



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 5, 2017
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Community Bed Bug Strategy (CES14013(b)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

On October 28, 2015, Board of Health endorsed Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy 2016-2019 (BOH14010(a)/CES14013(a)). On December 4, 2015, Council approved \$1,060,000 in capital funding over three years to implement the strategy.

Information:

Hamilton's Community Bed Bug Strategy (the Strategy) is a three-year plan that was developed in collaboration between the City and community partners. Community members who have experience with bed bugs and people who work in higher risk occupations for exposure to bed bugs were consulted during the development of the Strategy.

The long-term goals of the Strategy are to:

1. Minimize the movement of bed bugs from place to place;
2. Identify and reduce significant infestations that can serve as reservoirs for spreading bed bugs; and,
3. Create living, work and community spaces that are less receptive to bed bug infestations.

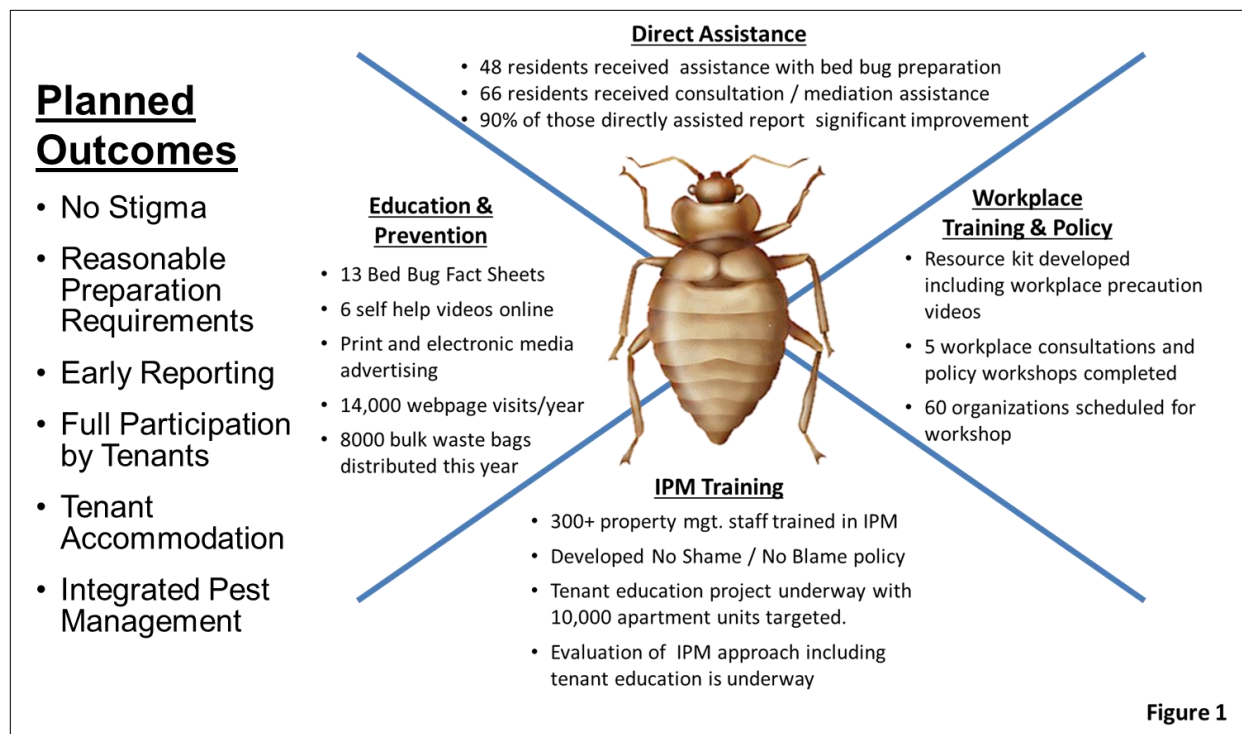
Council's investment has resulted in significant and positive changes to how bed bugs are addressed within Hamilton, changes that are being watched and used elsewhere in the province. The time remaining in the project will focus on expanding the reach of the work underway to include a wider range of community landlords, workplaces and pest control companies.

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Figure 1 provides a snapshot of achievements made to date. A further update of the six priority areas are shown below.



Direct assistance for residents, in particular vulnerable populations

Some of Hamilton's most vulnerable residents are unable to successfully prepare their homes for bed bug treatment. Without effective unit preparation and treatment of infested personal belongings, results of pest control efforts are limited and the chance of re-infestation is much greater. Highlights of achievements and work in this priority area include:

- The Housing Help Centre for Hamilton & Wentworth (HHC) manages the City's Bed Bug Assistance Program including reviewing all applications for assistance and determining eligibility based on the established criteria. Completing the unit preparation on behalf of the tenant who is unable to do so themselves is the primary activity.
- In some situations, HHC will meet with those affected by bed bugs and determine whether the landlord, a family member or the tenant themselves has the capacity to assist with or complete unit preparation. HHC has been effective at mediating solutions and providing needed information including:
 - a landlord's duty to accommodate a tenant under the Ontario Human Rights Code;

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- a tenant's requirement to participate in the pest control effort by following reasonable instructions of landlords and/or pest control companies when possible; and,
- providing referrals to other organizations that can assist the landlord or tenant address issues that impact on the bed bug situation.

Providing this mediation, information and support leverages the resources that administer the direct assistance program, allowing the program to reach a broader population. There are no eligibility requirements for this service.

- In the first year of operation, results include:
 - 48 residents qualified for and received direct assistance in preparing their homes for bed bug treatment;
 - An additional 66 residents were provided with mediation and/or useful information that assisted them in preparing their own unit for bed bug treatment or helped secure the needed assistance from the landlord or family members; and,
 - 90% of tenants surveyed after treatment reported that the bed bug issue was resolved or significantly improved and on the path to resolution.

In addition to providing needed supports to residents, activities within the direct assistance program also demonstrate to landlords the levels of support required by special-needs tenants. This education will reduce the need for future assistance by the City.

Workplace Training and Policy

Workplaces have a responsibility to develop policies that protect workers from acquiring bed bugs and to limit the spread of bed bugs via workplace exposure. This is especially important in service sectors that manage facilities where the public congregate or where home visits are a routine part of delivering their service. Highlights of achievements and work in this priority area include:

- Resource materials (fact sheets, on-line videos, workplace precautions, risk assessment, policy statements) have been developed for workplaces.
- Five workplace consultations and policy workshops have been completed with local workplaces at high risk of bed bug exposure.
- 60 local agencies that may have clients with bed bugs have requested workplace training. The training provides information on appropriate safeguards that prevent the spread of bed bugs. Our objective is to provide them with the information and resources that support them in furthering our work of reducing the stigma associated with bed bugs. These agencies can also provide referrals to clients

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with bed bugs that have additional needs beyond the agency's normal range of services.

- Agency education on the Ontario Human Rights Code to address denial of service to residents with bed bugs. Vulnerable populations need services offered by local agencies and should not be denied services due to a bed bug infestation.

Feedback from workplaces and agencies that we have assisted continues to inform our approach and resources.

Public Education and Prevention

It is crucial that the stigma surrounding bed bugs be addressed so that bed bug response efforts can be effective. As well, residents need trustworthy and useful information to assist in the prevention, early identification and treatment of bed bugs. Highlights of achievements and work in this priority area include:

- A public advertising campaign was launched in the spring of 2017 via bus shelter ads, print and electronic media. Campaign goals include reducing the stigma of bed bugs, empowering residents to take effective actions and directing interested members of the public to a trustworthy source of information. Web page views on the City website increased to by 235% to 14,000 unique views per year when the campaign was launched.
- Several fact sheets have been developed for residents, landlords, workplaces and pest control companies to make bed bug control more effective. These resources were developed to encourage behavioural changes that are needed to help take action with proven prevention and treatment techniques. The Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario (FRPO) collaborated with the City on these tenant-focused fact sheets and have adopted them for use with members across the province. A sample of one of the fact sheets is included as Appendix A to Report CES14013(b).
- Several how-to videos related to the prevention and treatment of bed bugs are available on the City of Hamilton website. These new videos were recently posted on social media and have attracted over 500 views since they were launched this summer.

The information contained in these fact sheets and videos are based on best practice in the field of bed bug prevention and treatment. These resources can be used by residents wanting useful information on bed bug prevention and treatment, as well as by landlords as part of their tenant education efforts.

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Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the most effective way to control and manage bed bugs. IPM programs combine traditional chemical pest control treatments with:

- tenant education;
- proactive inspections by occupants and landlords; and
- a combination of treatment methods that effectively treat a unit and reduce the impact of bed bugs while they are present.

Highlights of achievements and work in this priority area include:

- Development of a half-day training course for front-line apartment building staff that includes tools that help landlords take a proactive approach to bed bug treatment in their buildings. Content includes resources and concepts developed in Hamilton that address existing barriers in implementing an effective IPM in multi-unit buildings, including:
 - a No-Shame / No-Blame policy. This concept addresses the stigma associated with bed bugs which has been identified as a significant barrier to early reporting and early treatment.
 - reinforcement of concept that the landlord, tenant and pest control company must work together. This concept addresses the lack of cooperation that sometimes exists on the part of landlords and tenants.
 - application of the Human Rights Code *Duty to Accommodate* requirement to landlords and bed bug infestations. This concept requires landlords to provide assistance to tenants unable to perform their responsibilities for unit preparation prior to pest control treatment.
 - recommended changes in the relationships between landlords and pest control companies. Front line building staff are provided realistic ways they can be more involved in pest control efforts within their buildings.
 - over 300 front-line building staff have been trained, representing over 12,000 apartment units in Hamilton.
- Collaborated with Hamilton's largest residential landlord and several pest control companies to develop an approach that tailors tenant preparation requirements to pre-treatment inspection results. This creates requirements that are less difficult for tenants to complete. This approach tackles one of the common barriers to successful pest control treatment.

The training materials and concepts included have drawn positive attention from the local landlords that have attended our workshops. FRPO has attended several Hamilton workshops and plan to develop an electronic training course for their members based on our content. We will collaborate in this effort and provide access to the online training course to Hamilton landlords.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to measure the progress of the Bed Bug Strategy and its impact on the spread and effective treatment of bed bugs in Hamilton. While it is challenging to count the number of dwellings that have bed bugs or the overall impact on residents, a number of key indicators have been created to measure the effectiveness of work completed within the strategy. Highlights of work in this priority area include:

- development and use of a follow up survey for residents that receive direct assistance from the Housing Help Centre.
- use of a pre and post survey of front line building staff that participate in IPM workshops. Results demonstrate increased knowledge of bed bug IPM best practices and changing beliefs based on common bed bug myths.
- pre and post surveys are in process to measure the effectiveness newly developed bed bug fact sheets used in a tenant education initiative in two local apartment buildings.
- use of website statistics which highlighted an increase of 235% of City bed bug web pages following the launch of the public education campaign.

The use of measurement tools will continue to monitor the reach and effectiveness of work underway.

Support and Advocacy

The recent increase in bed bug infestations across North America has highlighted that many existing policies and approaches to pest management are not adequate. As examples of these practices become evident, it is important to focus attention and advocate for change. Highlights of achievements and work underway in this priority area include:

- Drafting a stand-alone pest bylaw by the City of Hamilton that requires a building owner to “take immediate action to eliminate the pests and to prevent their reappearance”. Orders issued under the authority of the bylaw would provide realistic actions that should be taken to comply with the bylaw. This bylaw will be reviewed by the Board of Health later this year.
- Confirmation that FRPO has rewritten the pest control standard within its Ontario-wide Certified Rental Building accreditation program. These changes reflect the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices and concepts promoted by Hamilton in our IPM training for front line building staff. The draft revised standard currently under review includes an endorsement of Hamilton's respectful and cooperative approach taken in addressing bed bugs in the community.

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Staff are also investigating potential topics for advocacy with provincial organizations.

Project Budget

The project is currently operating within the capital budget approved by Council.

Next Steps

Next Steps in implementing the Community Bed Bug Strategy include:

- Collaborating with Information Hamilton to develop an agency referral list that would be available to all community partners;
- Expanding outreach to workplaces at higher risk of bed bug exposure due to the nature of their work;
- Continuing information and advocacy work with apartment building owners so local apartment building staff are encouraged to go beyond the traditional chemical pest control treatments currently relied upon;
- Monitoring IPM efforts and results at a sample of local apartment buildings to validate benefits of the approach promoted in our landlord training course.
- Collaborating with FRPO to adapt the Hamilton developed training materials for use online;
- Updating the City website to locate resources on bed bugs together with new content about other pests covered by the new pest bylaw; and,
- Advocacy with additional local pest control companies encouraging more tenant-friendly and effective practices that are not currently followed.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES14013(b): Sample Fact Sheet – Bed Bugs and Used Furniture

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