagram and Twitter for action updates, and [take a look at the resources in our toolkit.](#)

As always, **thank you for your support.**

## OVER THE PAST WEEK, WITH YOUR HELP, WE WERE ABLE TO DELIVER:

- ★ 28 flats of Gatorade
- ★ 26 cases of water
- ★ 47 boxes of various bars
- ★ 32 boxes of trail mix
- ★ 24 boxes of protein shakes
- ★ 42 tents
- ★ 14 tarps
- ★ 25 sleeping bags
- ★ 4 blankets
- ★ 15 first-aid kits
- ★ 28 boxes of masks
- ★ 32 packs of wipes
- ★ Food deliveries
- ★ Batteries
- ★ Hand sanitizer
- ★ Harm reduction
- ★ Gift cards

## **ESN has 6 neighbourhood committees of volunteers who visit encampments daily:**

1. ESN Parkdale (20 tents, 10 tiny homes)
2. ESN Trinity Bellwoods (45 tents, 11 tiny homes)
3. ESN Scadding Court (53 tents, 24 tiny homes)
4. ESN LNP (scattered along the lakeshore and in ravines)
5. ESN Moss Park (19 tents, 12 tiny homes)
6. ESN Cherry Beach (13 tents, 5 tiny shelters)

# ESN REPORT ON THE CITY

We are the only non-residents on the ground daily at 6 main encampment locations - and lately we have been striking out to various small encampments in our neighborhoods as well. We can only speak to the realities faced by encampment residents in the places we visit. There are dozens of encampments in the city, all varying in size, so the picture we have is limited to what we know. That said, we do consider it our responsibility to voice what we see is happening on the ground, because so far no one from the City is asking residents what their experience is.

# ESN STATEMENT ON THE ATTEMPTED CLEARING OF LAMPORT STADIUM ENCAMPMENT

***On Wednesday May 19th, the City of Toronto sent a massive force to clear the encampment at Lamport Stadium Park. Roughly 60 City of Toronto corporate security guards and police officers (including eight on horseback), six people in Hazmat suits, a handful of other city workers, two "claw" heavy excavators and three dump trucks were only able to clear one tent and two wooden shelters—about 10% of the encampment—after trying in vain for the better part of the day.***

Five days prior, trespass notices had been posted at the encampment, threatening arrests and fines of up to \$10,000 if residents didn't leave the park.

***Several of Lamport's residents told us that they didn't intend to leave and wanted their homes and belongings to be defended. Even those who were considering taking a hotel spot felt pressured to make an imminent decision.***

The residents of Lamport encampment have chosen to live there for many reasons: there's the



proximity to the respite, where some have beds and can access showers or food occasionally, though it doesn't currently provide a space for safe and supervised drug use. There's the fact that encampment dwellings have been indispensable for social distancing, especially during outbreaks at the respite, a congregate setting. Importantly, there's also a greater sense of autonomy and community support. When we recently asked a resident whether he wanted his tent defended, he replied, "It's not my tent, man. It's our tent."

Around 8:30 AM, Streets to Homes showed up to offer spots in temporary shelter hotels. **Contrary to the City of Toronto's public statement on the day's events, no residents were offered actual housing.** By about 10:45 AM, about 30 police officers arrived on the west side of the stadium and the growing presence of supportive community members frustrated their repeated attempts to enclose the west side with caution tape.



**A member of the City's encampment division briefed residents around the eviction timeline, saying that they had until 6pm to pack their bags. But that deadline was disregarded once it became clear that other residents planned to stay put.**

Police and security found themselves overwhelmed, so they changed tack and moved in on the less-populated area to the east of the stadium, where a tent and two wooden structures stood. Again frustrated in their attempts to put up caution tape, police surrounded the dwellings as their residents rushed to pack their belongings. As several community members went to the east to support residents, a city truck and a heavy excavator with a large claw attachment moved in, flanked by police. But "The Claw" was blocked by a crowd of supporters before it could reach the dwellings. Corporate security mandated that anyone who interferes with the clearing should be arrested. When community supporters attempted to create a buffer between residents' dwellings and the police, police responded with two arrests. Meanwhile, a small crew of people began to throw out residents' belongings without permission, and they felt the need to wear Hazmat suits to do it.

**Mounted police moved in, and when a Lamport resident attempted to step in to defend a shelter, police punched him in the face and forced him to the ground, where he was trampled by several officers and shoved into a court services vehicle. He was later released from 14 Division with deep cuts**



and bruising on his face and body, after a crowd of supporters gathered outside demanding his release. But the release was contingent on the absurd condition that he doesn't return to Lamport Stadium, where he lives. Two days later he was arrested again simply for walking around near Lamport in a blatant attempt to harass and intimidate him. He was then released again under the same conditions.

Police cracked down on supporters, punching some in the face and dragging others along the ground. A second "Claw" appeared and drove right up into the park from King Street, managing to maneuver the structures into a nearby dump truck. As supporters held up the clearing on the east side, a mass of roughly 150 supporters had formed a perimeter around several structures on the west, in anticipation of what was to come. But the police and city workers decided to retreat.





**The Lamport encampment still stands today because of the incredible force of solidarity between community members and their unhoused neighbours.**

Community supporters have been painted as “outside agitators” by Mayor John Tory and others, implying that we acted against the wishes of encampment residents. ***We want to be clear: our response flows from the relationships we’ve made with Lamport’s residents over the course of a year of delivering the daily humanitarian aid that the city refuses to provide.*** Residents themselves defended their homes against the city - we were just there to help.

Over the past couple of days, residents have said that they were proud to have fought back against the city and asked us to bring an even greater response next time.

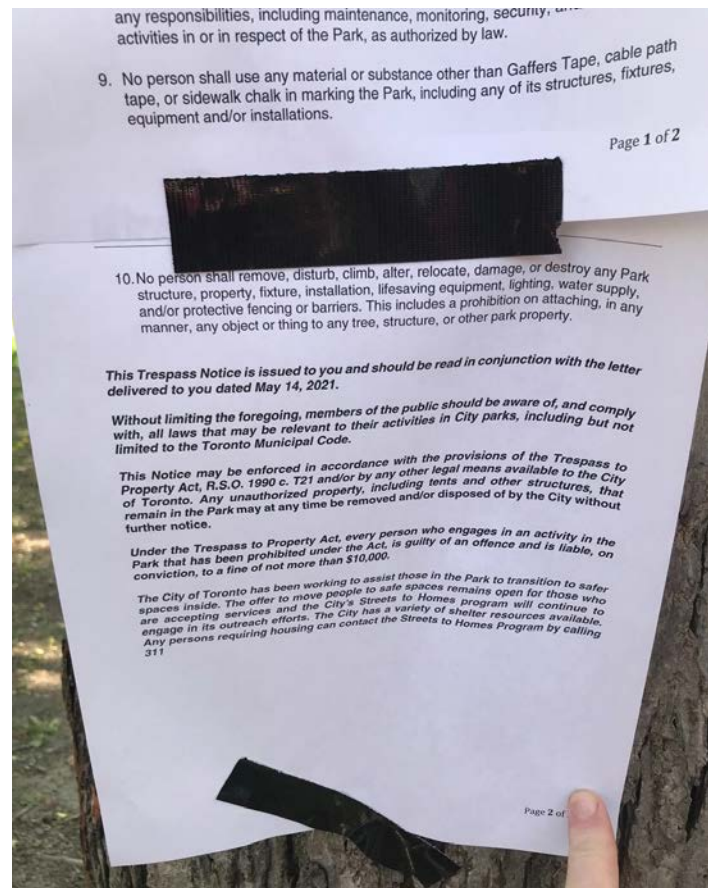
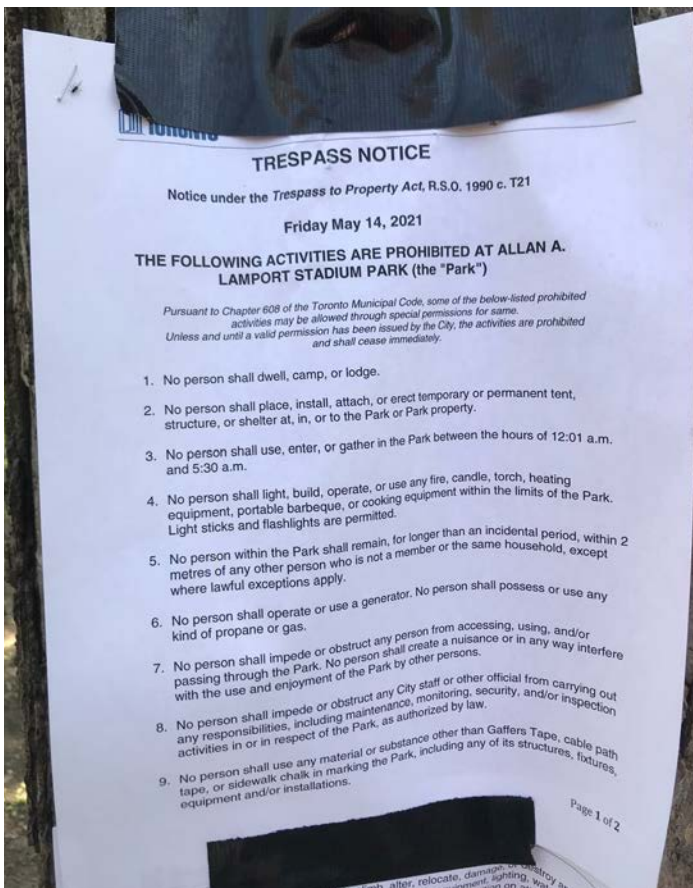
**Much of the coverage has highlighted the extreme state violence enacted against residents, community members, and advocates.** While important, this

coverage tends to overlook the fact that the majority of residents’ homes were effectively and collectively defended. Just as the City of Toronto remains hellbent on clearing Lamport Stadium, we will continue to support our neighbours in encampments as they refuse to be forcibly displaced.

***It’s time to step up and stand with your unhoused neighbours. The City has indicated that they’ll be back again soon, and we’ll be ready.***

## IT’S NOT OVER YET

We anticipate that other encampments in the downtown core will receive Trespass Notices this week, just like the one issued to residents at Lamport Stadium. The Cherry Beach encampment has already received notice. While some residents would appreciate the opportunity to move indoors, there are some who do not feel the City’s options work for them. We believe in people’s right to self-determine, and will defend it. Stay tuned for action updates.



Notice of Trespass received by residents of the Lamport Stadium, giving them until the 18th to leave. The City moved in with a massive force to clear remaining structures on May 19th.

## CALL FOR DONATIONS

We've been at this for a year now, and tents are as expensive as ever. With people returning to encampments from shelters all the time, we still need your help. Please email [report.on.toronto@gmail.com](mailto:report.on.toronto@gmail.com) or visit our [Patreon](#) if you'd like to help out-- if everyone on this listserv pledged just \$3-5/month, our funding issues would be solved! Think about it <3

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

We love to see support for encampments on lawns and in windows across various neighbourhoods. ESN volunteers want to connect with supportive businesses and neighbours. If you're looking for a sign for your residence or business, hit us up and someone will drop one off for you. Just fill out [this form](#).



**ENCAMPMENT DONATIONS**

DONATE  
DONATE  
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DONATE  
DONATE  
DONATE  
DONATE  
DONATE  
THANK YOU SO MUCH

**ESN really needs**

- \* **Tents - new**
- \* **Money for tents**

EMAIL [report.on.toronto@gmail.com](mailto:report.on.toronto@gmail.com) and you will get instructions as to how to do this

## OUR TALKING POINTS WHEN ADVOCATING TO THE CITY

1. Encampments are the result of a decades long housing crisis which is a result of policy design. The City of Toronto must provide safe, stable, permanent housing options in the downtown core and consult with encampment residents about their needs.
2. The City of Toronto's shelter system does not have enough space for everyone who is unhoused.
3. The City of Toronto should open community centres and spaces to encampment residents and other unhoused people.
4. The City of Toronto should repeal the by-law that criminalizes camping in parks, and oppose police violence.
5. The City should ensure encampment residents' health and safety by taking the recommendations of the Centre for Disease Control and outfit encampments with fire safety, running water, handwashing stations, and regularly cleaned port-a-potties. Send the H2O trucks to encampments. When an encampment is close to a community centre, the amenities of the community centre should be open for encampment residents to use. This includes hot showers.
6. Risk of fire should not be used to criminalize or displace encampment residents. The city should supply safe heat sources and clean power to people living in encampments.
7. The Mayor should use his emergency powers to halt all evictions at this point.
8. The City of Toronto should respect people's agency to choose their own living situations, and allow them to stay in encampments if no other option is suitable.

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## STAY TUNED FOR MORE APPEALS FOR SUPPORT BUT FOR NOW...

Individuals should keep writing and phoning John Tory and all [city councillors](#) and remind them that this humanitarian crisis is not going away. Ask for permanent Rent Geared To Income (RGI) housing solutions in the downtown core. [Here is a sample letter for you to use when advocating.](#)

Be proactive about welcoming encampment residents in your neighborhoods. Be loud about it

too – the NIMBY's calling 311 are the worst, and they dominate the attention of politicians. Educate your neighbors about the issues. Respectfully offer encampment residents the material support to fulfill their basic needs. Reach out to ESN for tips and recommendations for how to do that, or donate.

***That said, money is always best as we can buy in bulk. If you donate, be sure to write to your city councillors and politicize the act – this should be coming out of the city's coffer not your covid slim wallet.***

**Email [report.on.toronto@gmail.com](mailto:report.on.toronto@gmail.com) with subject line DONATIONS to arrange.**

## NICE STUFF

- ★ Community supporters really came through for residents at Lamport Stadium this week. There were some beautiful moments of solidarity amid the violence. So much gratitude to everyone who showed up and stood beside their neighbours.
- ★ Kind neighbours all over the city have been showing up at the encampments we visit bringing food, snacks, coffee and art supplies, and clothes. Your support is so appreciated!
- ★ Some beautiful art is being made at Queen/Dufferin, Cherry Beach and at Trinity Bellwoods!
- ★ Shout out to ALAB! It is always a privilege to work with you <3

## READING LIST & MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ★ [PRESS CONFERENCE - Toronto Drop-In Network - On encampment clearings](#)
- ★ [Buildings Are Crammed, Dilapidated, and Further Hard-Hit by COVID-19: Toronto Community Housing Corporation \(TCHC\) Workers Aim to Improve Quality of Life for 110,000 Tenants During Collective Agreement Negotiations](#)
- ★ [Toronto clears three downtown encampments and ejects some occupants to unknown locations](#)
- ★ [Fact Check Toronto - Claim: The City of Toronto continually provides safe, inside space to people living outside.](#)
- ★ [Councillor Mike Layton's Statement on Encampments](#)