



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Healthy and Safe Communities Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 11, 2018
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	2018 Homelessness Enumeration Preliminary Results (HSC18031) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not applicable

Information:

This report provides Committee with an update on Hamilton's 2018 Homelessness Enumeration, which provides information on demographics and characteristics, as well as the intersecting health and social contexts of individuals experiencing homelessness in Hamilton. Locally, the initiative was referred to as the Point in Time Connection. The initiative was undertaken in partnership with Hamilton's Aboriginal community.

The initial results provide a better understanding of homelessness from those who participated. Surveys were completed with more than 300 individuals experiencing homelessness in Hamilton and were conducted in sheltered, unsheltered and service provider locations. Most individuals surveyed responded that they sleep in sheltered or service provider locations most frequently. While the survey methodology provides an indication of where people experiencing homelessness are staying, it is a snapshot of a point in time and does not account for all individuals who may be experiencing homelessness.

The results help to illustrate the combination of factors that may jeopardize the stability of anyone's housing at any given time, as well as the necessary services and supports needed to address them. While a significant level of need remains evident, the results indicate positive local progress in addressing homelessness since the 2016 Point in

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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Time Count. As the initiative did not capture everyone experiencing homelessness, there will be some populations who are likely underrepresented within the results. A full report on the detailed local survey results will be made available in the fall of 2018.

Background

On October 5, 2017, Report CES17038 was received by the Emergency and Community Services Committee on Hamilton's 2018 Homelessness Enumeration. This report included information regarding the objectives and methodology of the initiative, as well as corresponding Federal and Provincial requirements.

During the Emergency and Community Services Committee meeting on December 7, 2017, a discussion on the Provincial Home for Good Program led to a question from Committee regarding "the percentage of homelessness that is based on choice and what the contributing factors are". The discussion was framed around physical and health barriers that may cause an individual to stay in an unsheltered location as opposed to a sheltered or service provider location. Staff indicated that more information on where people experiencing homelessness reside could be provided from the results of Hamilton's 2018 Homelessness Enumeration.

On April 22 and 23, 2018, 235 volunteers and professional social service staff surveyed 338 individuals experiencing homelessness and completed 48 family surveys. Over the course of the two days, volunteers had 1,250 individual recorded interactions in the community. Participation in the survey was voluntary and participants received a \$10 gift card to thank them for their time. The 2018 Point in Time Connection followed the same methodology used in Hamilton's 2016 Point in Time Count.

The surveying approach combined full coverage and known location approaches to cover "sheltered", "unsheltered" and "service provider" locations. This was achieved using drop in sites through partnerships with local agencies and organizations, block by block canvassing and outreach throughout the city, and a magnet event specifically focusing on Aboriginal engagement.

Preliminary results were shared with the public at a Community Debrief on May 4, 2018 in Council Chambers.

Preliminary Survey Results

The survey results provide information on individuals' history of housing and homelessness as well as their health and social needs. The initial findings presented below are for the individuals surveyed and do not include families. An overview of the results can be found in Appendix A to Report HSC18031.

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Acknowledging peoples' agency and autonomy, there remain structural, systemic and relational factors that intersect to impact an individual's ability to choose where to live or where to access various supports. Availability of affordable housing, income status, mental health, physical health, as well as systemic factors such as racism and discrimination all contribute to the experience of homelessness¹.

Preliminary findings from Hamilton's Point in Time Connection confirm that the experience of homelessness is complex, with a number of systemic factors that contribute to how people become homeless, why they may not engage with specific services and supports, and why they may remain without safe, stable and permanent housing. Of those who were surveyed and responded, a majority reported sleeping in sheltered or service provider locations (87%) compared to those sleeping in unsheltered locations (12%). Individuals have the right to choose where to live, therefore program supports and resources are in place to assist those in both sheltered and unsheltered circumstances realize their right to housing. All survey participants were provided with information on local resources and asked for the best way to follow up, as appropriate.

The majority of individuals surveyed identified as male (66%). Female identified individuals experiencing homelessness may be underrepresented among survey respondents (32%) as there are fewer emergency shelter beds for women in the homelessness serving system. Women experiencing homelessness may also be more likely to rely on natural supports rather than sleeping rough or accessing formal supports. Of respondents, less than 2% identified as transgender or two-spirit. The majority of respondents (71%) were between the ages of 31-64.

Twenty-two percent of individual respondents identified as Aboriginal or as having Aboriginal Ancestry (including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit). While people who identify as Aboriginal represents approximately 2.3% of Hamilton's total population, these findings continue to demonstrate that Hamilton's Aboriginal population is over-represented amongst those experiencing homelessness in our community.

The initial data reveals that the hard work and effort of community members who work each day to ensure every person in Hamilton realizes their right to housing is having an impact. Compared to Hamilton's 2016 Point in Time Count, initial analysis of results shows a decrease in the proportion of respondents who have been homeless for 6 months or longer, as well as those who also have a severe level of need.

¹ Gaetz, S.; Barr, C.; Friesen, A.; Harris, B.; Hill, C.; Kovacs-Burns, K.; Pauly, B.; Pearce, B.; Turner, A.; Marsolais, A. (2012) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

Current Status and Next Steps

The data gathered from the Point in Time Connection will be used to inform local policy development, while also being used to inform provincial and federal partners of Hamilton's homelessness and housing needs. The information gathered will help ensure that people experiencing homelessness are matched to the appropriate types of housing and supports, prioritizing those with the highest need.

A full report with detailed analysis of the local survey results will be made available in the fall of 2018.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A to Report HSC18031: Hamilton's 2018 Point in Time Connection
Infographic