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Dear mayors:

Thank you for your recent letter outlining the serious challenges communities across Ontario are facing when it comes to homeless encampments and their impact on community safety.

Our government shares your concerns about the need to keep our children, families and communities safe. That's why we are acting to put an end to the public disorder, drug use and trafficking and loss of public space that have resulted from the widespread growth in encampments. These are serious problems that are impacting communities across Ontario, with people rightly demanding action. Enough is enough.

Solving the homelessness crisis starts with more treatment beds and places to call home. Ontario is making unprecedented investments in mental health, addiction recovery and homelessness prevention services, including nearly \$700 million annually through our provincial homelessness prevention programs to ensure we can provide more roofs over the heads of people experiencing homelessness. More recently, our government announced \$378 million to create 19 Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs, which will add up to 375 highly supportive housing units, in addition to addiction recovery and treatment beds and other services to help people facing homelessness and addiction.

There is an urgent need to do more and I am thrilled that you have shown considerable leadership in putting forward concrete and actionable solutions. Ontario is finalizing the details of new initiatives, including enhanced legislative powers, that will be responsive to your requests. I want to be clear: Our government will be there to support municipalities in restoring public order in your communities every step of the way.

The new legislation and supporting initiatives will achieve the outcomes all of us agree are necessary in order to protect public safety and dismantle encampments, including:

- Greater service manager accountability and alignment with provincial and local priorities.
- Additional funding to create more capacity in our shelter systems, supported by the new accountability measures to ensure these funds support dismantling encampments.
- Explicitly and unequivocally prohibiting the use of illicit drugs in public, with new tools and authorities to help police enforce this prohibition.
- Enhanced penalties for people who deliberately and continually break the law.
- New approaches to treatment and rehabilitation that prioritize pathways to recovery over incarceration in the cases of minor and non-violent drug-related crimes.

I am confident that the legislative authorities the province is preparing are common sense, practical and entirely aligned with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, especially for the law-abiding residents who simply want to enjoy the benefits of their local public spaces. For that reason, I do not expect the legislation will need to proactively invoke Section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, should the courts interfere with our shared goal of effectively addressing and clearing out encampments using these enhanced tools, with your support, our government is fully prepared to use the Notwithstanding Clause. This includes the province becoming an intervenor in any court case that restricts the ability of municipalities to regulate and prohibit encampments, so long as the approach you pursue is aligned with provincial best practices.

Finally, we are ready to continue to advocate on behalf of Ontario's municipalities to the federal government to ensure that you receive your fair share of federal funding needed to deal with the challenges you have outlined and that these resources are allocated in a manner that meets your needs.

While municipalities are on the front lines of protecting our communities, it will require all levels of government to solve the homelessness crisis that is spilling into public parks and spaces. Our government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with you as we work to keep our communities safe and support people in need.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario