



First published  
Kitchener Citizen  
"Notes from City Hall"  
August 2022

**To consider housing as a human right requires us also to think about encampments as a form of housing.**

# On the record

Every month, the Kitchener Citizen publishes "Notes from City Hall" which Kitchener City Councillors can use to communicate with residents.

In addition to highlighting upcoming community events, I often use this as an opportunity to present my position or invite discussion about issues that pertain to citizens.

Here is one that I think bears repeating.

It was a great honour and privilege to sit at the table in late July with Leilani Farha, a former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (2014-2020) and founder of The Shift, a global housing advocacy group.

Her role at the UN took her around the world examining housing as a human right and drafting policies that would sustain it. The Shift is working with the City of Kitchener and other municipalities across the country advocating housing as a human right.

To consider housing as a human right requires us also to think about encampments as a form of housing.

In fact, the Shift's National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada states that encampments are "instances of both human rights violations by those who are forced to rely on them for their homes, as well as human rights claims, advanced in response to violations of the right to housing". Furthermore, governments must "uphold the basic human rights and dignity of encampment residents while they wait for adequate housing solutions that meet their needs".

Homelessness, insufficient affordable housing and housing as a human right will be examined by The Shift in collaboration with the City. I was pleased to hear Leilani speak about the need to do an audit of our housing needs, so that greater consideration would be placed on building to meet those needs. This would allow development to be done based on a plan. I look forward to learning more from her global experience as the process advances.

If you would like to learn more about Leilani's work, please feel free to contact me.