




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	September 12, 2022
SUBJECT:	Encampment Coordination Team Update - August 2022 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Angela Burden General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

Background:

On March 31, 2022, City Council approved:

- (a) That an Encampment Coordination Team be created as a pilot to the end of 2022 with an estimated cost of \$305,000, funded first from COVID-19 Government Funds (eligible costs), then COVID-19 Reserve (eligible costs), then departmental budgets surplus and finally by the Tax Stabilization Reserve; and,
- (b) That all reporting from staff related to encampment coordination and response in Hamilton be brought forward to the General Issues Committee for discussion and decisions.

This is the fifth monthly update for the dedicated Encampment Coordination Team which began on April 11, 2022.

Information:

The Encampment Response Team (reps from: Municipal Law Enforcement, Housing Services, Housing Focused Street Outreach, Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team and Public Works – Parks) continues with a co-ordinated, strategic approach in responding to encampments to achieve compliance with the Parks By-law.

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.

Staff investigated 116 encampment sites on City and private property. For the 116 investigations the following results were achieved:

- At 89 encampments voluntary compliance was achieved (66 City/23 private);
- 41 complaints were unfounded (24 City and 17 private) (not encampment sites, but garbage and debris, partying locations, etc.);
- It was necessary to issue Notices of Trespass at 14 encampment sites on City property and voluntary compliance was achieved without any further intervention;
- Parks staff provided cleanup and maintenance at 59 sites in City Parks;
- Approximately 39 unique individuals that we are aware of currently remain unsheltered and regularly living in encampments throughout the City;
- 37 unique individuals (both in encampments and otherwise) engaged with Outreach for supports/referrals (examples include: referrals to shelters &/or other community supports, housing searches, open bank accounts, obtain ID, etc.);
- 1 individual was housed directly from an encampment by Outreach
- 6 unique individuals were assisted by Outreach through Housing Services Ontario Works Case Managers in obtaining or stabilizing their Social Assistance.

Staff continue to monitor data and activity to ensure compliance of the Parks By-law however a few encampment sites on city property have not met the 12-72 hour compliance timelines. This is a result of various challenges including staffing resources, and unique challenging situations at some sites requiring extra time to resolve however, in these situations compliance was obtained shortly after the 72 hours timelines. Staff anticipated these challenges, as during the summer months more individuals prefer to be outside, and there are staffing vacations and other staff absences.

The number of encampments on private property are increasing. This poses an additional challenge as MLEO's do not enforce the *Trespass to Property Act (TPA)*. Therefore, unless voluntary compliance is obtained the process of resolving encampments can be lengthy by either enforcing other city by-laws ie. Yard Maintenance/Zoning or involving HPS to work with private property owners and if required take the necessary action in enforcing *TPA*. Private property owners including CN Rail, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Hydro etc. continue to work with staff from the Encampment Response Team when dealing with encampments on private property including scheduled cleanups of garbage and debris and remedial efforts to discourage individuals from setting up tents on their property.

There continues to be several sites on city property that are challenging to monitor due to the location (e.g. escarpment/deep ravines). In addition, in order to support high acuity individuals who are moving from site to site, and address the presence of habitual repeated encampments, constant proactive and reactive visits are required sometimes daily by various City departments to provide Outreach to unsheltered individuals,

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.

enforce the Parks By-law and perform clean up and maintenance of garbage and debris. Dealing with these locations is time consuming, ongoing, contentious and challenging for staff from various divisions across the City (i.e. Municipal Law Enforcement, HPS, Street Outreach Services, Parks).

Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team (HPS EET)

Launched in April 2022 by HPs, HPS EET has helped in the mitigation of encampment sites throughout the City of Hamilton on both city and private property. Although the original intent was to keep the team in place until late fall 2022, the HPS EET has been disbanded as a result of resource challenges and the need to assign HPS Officers to patrol divisions to assist with front line policing. The HPS EET team has done an amazing job working to assist the city's most vulnerable population, and was a valued partner in working with the Encampment Response Team which also includes staff from Municipal Law Enforcement, Housing Focused Street Outreach and Public Works – Parks. HPS EET working together with Municipal Law Enforcement Encampment Officers have also assisted several private property owners in resolving encampments on private property including obtaining authorization from property owners to enforce *Trespass to Property Act* when compliance was not achieved. HPS will continue to assist in managing encampments at a lower staffing level and will continue to participate in Encampment Response Team morning meetings to determine strategies in dealing with encampment sites. HPS Social Navigators will continue to provide outreach and support for unsheltered individuals as they always have.

Continuous Improvement Measures To-Date

The need for improved data coordination across HPS and City divisions was identified in 2021 before the creation of the specialized encampment team. However, until recently, the HPS was unable to fill this long-standing vacant position. Part of this recently filled role will be to consolidate data to create an interactive map and dashboard to be used internally that will show reported encampment locations and the efforts of each responding area in order to inform a proactive outreach response to supporting individuals lived unsheltered to access housing and community resources alongside the work of MLE and HPS to preserve public health and safety through bylaw compliance. Over time, this consolidated data will also be used to support evaluation and continuous improvement of the Encampment Response Team and the Encampment Co-ordination Team.

The MLE Encampment Supervisor has been working with staff from Public Works on sites that have become habitual encampment set ups to determine remedial work to maintain site lines and address health and safety issues. Of note, several Municipalities across Ontario have reached out to Hamilton's MLE Encampment staff to discuss

challenges, strategies and best practices in dealing with encampment sites as they work to address encampments in their jurisdictions.

Update on the Development of Recommendations for Council

In July, in follow-up to a motion for Comprehensive, Human-rights Based, Health-focused Housing Solutions for Residents Living Encamped across Hamilton moved by Councillor Nann at the Emergency and Community Services Committee, a consultant engaged 35 representative stakeholders to come together to develop a shared understanding of the issues and potential next steps to be taken by the community towards developing a coordinated, person-centred, health and housing focused approach to encampment response.

In parallel to this process, to ensure recommendations are also being informed by individuals with lived experience, from July 25-29, 2022, City staff engaged with 57 individuals who are unsheltered living in encampments across Hamilton around their stories, impacts of the existing by-law, access to resources, and to brainstorm around what other approaches should be considered.

The SPM of the Encampment Coordination team is currently working to analyze the data and synthesize responses into key messages and draft recommendations. Prior to bringing the recommendations to Council, the SPM will be leading a follow-up engagement in September to review draft recommendations with representative stakeholders and ensure the voice of the community is accurately depicted. Once the recommendations have been reviewed by the community, they will be shared with Hamilton City Council.

Please direct any inquiries to Marty Hazell, Director, Response Coordination at (905) 546-2424 ext. 4588 or by email at Marty.Hazell@hamilton.ca.