

CITY OF HAMILTON

MOTION

Council: September 15, 2021

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR M. WILSON.....

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR.....

Encampment Response Strategy

WHEREAS on August 9, 2021 Hamilton City Council voted to repeal its Encampment Response Protocol that permitted unhoused individuals to shelter in public spaces for up to 14 days;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton will return to pre-pandemic enforcement levels that prevents anyone from sheltering on city property including public park areas effective Aug 30, 2021;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton’s pre-pandemic enforcement level resides within the domain of Municipal Bylaw Enforcement with support from the Hamilton Police Service;

WHEREAS the guiding principles and approach of the Encampment Response Protocol enabled an assessment of the individual health and social needs of those living in an encampment and an approach during the 14 day period that would provide supports including but not limited to the following:

- engagement that treats every individual from a rights-based approach, ensuring dignity and confidentiality is maintained;
- An assessment of health and social needs of individual with consent;
- Immediate work on a personalized housing plan with consent;
- Determine previous (if any) barriers affecting access into the system and attempt to resolve them;
- Informing individuals of the timeline for encampment removal taking into consideration location and individual health and social circumstances;
- Assist with the movement to shelter/housing including but not limited to transportation, financial assistance, and storage of possessions.
- Ensures abandoned belongings and litter are cleared and the site is cleaned.

WHEREAS there is no formal, publicly established approach to how the pre-pandemic enforcement level will operate and the role of the encampment response team (includes representatives from the City of Hamilton Housing Services Division and Street Outreach Team, Municipal Law Enforcement, Public Works and Hamilton Police Services Social Navigator Program) is undefined;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton recognizes the rise in unsheltered homelessness during COVID-19 continues to highlight ongoing systemic health, social and economic inequities and remains an ongoing concern for the City;

WHEREAS in its Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) the City of Hamilton committed to taking an individualized, person-centred approach to housing by connecting those experiencing homelessness with the available community resources and supports;

WHEREAS the Housing and Homelessness Action does not include an approach of responding homeless individuals living in encampments;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton has formally acknowledged that all actions and decisions relating to housing and homelessness policy, programs and services must use a formalized equity, diversity and inclusion framework and Gender Based Analysis (GBA+) to ensure they are effectively meeting the specific needs of a diversity of individuals;

WHEREAS the Hamilton Board of Health has acknowledged that trauma-informed services must be designed and delivered in a way that will not cause further traumatization or retraumatization;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton through its Urban Indigenous Strategy (2019) committed to developing and strengthening its relationship with Indigenous Peoples;

WHEREAS action Item #24 in the City of Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy Implementation Plan is to enable city staff to deliver city services in a culturally-appropriate way;

WHEREAS Indigenous Peoples experience homelessness at a higher rate than the general population and that homelessness amongst Indigenous Peoples is a colonial legacy;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton has stated that its homeless servicing system must account for systemic over-representation of Indigenous Persons experiencing homelessness and aim to design a system that not only responds to Indigenous homelessness but also respects, honours and promotes the strength and resiliency of Indigenous Peoples (Coming Together to End Homelessness, July 2019)

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton has acknowledged that homelessness is a gendered experience, impacting single women, trans and non-binary individuals differently than single men or families;

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton unanimously declared an opioid overdose emergency in November 2019 in recognition that Hamilton's opioid-related death rate was more than double the provincial rate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That staff be directed to report to Emergency and Community Services Committee the following:
 - (i) define encampment response strategy within the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan
 - (ii) define how encampment response strategy will be informed by an individualized, person-centred and Gender Based Analysis approach to ensure it effectively meets the specific needs of a diversity of individuals;
 - (iii) to respect, honour and promote the strength and resiliency of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness
 - (iv) clarify the role and responsibility of the encampment response team following Council's termination of the Encampment Response Protocol
 - (v) identify the process to be followed once an encampment is identified

- (b) That staff consult with all necessary community and health organizations that currently serve homeless groups and individuals prior to.