



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 20, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Encampment Response Update – August 2023 (HSC23066) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Mike Jones (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3824 Danielle Blake (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3731
SUBMITTED BY:	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	<i>Michelle Baird</i>

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On August 18, 2023, Council ratified an Encampment Protocol to be used 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.

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INFORMATION

Housing-led Approach

As per the Council-approved housing-led approach, Housing Focused Street Outreach is the first point of contact to receive complaints and requests for service from a variety of sources, including concerned citizens; community stakeholders; Business Improvement Areas, and local business owners; Mayor's office and Councillor offices; Hamilton Police Services; and other internal departments within the City.

Housing Focused Street Outreach will make all reasonable attempts to visit and engage with individuals living within newly identified encampments, within the 72-hour timeline designated by the Encampment Protocol. At this time most complaints receive a response within the 72-hour timeframe.

Given the magnitude of non-compliant encampments already established prior to the ratification of the Encampment Protocol, and existing resources, it will take time for Housing Focused Street Outreach and Coordinated Response Team partners to address each existing encampment. The following criteria is being applied to prioritize response to encampments, tents, and temporary structures:

- Persistent, acute health and/or safety concerns
- Proximity to schools, childcare centres, play structures, and spray pads

Housing Focused Street Outreach teams are prioritizing visiting locations with existing encampments that meet the prioritization criteria, as well as new encampment locations brought to the team's attention. After visiting a location, if encampments at the site are deemed to be non-compliant Housing Focused Street Outreach escalates the encampment to Municipal Law Enforcement for further investigation.

Housing Focused Street Outreach continues to engage with residents at locations regardless of compliance to the Encampment Protocol, to provide goods that meet their basic needs, and to make referrals to health, housing, and other supports as necessary.

All complaints and requests for service regarding encampments are received by Housing Focused Street Outreach via its unsheltered@hamilton.ca mailbox, as well as by phone at 905-546-2828. This includes new tent locations, requests for litter pickup or waste management, or other concerns.

Access to Washrooms and Showers Update

Staff from Housing Focused Street Outreach, Recreation, and Corporate Security have worked to identify and operationalize 24/7 washroom access, shower access, and drinking water access throughout the city for individuals who are unsheltered.

To support access to washrooms, a first location has been secured at JC Beemer Park. JC Beemer's washrooms are winterized and is operational on a 24/7 basis with security, as of September 6, 2023. A second location is being finalized at Myrtle Park and is anticipated it will be in place with security by September 14, 2023. It is important to note that the 24/7 washroom locations may change over time, to respond to the changing locations of encampments, conditions at the parks, winterization of the washroom building or maintenance. The locations that are designated as the 24/7 washroom locations will continue to be articulated through these updates, as well as communicated to encampment residents by the Coordinated Response Team members.

For shower access, Norman Pinky Lewis Recreation Centre and Eastwood Arena have been identified as the two locations where showering access will be operationalized for individuals living unsheltered. Each site will maintain security for all hours of operation, as well as staff from Recreation and Facilities present. Individuals who are unsheltered will have access to a private showering room, and be provided with hygiene supplies, toiletries, and other sundry items to support their access.

Norman Pinky Lewis will have a total of 14 hours of access distributed across different times throughout the week, in alignment with adult programming or periods of the day without programming and is currently operating and welcoming unsheltered residents to use the facility. Eastwood Arena is not ready for use yet, but will be open for access 8am-4pm, Monday-Friday starting September 18, 2023. Washrooms at each site will also be available for use. Notably, recreational centers throughout the city have already been supporting individuals who are unsheltered on an ad hoc basis, and this approach would seek to formalize supports at particular locations.

Community Collaboration and Review Process Update

City staff are currently reviewing models for ongoing engagement of key frontline stakeholders and are developing a process to review decisions made with respect to the Encampment Protocol. This work will continue with the intention of forming a steering group by end of September 2023.

Encampment Compliance Update

In utilizing the noted process to prioritize existing sites for intervention, in August 2023, Housing Focused Street Outreach escalated 36 parks or non-compliant areas to Municipal Law Enforcement for investigation, who issued 137 Trespass Notices.

Housing Focused Street Outreach will continue to engage with individuals who are living unsheltered at non-compliant encampments to identify more suitable, compliant areas of the city that meet the individuals' needs, but the final decision of where to move is taken by individuals living unsheltered, and in some cases, this may be into new non-compliant spaces.

Additional Trends and Data

Volume of Complaints

In August 2023, Housing Focused Street Outreach received 799 service requests and complaints, sent directly from the community and external stakeholders, as well as those initially sent to internal Coordinated Response Team partners (i.e., Parks, Municipal Law Enforcement) and forwarded to Housing Focused Street Outreach for first response. The 799 complaints and service requests received by Housing Focused Street Outreach in August 2023 represents an increase from 686 in July 2023.

As a result of the public attention on encampments and the ratification of a new Encampment Protocol, an increase in complaints and service requests after ratification was noted by staff, specifically to enforce the Encampment Protocol.

Total Unique Individuals Living in Encampments

The number of unique individuals identified in August 2023 by Housing Focused Street Outreach staff was 122, higher than July's reported total but lower than the year-to-date average.

Supports for Individuals Living in Encampments

Housing Focused Street Outreach identified that they were able to interact with 289 individuals to support their basic and housing-related needs. This number is higher than previously reported numbers in 2023 and is significantly higher than what was reported in July 2022. This is likely a result of the intensive engagement occurring at existing sites to inform individuals living unsheltered of the expectations of the new Encampment Protocol and to begin initial discussions around new locations that meet their needs.

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Escalated Complaints

Since the ratification of the Encampment Protocol, Notices of Trespass have been issued immediately to sites in contravention of the terms in the Encampment Protocol. As such, a total of 137 Notices of Trespass were issued to individuals at non-compliant sites in August. When compared to August 2022, there were a total of 14 Notices of Trespass issued.

The increased number of Trespass Notices reflects new service levels within the Encampment Protocol, requiring Municipal Law Enforcement to issue notice within four days from the date a non-compliant site is escalated by Housing Focused Street Outreach.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Parks Section staff cleaned and/or maintained 94 encampment sites in August 2023. This was much higher than the July 2023 total of 86, and much higher than the August 2022 total of 59.

As individuals living in encampments begin to understand the impacts of the Encampment Protocol and move to new permitted locations in the city, Parks section staff are cleaning all garbage and debris left at abandoned sites. Additionally, as encampments in permitted areas become more entrenched, staff work with individuals living in encampments to regularly schedule maintenance and garbage pickup whenever possible.

Indicators

The following indicators have been established 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	August 2023	Prev. Month	YTD Avg.	August 2022
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	799	686	667	N/A

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	August 2023	Prev. Month	YTD Avg.	August 2022
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 HIFIS.	Total unique individuals living in encampments	69	80	86	53
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 not yet provided consent to have their personal information stored in HIFIS.	Total unique individuals living in encampments	53	37	51	N/A
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSO) with their basic needs per month	Support basic needs of individuals living in encampments	106	27	87	65
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSO) with their housing needs per month	Support housing-related needs of individuals living in encampments	183	115	159	84
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on public property	Volume of Escalated complaints	36	8	16	N/A

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	August 2023	Prev. Month	YTD Avg.	August 2022
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on private property	Volume of Escalated complaints	11	0	8	N/A
Total number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	0	5	12	66
Total number of Voluntary Compliance Notices issued on private property	Response type to escalated complaint	0	0	0	23
Total number of Trespass Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	137	N/A	N/A	14
Total number of Trespass Notices issued on private property	Response type to escalated complaint	0	N/A	N/A	0
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	4	5	4	N/A
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on private property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	0	0	0	N/A
Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor	Park cleaning and maintenance	94	86	77	59

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

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Please continue to direct complaints and inquiries related to encampments to unsheltered@hamilton.ca. This will ensure a coordinated response and avoid duplication of efforts as staff work to respond.

If there are question specific to this information report, 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.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A