



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members of City Council
DATE:	March 28, 2024
SUBJECT:	Update #4 Regarding 2023-2024 Winter Response Strategy (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On September 13, 2023, Council approved that staff implement an annual Winter Response Strategy, from December 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, through Emergency & Community Services report HSC23012(a) to support vulnerable individuals within the homelessness serving system.

On November 27th, 2023, November 30th, 2023, and December 13th, 2023, Housing Services Division provided communications updates about enhancements to the Council approved winter response.

On February 21, 2024, Council received an Information Report Winter Response Strategy Update (HSC23012(b)) detailing enhanced one-time funding of \$1,496,028 from Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy 2023-2024, to support the Winter Response.

INFORMATION

The Winter Response Strategy has been well utilized by vulnerable people and early analysis of the program has shown positive results. Client feedback has been favourable, and occupancy reporting shows that the additional Winter Response programming is well attended. Added capacity in the emergency shelter system is consistently at full occupancy. Given the high demand for service, Healthy and Safe Communities expanded service for overnight men's warming spaces in January 2024. These spaces were also fully utilized.

Staff are currently evaluating the program to document program successes and areas for improvement. Results from this evaluation, as well as recommendations for Winter response planning in the future, will be brought forward to General Issues Committee later this year.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

In recognition of the continued need for service and ongoing capacity pressures within the homelessness serving system, services which expanded capacity and were implemented through the Winter Response Strategy will be temporarily extended to November 30, 2024 to allow for enhanced capacity in the emergency system. It is anticipated that funding for this extension will be through existing Provincial and Federal funding sources first, then from Housing Division and or Corporate surplus. Staff will return with a report outlining further details to a future Council meeting.

In summary, the services which will be temporarily extended beyond the Winter Response Strategy end date of March 31, 2024 include:

- 45 additional overnight warming spaces (serving women, trans- and non-binary people)
- 50 additional overnight warming spaces (serving men, trans- and non-binary people)
- 40 additional overnight drop-in spaces (serving women, trans- and non-binary people)
- 100 additional day-time drop-in spaces (all populations)
- 45 additional emergency shelter beds (serving men)

Details on the Winter Response Strategy can be found on the City of Hamilton's website at the following page: www.hamilton.ca/WinterResponse

For more information, please contact Rob Mastroianni, Manager Homelessness & Housing Support, at Rob.Mastroianni@hamilton.ca or 905-546-2424 ext.8035.