




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	June 20, 2024
SUBJECT:	Encampment Response Update – May 2024 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Al Fletcher Acting Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On August 18, 2023, Council ratified an Encampment Protocol to be utilized by City staff to respond and manage encampments, tents, or temporary structures within public lands in the City of Hamilton.

To provide ongoing accountability and transparency to the City's encampment response program and the implementation of its encampment protocol, staff were directed to communicate with Council and Ward Councillors regarding the Encampment Protocol through monthly, ongoing Information Reports to General Issues Committee and include data and trends, operational updates, and any continuous improvement measures implemented to further efforts toward providing ongoing accountability and transparency to the City's encampment response program and the implementation of its encampment protocol.

INFORMATION

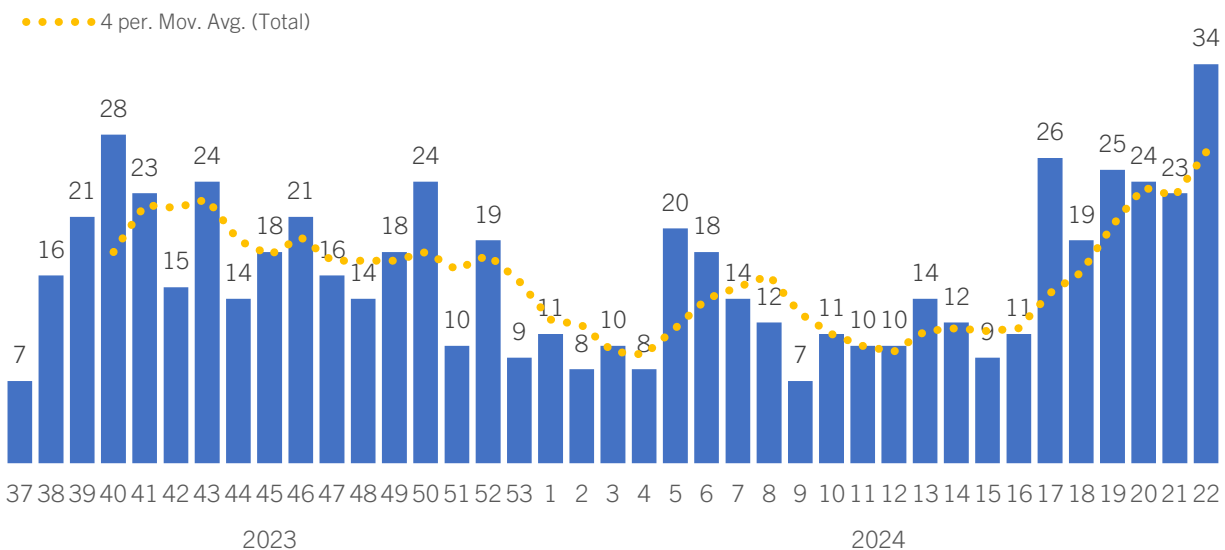
Program Trends:

Identification of New and Existing Sites with Compliance Concerns

New encampments continue to be identified throughout the City by several different sources, including concerned citizens, businesses and business improvement areas, and internal staff from other City departments. In addition, existing encampments have also come in and out of compliance, resulting in initial compliance checks from Housing Focused Street Outreach.

Since April 22, 2024, there has been a sharp increase in the number of new and existing sites with potential compliance issues identified to Housing Focused Street Outreach and requiring engagement from Outreach staff. May 2024 has seen the most sites identified (114) to Housing Focused Street Outreach, significantly higher than the previous high of 86 in October 2023, and higher than the to-date monthly average of 70.

Figure 1: New and Existing Sites requiring Engagement by HFSO, by Week



It is likely that individuals who previously found respite in indoor spaces in shelter, winter response programs, and/or were couch surfing temporarily with friends and family may return to living outside in encampments as the temperatures have increased. With more individuals living outside and demand at its highest for compliant spaces in lower City wards that are closest to services and supports, it is possible that this is resulting in more compliance concerns, particularly in Wards 2 and 3.

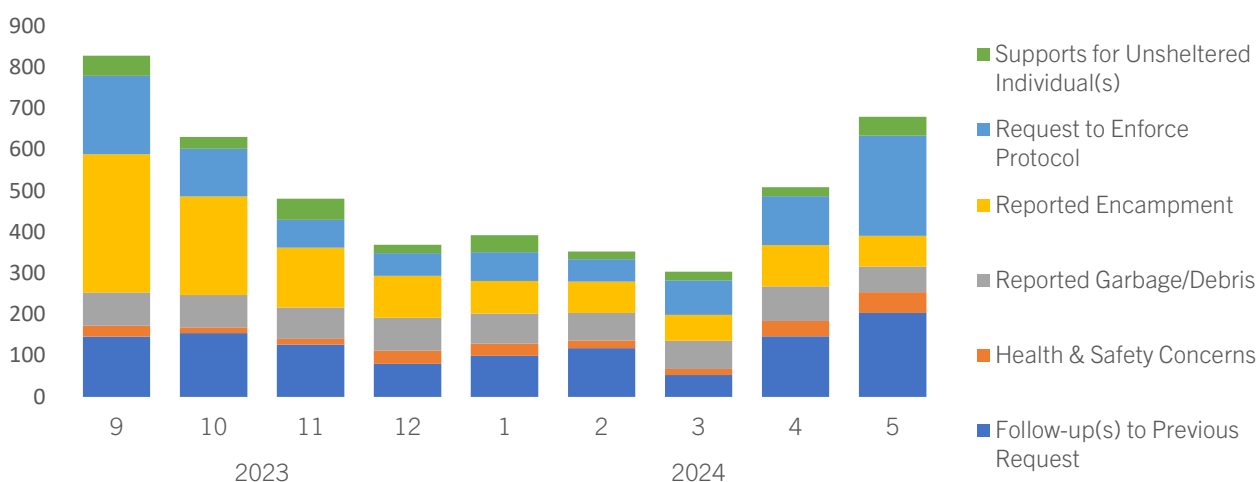
Compliance Trends

In May 2024, a total of 114 potential sites were identified through various modalities to Housing Focused Street Outreach. Of the sites identified to Housing Focused Street

Outreach, there were no tents observed upon visiting 37 (32%) locations, 15 newly identified sites were deemed compliant on first visit (13%). In total, 60 sites (57 on public property, 3 on private property) were escalated Municipal Law Enforcement, resulting in 80 trespass notices being served to individuals on public property who were in contravention of the Protocol. The three most common reasons for escalation were proximity to private property (10%), proximity to recreational asset(s) (9%), and the site being located on a roadway (6%).

Complaint and Service Request Trends

Figure 2: Complaint and Service Request Trends, Monthly



Increase in Follow-Up Correspondence

Since a low of 328 complaints and/or requests for service in March 2023, the total has steadily increased to 737 in May 2024. The total in May is the second highest since the Protocol was established in August 2023, only behind September 2023 (897). Some of this increase is a result of new staff available to reply directly to concerned citizens, as the number of follow-ups was 204 in May 2024, a significant increase from a previous high of 155 in October 2023.

Increase in Requests to Enforce

There has also been a significant increase in the number of requests to enforce the Encampment Protocol at a particular site, or across the City. Previously, the Public was reporting encampments instead of requesting enforcement, but recently there has been a shift away from more neutral reporting towards an immediate request to enforce. This

is likely a result of a greater comprehension of the Protocol, as well as growing frustration amongst housed neighbours of specific sites.

When combining the number of encampments reported with requests to enforce, May 2024 (318) has the third highest total correspondence to the unsheltered inbox, behind September 2023 (526) and October 2023 (355) and is above the to-date average of 246. This aligns with a potential increase in the number of individuals living unsheltered and number of sites identified during the warmer weather months.

Outreach Update:

In April 2024, Housing Focused Street Outreach introduced a new methodology to categorizing and tracking interaction outcomes with individuals living unsheltered, in lieu of the availability of HIFIS. The new approach allowed Outreach staff to streamline data entry and supports more efficient tracking of multiple outcomes that may occur within a single interaction (i.e., Outreach staff may build rapport, help someone to acquire income supports, and present an available shelter space all in one conversation). As a result of a new approach and additional staffing, the totals are higher in April and May 2024 than they were in previous months.

In May 2024, staff identified 2107 interaction outcomes with individuals living unsheltered. The interactions were disaggregated into the following categories:

Figure 3: HFSO Interaction Outcome Results: April-May 2024

Interaction Outcome Category	April 2024	May 2024	Total (%)
Rapport Building & Engagement	698	1132	54%
Protocol Awareness & Education	128	210	10%
Housing Supports & Referrals	91	166	8%
Financial aid & income support referrals	64	146	6%
Physical health-related support referral	31	48	2%
Mental health-related support referral	6	13	1%
Harm reduction-related support referral	21	65	3%
Indigenous-specific supports	26	18	1%
Pet-related supports and referrals	46	71	3%
Other supports	80	62	4%

Interaction Outcome Category	April 2024	May 2024	Total (%)
Shower / washroom program referral	27	13	1%
Shelter referral - Successful	11	9	1%
Shelter referral – Declined	14	25	1%
Shelter referral – Other	12	14	1%
Drop-in referral made	40	106	4%
Winter service referral	15	9	1%
Total non-unique outcomes	1310	2107	100%
Provision of goods	357	915	N/A

Housing Focused Street Outreach staff also introduced a new process to track the provision of goods to individuals living unsheltered, in lieu of HIFIS, which includes items like bottled water, snacks, harm reduction supplies, footwear and clothing, and sunscreen.

Enforcement Update

In an effort to manage the increasing number of sites that require enforcement and with limited resources available to enforce, Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team aims to utilize a tiered approach to responding to enforcement requests, addressing all sites within a specific tier, before moving to the next tier.

The following are the defined tiers of enforcement:

1. Sites with both numerical (i.e., number of tents within a site) and geographic non-compliance (i.e., tents within prohibited distance from geographic landmark(s))
2. Geographic non-compliance
3. Numerical non-compliance
4. Distance-related non-compliance (i.e., distance between clusters)
5. Square footage enforcement (i.e., 3x3-metre footprint, per tent)

With increasing demand to address compliance concerns, it is likely that this will create a backlog at current service levels and the lower tiered sites will be active for a longer period of time.

Service Levels

Housing Focused Street Outreach

The ratification of the Encampment Protocol established a 72-hour service level for response to complaints and/or service requests related to encampments. As such, Housing Focused Street Outreach has three days to visit the site and engage with the individuals at the site to inform them of the Encampment Protocol and forward the site to Municipal Law Enforcement, if required.

With new Outreach and administrative staff in place to support the process of identifying and escalating new sites internally within HFSO, in May 2024 Housing Focused Street Outreach met its service level 99% of the time, above the 2023 average of 75% and the 2024 to-date average of 90%. Since the Protocol was established in August 2023, Housing Focused Street Outreach has concluded its engagement process within seven days of a site being identified 97% of the time.

Municipal Law Enforcement

As per the Protocol, Municipal Law Enforcement Officers will determine compliance timelines depending on the presenting circumstances, for the issuance of notices or actions to be taken in respect to the encampment, temporary shelter, or tent, within a maximum of four (4) total days from the issuance of notice, unless exceptional circumstances exist.

In May, Municipal Law Enforcement met its service level at 27/57 (47%) sites escalated by Housing Focused Street Outreach. Delays in meeting service level requirements are due to a number of factors including impacted resources as a result of the Cyber Security incident, a significant increase in the number of sites escalated overall and, lengthy enforcement operations at other noncompliant sites.

Additional Updates:

Access to Washrooms and Showers Update

The City of Hamilton continue to make two recreational centres available for individuals experiencing homelessness to use for shower and maintain their hygiene. To date, the centres have received modest uptake, collectively averaging 19 users in May 2024. This is above the to-date average of 14, and likely reflects greater knowledge of the program amongst the unsheltered community.

Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters Update

There are no updates available regarding Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters at this time.

Encampment Liaison Committee (ELC) Update

A second meeting of the Encampment Liaison Committee is planned for the first week of June 2024, after the inaugural meeting was held in January 2024. The meeting was originally scheduled for March 2024, but was re-scheduled due to the cybersecurity attack.

Partners from key frontline agencies and organizations, including Indigenous partners, as well as people with lived/living experience have been invited to discuss peer supports and other gaps and program improvements.

Additional Trends and Data:

Total Unique Individuals Living in Encampments

The total number of individuals that Housing Focused Street Outreach interacted with in May 2024 was approximately 219. This is much higher than April's total of 188, and also higher than the 2023 average of approximately 204 individuals living unsheltered.

The increase in the number of individuals living unsheltered is likely due to a number of factors, including an increase in the number of outreach staff, warmer weather, and people choosing compliant outdoor spaces as an alternative to shelter space or alternative temporary accommodations that are less suitable. It is unclear when a saturation point will occur and the totals will plateau, although it is likely to be later in the summer.

Cleaning and Maintenance

In May 2024, Parks Section staff cleaned and maintained 191 sites, the highest monthly total in the past year, and significantly higher than the previous high of 157 in November 2023. With more movement across the City into newly identified sites, in conjunction with several existing compliant areas, the demand for cleaning and maintenance at sites has never been higher. To address the demand, Parks Section staff are conducting regular pickups at all known compliant sites and working with individuals living at the site to determine a location to leave their garbage and debris.

Indicators

The following indicators have been developed to assess the success of the program on an interim basis and will be reported on regularly to provide accountability to the public

and people with lived experience, and transparency regarding the City’s approach to encampment response.

Indicator	Category of Measurement	May 2024	Prev. Month	2023 Avg.	May 2023
Total complaints and/or requests for service requiring response or follow-up by Housing Focused Street Outreach (HFSO)	Volume of complaints and/or requests for service	737	530	545	728
Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have provided consent to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).	Total unique individuals living in encampments	N/A^	N/A^	47	47
Approximate number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have <u>not</u> yet provided consent to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).	Total unique individuals living in encampments	219	188	114	N/A
Total supports (e.g., rapport building conversations, referrals, information) provided to individuals living unsheltered from Housing Focused Street Outreach	Supports provided to individuals living in encampments	2107	1310	N/A	N/A

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.

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	May 2024	Prev. Month	2023 Avg.	May 2023
Total goods (e.g., water, snacks, harm reduction materials) provided to individuals living unsheltered from Housing Focused Street Outreach	Basic needs provided to individuals living in encampments	915	357	N/A	N/A
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on public property	Volume of Escalated complaints	57	26	20	N/A
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on private property	Volume of Escalated complaints	3	4	9	N/A
Total number of Trespass Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	80	31	64	N/A
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	4	2	4	N/A
Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor	Park cleaning and maintenance	191	155	97	58

Note: ^ Information not accessible due to HIFIS shutdown

All indicators meet the criteria of being valid and reliable and can be replicated by City staff and reported monthly.

Please direct any inquiries to Danielle Blake, Manager, Housing Focused Street Outreach, at (905) 546-2424 ext. 3731, or by email at Danielle.Blake@hamilton.ca.