

**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**  
**Health Protection Division**

**COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**Housing Services Division**

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members Board of Health
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	October 19, 2015
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Community Bed Bug Strategy (BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a)) (City Wide) <b>Outstanding Business List Item</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy (2016-2019), attached as Appendix "A" to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a), be endorsed by City Council;
- (b) That funding at a cost of \$1,060,000 for implementation of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy from April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2019 be referred to the 2016 Capital Budget process;
- (c) That the Mayor send a letter on behalf of the Board of Health and City Council to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Health and

Long-Term Care requesting endorsement of and financial support for implementation of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy;

- (d) That Bed Bug Strategy Report BOH14010/CES14013 be considered complete and removed from the BOH Outstanding Business List.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On March 17, 2014, Board of Health approved recommendations in Report BOH14010/CES14013 to develop Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy. The Bed Bug Strategy is a three-year plan that will reverse the growing trend of bed bugs and reduce the impact of bed bugs for those residents that are exposed to them through a framework of resources and public education. It provides a coordinated approach by providing resources to support vulnerable residents. Work place training and policies will be developed for people that work in occupations that support individuals with bed bugs (e.g. nursing care) or who may be exposed to bed bugs (e.g. furniture disposal services). It will create a city-wide public health promotion campaign to increase awareness and reduce the stigma associated with bed bugs.

The Strategy marks a significant milestone for Hamilton to achieve its vision of a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable city. At the end of the three years, the Strategy will position the City and community to better respond to bed bugs and prevent severe infestations from occurring. Hamilton residents will be better educated about how to respond to bed bugs, including reduced stigma, early identification, knowledge about the options available through Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and improved work place practices that enhance service and reduce spread. The Strategy builds on previous work regarding bed bugs by all levels of government through increased coordination and a focused effort to respond to this growing problem.

Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy has six priority areas and twelve recommended activities. Three activities in particular have been identified as critical investments in that they provide a foundation for the success of the overall Strategy and will positively impact the remaining activities. Complete details of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy are outlined in Appendix A to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a). A summary of the Critical Investment Activities are as follows:

1.1 Make improvements to the 2014/2015 pilot Bed Bug Assistance Program for vulnerable residents to create and implement a more coordinated approach for bed bug preparation and practical assistance. Investing in this Critical Investment Activity will positively impact activity 1.2 and 3.1.

2.1 Create and implement workplace and other relevant training modules as well as a comprehensive community health promotion campaign that addresses how to

prevent, identify, and act to reduce bed bugs. Investing in this Critical Investment Activity will positively impact activities 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, and 4.1.

6.1 Achieve success with 1.1 and 2.1 by investing in project management support to oversee the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Bed Bug Strategy. Investing in this Critical Investment Activity will positively impact activities 4.2, 5.1 and 5.2.

**Priority Area 1: Direct Assistance for Residents, in particular vulnerable populations;**

- 1.1 Develop a Bed Bug Assistance Program for vulnerable residents that offer preparation and practical assistance. (Critical Investment Activity)
- 1.2 Ensure appropriate services are available to prevent and respond to bed bugs.

**Priority Area 2: Workplace Training and Policy;**

- 2.1 Create and implement a comprehensive health promotion campaign that addresses workplace training, public education and prevention. (Critical Investment Activity)
- 2.2 Adapt workplace policies to support employees and the community to respond to the unique challenges brought on by bed bugs.

**Priority Area 3: Public Education and Prevention;**

- 3.1 Reduce stigma around bed bugs by supporting the development and implementation of a comprehensive health promotion campaign.
- 3.2 Promote the use of bed bug prevention tools and techniques to assist with early identification of infestations.

**Priority Area 4: Integrated Pest Management;**

- 4.1 Promote and implement Hamilton's Bed Bug Guidelines: An Integrated Pest Management Approach for Managing Bed Bugs.
- 4.2 Work with the community to develop a plan to respond to barriers faced by multi-unit dwellings, work and community spaces.

**Priority Area 5: Monitoring and Evaluation;**

- 5.1 Invest in and develop long-term surveillance methods to monitor bed bugs.
- 5.2 Develop an evaluation plan with key indicators to measure progress of the Bed Bug Strategy.

**Priority Area 6: Support and Advocacy.**

- 6.1 Invest in project management support to implement and monitor the Bed Bug Strategy. (Critical Investment Activity)
- 6.2 Advocate to all levels of government to improve response to bed bugs, including root causes of the bed bug resurgence.

Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy is comprehensive and will take three years to implement, but there are activities that may be done in the short-term over the next 12-18 months to improve the quality of life for those experiencing bed bugs. Focusing on the three critical investment activities and advocating to all levels of government to come up with solutions to offset the costs of addressing these activities will begin to reverse the trend of rising bed bug occurrences in Hamilton. An effective bed bug response will require collective ownership at all levels of government, through multiple service organizations, landlords, tenants, and the community. Hamilton is a cornerstone partner of these efforts. Leadership and a sustained financial commitment by all governments, including enhancements to programs and supports for vulnerable residents will need to be considered.

If approved, a report on the first year of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy and a plan for the remaining years will be brought forward to Council by way of annual progress updates.

***Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 11***

## **FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial:**

The following chart outlines the costs involved in implementing the recommendations related to the three Critical Investment Strategies with a request to refer recommendations to the 2016 Capital Budget process.

**Table 1. Bed Bug Strategy Financial Implications**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bed Bug Assistance Program	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	<b>\$450,000</b>
Coordinate, Implement and Monitor Strategy (1.0 FTE)	\$115,000	\$115,000	\$115,000	<b>\$345,000</b>
Develop and Implement Comprehensive Health Promotion Campaign (1.0 FTE)	\$90,000	\$90,000	-	<b>\$180,000</b>
Health Promotion Activities	\$50,000	\$25,000	-	<b>\$75,000</b>
Development of Bed Bug Monitoring System	\$10,000	-	-	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$415,000</b>	<b>\$380,000</b>	<b>\$265,000</b>	<b>\$1,060,000</b>

It is anticipated that implementation of the Strategy should result in more manageable incidents of bed bugs. As such, the City should be able to absorb ongoing costs beyond the implementation timeframe of the recommended activities through existing resources. Any changes to strategy scope or factors that might impact on the ability to absorb ongoing costs into operational budgets will be reported on annually with the Strategy update and, if necessary, any resulting requests for additional funding will be brought to Council for consideration.

**Staffing:**

It is recommended that one temporary FTE in a Senior Project Manager position be hired for a three-year period, from April 2016 to March 2019 at a cost of \$115,000 per year. The position will report to the Community and Emergency Services Department (C&ESD) and will implement and monitor Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy in consultation with Hamilton's Bed Bug Action Group and the City of Hamilton Internal Steering Committee. Duties will include overseeing the development and administration of the bed bug assistance program for low income vulnerable residents, coordination of stakeholders, and monitoring and implementing Strategy activities.

It is recommended that one temporary FTE in a Health Promoter position be hired for a two-year period, from April 2016 to March 2018 at a cost of \$90,000 per year. The position will report to Public Health Services (PHS) and will work closely with the Senior Project Manager, Bed Bug Action Group and Internal Steering Committee to develop and implement a Comprehensive Health Promotion Campaign, which includes workplace training modules and policy, and public education and prevention.

**Legal:**

There are no direct legal issues related to the implementation of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy, including the introduction of the bed bug assistance program.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Hamilton's Bed Bug Action Group (BBAG) formed in October 2010 to share information and coordinate bed bug activities across many sectors. The group came together in response to growing complaints of bed bug infestations in the community. A list of membership is available in Schedule B of Appendix A to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a).

In 2011, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) launched the website ([www.bedbugsinfo.ca](http://www.bedbugsinfo.ca)) to develop and share bed bug resources across the province. In the same year, on June 9, 2011, Hamilton PHS received \$234,254 in one-time funding from the MOHLTC as part of a province-wide announcement of \$5 million in funding for Ontario health units for bed bug education and outreach activities. An update on bed bug activities was submitted to BOH on July 11, 2012 in Report BOH11010(a). The bed bug education and outreach activities continued until December 2012 through the temporary re-allocation of gapping dollars in the PHS general programs budget (75%

provincial: 25% levy). No additional funding was received from the Province so activities were curtailed in 2013. However the community continued to remain in need of these services.

On December 11, 2013, Council endorsed the City's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan which included a plan to address bed bugs in Outcome 4, Strategy 4.5.

Three-hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) in 2013 capital funding was approved by City Council for Housing Services Division to address bed bug issues in social housing and Residential Care Facilities.

On March 26, 2014, the funding was re-allocated when Hamilton City Council approved Report BOH14010/CES14013 – Bed Bug Strategy. Instead the capital funding was allocated as follows:

- One hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to develop the bed bug strategy to hire 1.0 temporary FTE for up to 18 months.
- One hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to pilot a unit preparation service for low income, vulnerable residents.
- One hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to implement best practices for bed bug remediation at Residential Care Facilities in the Domiciliary Hostel Program.
- Additional one-time funding from the City's Unallocated Capital Reserve (#108020) was used by PHS to hire 1.0 temporary FTE for up to 18 months to support vulnerable residents as a bed bug navigator.
- Staff were also directed to report back on a delegation submission by a local resident respecting ideas for pest prevention and a potential bed bug registry for rental buildings.

City of Hamilton Public Works Department administers a temporary bed bug waste bag program funded from the Public Works operating budget to residents and landlords to reduce the number of unmarked infested household waste items that are left curbside while awaiting pick up. To date, large waste bags have been purchased for this program at a cost of \$6,000, with additional costs for staff time and delivery of \$23,400 per year.

On June 8, 2015, an Information Update was provided to the Board of Health with updates on the development of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy, including details on initial consultations.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, endorsed by City Council on December 11, 2013, is a 10-year solution-focused, person-centred plan for addressing housing and homelessness issues in Hamilton. The Action Plan is identified as Strategic Action (xi) within Strategic Objective 1.5 of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan. Within Outcome Area 4 of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, "People live in housing that is good quality, safe and suitable to their needs", Strategy 4.5 directly supports the development of a bed bug strategy: "Develop and implement a proactive and coordinated strategy to address bed bugs." This strategy is a critical investment strategy, meaning that it has been given high priority among the 54 strategies of the Action Plan.

Two other areas of alignment with Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy are the City's Corporate Human Resource Employee Bed Bug Policy and Guideline currently in draft, which were developed to educate staff on the risk of bed bug exposure in the workplace and provide education on how to prevent the spread of bed bugs. The Strategy also aligns with activities performed by PHS staff in enforcing Section 26 (pests) of the Property Standards By-Law 10-221.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy was developed through collaboration with City staff and the community, and in consultation with people living with bed bugs or working in occupations at higher risk for exposure to bed bugs. The strategic priorities in the Strategy were shaped by several community-wide processes and through citizen engagement and evaluation. Consultations were conducted with staff within the following Departments:

- Community and Emergency Services
- Public Health Services
- Planning and Economic Development
- Public Works
- Corporate Services
- CityHousing Hamilton

The consultation process included more than 150 participants including key City staff and community stakeholders through focus groups, key informant interviews, and community check-ins. Details of the Community Engagement process are outlined in Schedule D of Appendix A to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a).

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

### **Bed Bugs in Hamilton**

There has been a resurgence in the population of bed bugs in Hamilton since 2006, with complaints into the Public Health Complaints database growing from 38 complaints in 2006 to 426 complaints in 2014. Hamilton's high number of multi-unit dwellings has contributed to the number of bed bug infestations as well as other factors such as increased travel and pesticide resistance.

Bed bug infestations can affect anyone. Unchecked infestations may spread within a building or to other buildings, throughout neighbourhoods, and even to public spaces. Bed bug control is not just an issue for those households currently infested; it is a community issue. In many cases, vulnerable persons need assistance with preparation and its related coordination to have success with treatment. Even with sufficient resources a bed bug infestation is costly and can lead to stigma, anxiety and emotional challenges.

Bed bugs do not appear to transfer infectious diseases to humans (though they can carry them). However, there remains a social cost to infestations, which can in turn impact an individual's health and well-being. The stigma, time, expense, sleeplessness and stress involved in dealing with an infestation are considerable. While bed bugs do not distinguish on the basis of economic status, people with fewer resources are less able to cope with and recover from an infestation.

### **Community Responses**

Hamilton's BBAG formed in 2010 and continues today to share information and resources across the community as a way to respond to the growing incidents of bed bugs in the area. Not for profit agencies and organizations such as City Housing Hamilton (CHH), Indwell and Good Shepherd Works have established best practices for managing bed bugs by adapting previous methods. Best practices include following Integrated Pest Management for controlling bed bugs, which involves treating infestations with more than chemical remediation. Instead, a combination of reducing clutter, vacuuming, steam and thermal treatment, laundering and chemical treatment is preferred. For example, in 2015 CHH began an 18-month pilot program to address pests using an Integrated Pest Management program. The pilot hired nine preparation staff, four exterminators (three of which are dedicated to bed bugs); two clerks to handle call volume and one supervisor. The Integrated Pest Management program spends roughly 80 per cent of staff time responding to bed bug calls, but addresses other pest related issues as well. Serving over 15,000 residents in more than 7,100 dwelling units, CHH manages 1,265 properties. In 2014, spending was allocated to provide information on how to prepare for treatment, assistance to vulnerable tenants and a contractor to treat infested units. At that time, CHH received over 2,704 inbound calls from tenants and spent roughly \$1.6 million on contracted preparation and treatment costs. Since delivering the service internally, CHH has received 1,469 calls in the first



half of 2015 and is projected to spend \$1 million on staffing and treatment, including overhead costs to purchase new equipment.

### **Public Health Services**

PHS responds to bed bug complaints, which are recorded separately to complaints responded to by CHH. Currently, PHS allocates approximately 1.3 FTE Public Health Inspectors to respond to bed bugs and other pests covered under the Property Standards by-law including rats, cockroaches, mice, fleas and wasps. In 2014, PHS responded to over 900 pest complaints; 456 were bed bug complaints with 40 involving co-infestations with cockroaches or other pests. In 2015, 289 bed bug complaints have been received up to August 31. These complaint investigations and their complexity have informed the development of the 2016-2019 Bed Bug Strategy. However, the increasing number of complaints and investigations are straining current resource levels and the ability to meet the requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards (mandatory programs and services) with the MOHLTC, which include inspection targets in other program areas.

### **Gaps in Existing Services and Programs**

There are gaps in Hamilton's existing bed bug services and programs. While some education has been conducted such as education and outreach sessions, and creating bed bug prevention videos, much more is needed. For example, bed bug control can be greatly improved if the public is widely educated on how to identify, control and treat bed bug infestations, and preventive measures are put into place. The ability to properly prepare for treatment is viewed by the public, non-profit and private sector as one of the biggest challenges to managing bed bugs. Supports are needed for those who require help to prepare, including coaching, navigating and coordinating efforts through the process, practical assistance, and access to monitoring moats, mattress encasements and replacement furniture if heavily infested, and financial or physical help with laundry.

### **Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy**

Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy recognizes that the elimination of bed bugs may not be possible, but there are steps needed to reduce exposure to and minimize the effects of bed bugs. Investing in supports for vulnerable residents, targeted work place training and policies and public education is the best approach to managing bed bugs. By the end of the three-year plan, the City and community will be better positioned to respond to new or small scale infestations. By improving education and early identification practices, it is expected that the number of bed bug complaints will rise in the first year of the plan. However, response time and flexibility in treatment options will be improved. Employing early identification practices, good preparation and IPM treatment options will benefit the City and community and return us to controlled numbers of bed bugs, repositioning the City and community to more routine operations in dealing with bed bugs, rather than crisis type intervention.

### Bed Bug Registry

Hamilton residents presented ideas for pest prevention and a potential bed bug registry for rental units to the Board of Health on September 16, 2013. As part of a Bed Bug Strategy, an environmental scan was conducted to explore best practices for addressing bed bugs, including the potential for a bed bug registry for rental dwellings in Hamilton. After consultation with residents, City staff and community agencies, including the Hamilton District Apartment Association, a bed bug registry was not selected as a priority for the Strategy because of:

- Considerable cost of operating an accurate and enforceable registry,
- Stigma attached to geographic labelling of rented dwellings that are recorded as having bed bugs,
- Rental housing is already regulated under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) and the City's Property Standards By-law, and
- Evidence-based surveillance and evaluation of bed bugs in Hamilton should include an enhanced collection of data across the full spectrum of accommodation types and not focus only on rental properties. It should encompass all dwelling types including hotels, other types of hospitality facilities, single family and detached housing and multi-unit dwellings, both rented and owned. Bed bugs currently affect all real estate types, although there are additional challenges for multi-unit dwellings.

### Public Health Nurse Navigator Pilot

The Bed Bug Navigator position was developed to assist Hamilton residents who live with bed bugs. Between November 2014 and August 2015, the pilot assisted 52 clients. Findings of the pilot confirmed that bed bugs disproportionately affect vulnerable residents and these individuals share a large burden of adverse impacts of bed bug infestations as a result of low income, poor social supports, little education, unemployment, inadequate housing and poor home management skills. Bed bugs compound the challenges that individuals are experiencing.

Findings from the evaluation of the Bed Bug Navigator pilot support the recommendation that future services for remediation focus on early intervention in the form of a rapid response team to assist people in reducing the number of bed bugs and appropriate assistance through services such as home cleaning, clutter removal and home organization in partnership and coordination with preparation, treatment, and post treatment. These findings are supported by the priorities and activities reiterated in the Strategy. Details on the evaluation of the Bed Bug Navigator Pilot are attached in Appendix B to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a).

### Bed Bug Assistance Pilot Project

The Bed Bug Assistance Pilot Project (BBAPP) which is delivered by the Housing Help Centre supports low income and vulnerable households experiencing bed bugs by providing supports and financial assistance for the preparation of their home or

apartment. Effective unit preparation is a key component for successful bed bug treatment. From November 2014 to July 2015, 82 applications for assistance were approved through the pilot. An additional 188 applications were approved for financial assistance for bed bug related issues for Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) participants from the separate Housing Stability Benefit (HSB).

Currently, OW and ODSP participants must first apply for financial assistance to address bed bug issues from HSB and then may apply for funding through the pilot project if they are not eligible for the HSB. OW clients apply for HSB payments through their case manager and ODSP clients through the Housing Help Centre. Findings of from both the Nurse Navigator and Bed Bug Assistance pilots suggests that two-tier application processes add unnecessary complexity to the process and impedes the ability of individuals who are under stress to obtain support and financial help. A single door approach is more accessible, presents fewer barriers and would support residents who are also in need of practical assistance.

## **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

An alternative is for City Council to consider approving endorsement of Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy in principle but defer the implementation costs to the senior levels of government.

### **Financial Implications:**

There would be no funding implications with this alternative.

### **Staffing Implications:**

There would be no staffing implications with this alternative.

### **Legal Implications:**

The City may be at risk of not meeting the requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards (mandatory programs and services) with the MOHLTC, which include inspection targets in other program areas.

### **Policy Implications:**

There would be no policy implications.

### **Pros:**

There would be no additional costs to the City and the responsibility for funding the Community Bed Bug Strategy would be deferred to the Provincial and Federal Governments.

### **Cons:**

Without additional investments for implementation of the Strategy, Hamilton residents will continue to face challenges with infestations and the City could experience

increased pressures on existing programs due to rising service levels. The current means of responding to these issues are not the most effective, efficient nor result in controlling bed bugs overall, particularly without a comprehensive health promotion campaign to address bed bugs. The City would also no longer support vulnerable residents with financial and practical assistance for bed bug infestations, leaving them without access to appropriate services necessary to enjoy a reasonable quality of life. The economic development of Hamilton could be impacted with the potential of investors, businesses, and tourists labelling the community as a place with a known bed bug problem.

## **ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Strategic Priority #1**

A Prosperous & Healthy Community

*WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.*

### **Strategic Objective**

- 1.5 Support the development and implementation of neighbourhood and City wide strategies that will improve the health and well-being of residents.
- xi. Implement a 10 year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan with strategies to support:
- Increasing the supply of affordable rental and ownership housing;
  - Developing a plan to improve housing affordability and geared to income that includes outlying communities in Hamilton with rising poverty issues; and
  - Providing quality, safe and suitable housing options

## **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix A to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a) - Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy 2016-2019

Appendix B to Report BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a) - Evaluation of the Bed Bug Navigator Pilot