




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 20, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Heat Response Plan Initiative (HSC19020) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Meredith Mandryk-Kelly (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2182
SUBMITTED BY:	Bonnie Elder Director, Ontario Works Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On May 24, 2017, Council approved the following motion:

“That staff in Community and Emergency Services, in consultation with Public Health Services, be directed to investigate the feasibility and evidence associated with providing identified low-income citizens in the City of Hamilton with air-conditioners and report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee detailing the implications of such an initiative”.

INFORMATION

The City of Hamilton's Public Health Services, along with partner municipal and provincial health agencies, have identified extreme heat as a health problem. Those most at risk include very young children, the elderly and individuals with illnesses or taking certain prescription medications. Individuals experiencing low incomes are at a higher risk of heat impacts, often due to poorer quality housing, limited access to air-conditioning and the increased likelihood that they suffer from pre-existing illness.

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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.

Community Heat Response Plan

The City of Hamilton, in consultation with community partners, coordinates the Community Heat Response Plan to help individuals cope with intense heat events. The plan alerts the public that hot weather conditions are imminent or occurring, and outlines services that will be provided to citizens to help them cope with the hot weather.

The plan includes seasonal monitoring with three escalating levels of response from May to September. Weather forecasts are monitored, including humidex, for conditions that can increase health risks. A chart outlining Hamilton's heat events from 2013 to 2018 is attached as Appendix "A" to Report HSC19020.

The goals of the plan are to provide support and information for those most at-risk of heat related illness, and rally community agencies and neighbours to check on vulnerable individuals during intense heat events.

Resources for Residents to Cool Off

In accordance with the Community Heat Response Plan, the City utilizes cool places as locations in the community where the public can find short-term relief from the heat. Depending on the level and duration of the event, the sites and hours may vary. While many of these cool places are City facilities, many are also operated by community partners.

Cool places can include recreational centres; indoor and outdoor pools; spray pads; wading pools; public libraries; Municipal Service Centres; other municipal office locations and community sites such as health centres, senior centres and ministries. Cool places are available in every ward within the City of Hamilton.

Free bottled water is distributed by The Salvation Army in Gore Park during heat events.

Ontario Works Special Supports

The Special Supports program in the Ontario Works Division of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department administers funding for a variety of benefits, including an air-conditioner benefit. This benefit is a discretionary, one-time benefit, issued to recipients of Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) who live independently within the community, to aid with providing relief from the heat and/or humid weather conditions. The intent of the program is to assist eligible individuals who have a severe medical condition and where, without an air-conditioner, the symptoms of the medical condition are likely to deteriorate, increase, become episodic or cause hospitalization.

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The current air-conditioner program is funded under the discretionary benefits program, which is a capped Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services funding envelope for OW and ODSP recipients. The assistance provided covers the cost of the air-conditioner and does not allow for additional related costs such as hydro, installation and storage. Special Supports does not cover the cost of air-conditioners for low-income residents, including seniors, unless they are in receipt of OW or ODSP.

Program data indicates that an average of 54 air-conditioners per year have been provided to eligible individuals on OW and ODSP over the past five years. Most of the air-conditioners have been provided to residents in Wards 2 through 5 with the majority assisting residents in Wards 2 and 3. A summary of the number of air-conditioners provided by Ward is attached as Appendix "B" to Report HSC19020.

Heat Vulnerability Mapping Project

Public Health Services is currently undertaking a heat vulnerability mapping project with the objective of creating awareness and facilitating program decision-making. The mapping project includes multiple sources of information to help spatially understand heat vulnerability in the City of Hamilton and the placement of resources to help those most impacted by heat.

Social Housing

Funding for new affordable rental construction projects involving the assignment and awarding of federal and provincial money is typically awarded through a Request For Proposals (RFP) process. A number of environmental considerations pertaining to heating and cooling systems such as energy efficiency, utility costs, environmental quality and comfort for the occupants, are built into the RFP process related to new builds and are important evaluation criteria. In recent projects, all of these factors have been dramatically improved through passive house construction. Future RFP's will require that these new standards be met.

Landlord Obligations and Rental Units

Although landlords everywhere in the Province of Ontario must provide working heating equipment, there are currently no specific rules about cooling. Usually a tenant is entitled to air-conditioning only if their rental agreement includes it.

Ontario Building Code

While it is noted that the installation of air-conditioning systems is not a mandatory requirement in the Ontario Building Code (OBC) it is noted that for multiple dwellings considered Part 3 buildings (i.e. buildings with an area over 600 m² or more than 4-storeys), Part 6 of the OBC applies. Under these circumstances, the ventilation shall be

provided by means of mechanical ventilation according to Sentence 6.2.2.2. (1) of Part 6. Further, self-contained mechanical ventilation systems serving an individual dwelling unit are permitted and shall conform to the mechanical ventilation requirement in OBC Part 6 or Subsection 9.32.3. As such, it is considered that under current building code requirements, sufficient ventilation and air circulation will more effectively deal with rising summer temperatures for newly constructed residential buildings.

Ontario Renovates

Ontario Renovates is a program administered by the City of Hamilton as part of the federally and provincially funded new Ontario Priorities Housing Program, as well as its predecessor, the Investment in Affordable Housing Program-Extension and its predecessor programs. It funds basic health and safety repairs to the homes of low-income homeowners and to affordable rental units. Current Ontario Renovates guidelines allow for the funding to support 'heating systems' but not 'heating/cooling systems'.

FEASIBILITY OF PROVIDING ADDITIONAL AIR-CONDITIONING SUPPORTS

Cost Analysis

Costs to purchase an air-conditioning unit vary based on the style and capacity of the unit. Typically, the air-conditioning units provided through the Special Supports program have been horizontal window units with an 8,000 BTU capacity. An 8,000 BTU unit is sufficient to cool up to 350 square feet; or a space approximately 17 feet x 20 feet in size. The amount approved for the cost of an air-conditioning unit in 2018 through the Special Supports program was \$350.00. This represents current pricing in the Hamilton area for this type of unit.

Additional costs for installation, liability insurance, operating costs (i.e. hydro) and storage fees are not included in the existing program, however, it should be noted that individuals will incur additional ongoing costs as the result of being assisted with the one-time purchase price of an air-conditioning unit.

The following table represents the estimated number of individuals and estimated cost of providing one-time air-conditioners for each sub-population in the City of Hamilton and does not include additional costs.

Population (Hamilton)	Number of Households	Estimated Cost of Benefit
Low-income households	39,370	\$13,779,500
Low-income households with members age 0-17	22,175	\$7,761,250
Low-income households with members age 18-64	48,630	\$17,020,500
Low-income households with members age 65+	10,110	\$3,538,500
Low-income households with a member aged 35+ diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	4,753	\$1,663,550
Low-income households with a member aged 12+ diagnosed with Asthma	9,455	\$3,309,250
Low-income households with a member aged 12+ diagnosed with Heart Disease	4,890	\$1,711,500

Number of low-income Hamiltonians (LIM-AT measure), 2016 census

Low-income defined as:

1-person household = <\$23,023; 2-person household = <\$32,560; 3-person household = <\$39,877; 4-person household = <\$46,046

The costs associated with providing air conditioners to low-income individuals, other than individuals on OW or ODSP, would require the reduction or elimination of existing low-income benefits or would require additional net levy funding as Special Supports low-income budget is 100% net levy dollars. Benefits available to low-income individuals include items such as: funerals and burials/cremations, vision care for adults, mobility aids and repairs, emergency adult dental services, dentures, orthotics, bath equipment, hospital beds, incontinence/ostomy/colostomy supplies, transportation assistance and hearing aids.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report HSC19020: Hamilton Heat Events 2013 to 2018

Appendix "B" to Report HSC19020: Summary of Air Conditioners Provided 2013 to 2018