



REVISED
CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 1, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters Proposal (HSC22015(a)) (City Wide) REVISED
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Nadia Zelisko (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2548 Greg Tedesco (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7168 Rob Mastroianni (905) 546-2424 Ext. 8035
SUBMITTED BY:	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (a) That respecting the request for a City of Hamilton contribution to the Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) Council approve an immediate contribution of \$100 K for the period of January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023 year to be funded from the projected 2022 Housing Services Division surplus or the Tax Stabilization Reserve #110046, if the division surplus is not realized;
 - (i) That funding as approved in recommendation (a) be based on the following conditions:
 - (1) That staff be directed to work with HATS to identify and outline standards around performance metrics and outcomes as a condition of funding including, but not limited to: eligibility and entry criteria, gender-specific considerations including specific supports for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary individuals, identification of formalized community partnerships with health- and social service sectors, equity and inclusion, and

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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.

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- demonstrated exits into safe permanent housing; and agreed upon by HATS for first year of operations;
- (2) Confirmation that matching funds have been received or committed to; and,
 - (3) That a detailed exit strategy has been created and agreed to should HATS not be able to ensure site safety and adequate operational funding.
- (b) That consideration of a contribution up to a maximum of \$100 K annually to HATS toward the establishment and operation of temporary tiny cabins for the 2-year period of April 2023 to December 2024, be referred to the 2023 Council Operating budget deliberations to be funded from the Operating Levy over the next 2 years:
- (i) That staff be directed to work with HATS to identify and outline standards around performance metrics and outcomes as a condition of funding including, but not limited to: eligibility and entry criteria, gender-specific considerations including specific supports for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary individuals, identification of formalized community partnerships with health- and social service sectors, equity and inclusion, and demonstrated exits into safe permanent housing;
 - (ii) That funding as approved in recommendation (b) be cash flowed in 6 month increments upon the following conditions:
 - (1) Confirmation that performance metrics have been achieved as outlined in recommendation (b)(i);
 - (2) Confirmation that matching funds have been received or committed to; and,
 - (3) That a detailed exit strategy has been created and agreed to should HATS not be able to ensure site safety and adequate operational funding.
- (c) That staff be directed to evaluate and assess program outcomes and efficacy; and report back to Emergency and Community Services Committee at the 6 and 12-month marks;
- (d) In the event that the initial proposed site for HATS at 647 Barton St. East is at any point deemed not viable to proceed, that staff be directed to return to Council

with a report identifying how these funds may be redirected in alignment with Council approved strategies such as the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and Coming Together to End Homelessness: Hamilton's System Planning Framework;

- (e) That the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department or their designate be directed and authorized, on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to enter into, execute and administer all agreements and documents necessary to implement the grant outlined above on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department or their designate and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposal put forward by HATS demonstrates a willingness and desire by community to contribute to solutions for chronically unsheltered residents in Hamilton. There remain distinct challenges and concerns around the operationalizing of such an intervention, including concerns around the health and safety of HATS residents and the potential for specific efforts and investment in 'tiny cabins' to divert resources from permanent solutions for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Given the ongoing challenges surrounding unsheltered homelessness, providing HATS immediately with \$100 K contribution will provide them opportunity to raise additional funding required to begin operations. Providing conditional support to HATS for up to an additional 2-years, with evaluation and assessment of program outcomes to be brought back to Committee and Council at 6- and 12-months, and annually thereafter, may provide the City of Hamilton a unique opportunity to pilot this approach on a temporary basis and assess if or how it may fit within Hamilton's system of care. An overview of the updated HATS proposal, reviewed by Housing Services staff in preparation of this report, is included in Appendix "A" to Report HSC22015(a).

The HATS group should be commended for organizing and building collective action through their proposal. Housing Services recognizes that this intervention is reflective of ongoing systemic challenges and inequities across Canada as it relates to housing and homelessness. This is demonstrated by the rise in, and visibility of, unsheltered homelessness and encampments throughout many Canadian cities during COVID-19. While HATS has mobilized to address a gap further intensified during COVID-19, this initiative should serve as further impetus for the City of Hamilton, as well as community partners and other levels of government, to rapidly prioritize and invest in deeply affordable permanent housing solutions. This report seeks to inform council of the risk and opportunities to invest in 'tiny cabins' at the identified site, as well as other investments in line with a Housing First philosophy and a rights-based approach to housing that can have positive impact in homelessness as they deliberate this decision.

Housing Services remains committed to seeking out and supporting innovative solutions to address homelessness in Hamilton. As a temporary emergency response, this intervention should not take away from our core focus on prioritizing investment and resource allocation in permanent housing that is safe, suitable and affordable to the individual. Housing Services remains committed to adapting the emergency system to enable flexibility to meet ongoing needs where possible, while also enhancing prevention, diversion and permanent housing placement supports. These efforts are strengthened through collaborative work with local Indigenous leadership, as well as a commitment to include and learn from the perspective of people with lived expertise. Through this, it remains critical that we continue to invest in and enhance a diversity of housing-focused interventions, grounded in a Housing First philosophy and a rights-based approach to housing, in order to shift from emergency response to long-term approaches to ending homelessness.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 10

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

As noted in recommendation (a), an immediate funding source is required, and therefore the initial contribution will be funded by the 2022 Housing Services Division Surplus, or the Tax Stabilization Reserve #110046, if the division surplus is not realized, and is subject to meeting the conditions outlined in recommendation (a)(i).

In addition, as noted in recommendation (b), a funding source is required to support the conditional funding for up to 2 years. Therefore, the HATS request will be referred to the 2023 Council Operating Budget deliberations to be funded from the Operating Levy in 2023 and 2024.

Should the conditions set out for HATS in recommendation (a) and/or (b) not be met, Housing Services Division will bring a report forward to Council with a recommendation for the use of the remaining levy base available. As noted in recommendation (d), the remaining levy base will be allocated to support prevention and housing placement support services in alignment with Council approved strategies such as the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and Coming Together to End Homelessness: Hamilton's System Planning Framework

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On February 17, 2022, the Emergency and Community Services Committee approved Report HSC22015 Proposal by Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters, which directed staff to share information gathered in the report with HATS to inform their planning for a potential site in Hamilton. This report included a full breakdown and analysis of considerations related to planning and development approvals for the HATS proposal.

On August 11, 2022, the Emergency and Community Services Committee approved Report (HSC20020(f)) Adaptation and Transformation of Services Update 6. This report outlined an interim plan for homelessness emergency system service levels for additional pressures in 2022 and to the end of March 2023. Up to the end of 2022, this included: a conditional grant to Mission Services for capital improvements to a new men's emergency shelter location; and ancillary costs associated with the rental of hotel rooms for expanded temporary emergency shelter for single men and women. From January to March 2023, approved recommendations included: interim capacity of up to 100 additional beds in the women's emergency shelter system as needed; maintaining increased interim emergency shelter capacity of up to 24 beds in the men's system; and continuation of enhanced drop-in services including but not limited to Living Rock, Mission Services, Wesley and the YWCA.

On November 21, 2022, General Issues Committee (Budget) approved the following motion: That the General Manager of the Healthy & Safe Communities Department be directed to meet with the Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) and report to the Emergency & Community Services Committee meeting of December 1, 2022; with respect to the proposal put forward by HATS at the November 21, 2022 General Issues Committee, with regard to policy and responsibility within the duty of the Healthy & Safe Communities Department.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The Housing Services Division is the designated Community Entity (CE) responsible for local implementation of the federal Reaching Home strategy and the Service Manager for the provincial Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and related investments. Housing Services works in partnership with the CE for the Reaching Home Indigenous funding stream, the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership (CHIL). Under the Reaching Home directives, the City is mandated to achieve core requirements that help strengthen an evidence-based and integrated approach across the homelessness sector. Similarly, HPP requirements include a set of performance indicators have been developed to monitor and track progress on the achievement outcomes, including the goal of measuring a reduction in homelessness and chronic homelessness.

Housing Services Division remains guided by and grounded in existing Council approved strategies, such as the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and Coming Together to End Homelessness: Hamilton's System Planning Framework. These strategies are deeply aligned with Reaching Home and HPP requirements and represent evidence-based community strategies towards ending homelessness that build on a foundation established through many years of collaboration. This includes a rights-based approach and a Housing First philosophy underpinned by the following principles:

- rapid housing placement with supports and no readiness requirements;
- participant choice and self-determination;
- recovery orientation separating housing provision from treatment services;
- individualized and client-driven supports; and,
- social and community integration.

From a policy perspective, as currently constituted the proposal by HATS does not fit within the typical housing continuum, as it is neither emergency shelter or permanent housing. The proposed intervention continues to reflect a broader, long-term failure of public policy at all levels to ensure that all individuals have access to adequate housing and supports. Framed as a new solution for those who may face barriers accessing existing homeless serving system supports, the proposed intervention is more reflective of a 'managed encampment' site. Should this proposal be implemented, it is critical that it should be time-limited to ensure this does not become embedded as a permanent intervention. At the same time, collective efforts to rapidly prioritize and invest in deeply affordable permanent housing solutions should be prioritized, in alignment with Federal and Provincial housing and homelessness commitments.

As Service Manager Hamilton will continue to seek out perspectives and learnings from similar initiatives in Ontario municipalities / regions including but not limited to: 'sleeping cabins' in Kingston; outdoor shelter model development in Waterloo Region; A Better Tent City in Kitchener; and, temporary outdoor shelters in London.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff from Hamilton Fire Department, including the Chief Fire Prevention Officer, previously met with representatives from HATS with the primary goal of understanding the parameters of the project, and how Hamilton Fire could be of assistance. Discussion included the possibility of a site visit to visualize the space and to provide template documents and supporting information that would allow HATS to make informed decisions regarding structure placement and access controls for emergency response. Hamilton Fire also indicated that they would advise on how to create a fire safety plan for the premises, and possible considerations for fire safety awareness training for any employees or property managers that may work at the site. If the project moves ahead,

the property/location would be subject to emergency police / fire / paramedic response for persons or property anywhere within City boundaries.

The City of Hamilton Paramedic Service met with HATS representatives in October 2022 and reviewed their planned implementation plan. At this time, Hamilton Paramedic Service have no concerns with their proposal as there are no resource implications for the paramedic service; HPS response would be through usual service levels such as social navigator program and 911 response if/as needed.

Staff from Housing Services communicated with Hamilton Police Services (HPS) in November 2022, and HPS confirmed that with regards to the Rapid Intervention Support Team (RIST) and HATS, there will be no additional police resources dedicated to HATS. HPS indicated that if RIST is supporting clients at the site, they will continue to support them and that there may be proactive visits in a supportive role, however nothing enforcement related.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The interim response actions proposed by the HATS group represent a strong community desire to explore practical solutions to support the ongoing needs of unhoused residents living encamped in Hamilton. As Housing Services implements key actions to support implementation of a phased transition plan for the homeless serving system, including emergency supports, the HATS project has the potential to provide an additional base layer of support over a temporary period to unsheltered populations who may face barriers to accessing the current interventions within this system.

Critical to the recommendation to provisionally support the HATS proposal for the period between **2023** to 2024, pending a review of efficacy at 6- and 12-months, is the expectation that staff work with HATS to identify and outline specific measurable performance metrics, standards and outcomes as a condition of temporary funding. At minimum, quantitative and qualitative approaches should examine safety and well-being for unsheltered residents, progress toward as well as consistent exits into safe permanent housing. People with lived expertise of unsheltered homelessness should be the key focus of evaluation efforts and should continue to inform further adaptations and interventions in housing and homelessness services and identified solutions should be evidence-based and informed by intersectional, culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches.

Additional practical items to consider and address immediately and throughout the design and implementation of the HATS proposal should it go forward include:

- clear identification of admission and selection criteria, with a prioritization of chronically unsheltered individuals who face barriers to accessing the current homeless serving system;

- a recognition of the systemic over-representation of Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness and the need to prioritize autonomy and self-determination, with connections to housing and supports that are culturally appropriate, rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation;
- gender based analysis to inform accessibility, safety and supports for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults;
- identification of an overall safety and well-being site plan for HATS residents, staff (on- and off site) and the neighbouring community, including but not limited to an assessment of risk and safety factors linked to human trafficking, weapons and fire;
- explicit reference of and commitment to addressing diversity and inclusion considerations and implications on support structure, implementation and operation as to consistently explore who may be impacted (i.e. considerations around gender, gender identity and expression, race, ability, sexual orientation, immigration status, socioeconomic status, etc.), how they are impacted and why.

As outlined above, the intervention proposed by HATS should remain time limited, prompting collective action to seek out and implement permanent housing solutions through a whole-of-community approach to support person-centred solutions for unsheltered residents.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that in the long-term, emergency based ‘tiny cabins’ should not be viewed as a permanent solution to addressing issues related to permanent housing. If resources are disproportionately directed at emergency interventions over time without additional investment in and focus on permanent housing solutions, temporary emergency responses may become more permanently entrenched within our system. As such it is critical that we continue to practically pursue housing-focused interventions, grounded in a Housing First philosophy and a rights-based approach to housing.

Alignment with Housing Services Strategic Priorities

Housing Services will continue to engage with HATS to gather important information and context related to the proposed project to address practical considerations and concerns related to health and safety, equity and inclusion, alignment with a Housing First philosophy, and connections to permanent housing solutions. Recommendations and decisions proposed by Housing Services continue to be rooted in the goal of ensuring safe, dignified and secure permanent housing solutions for all Hamiltonians, and as such, temporary and conditional support for the HATS initiative allows for an assessment period to practically explore a clear demonstration of connectivity with departmental goals and strategies.

We remain committed to adapting the emergency system to enable flexibility to meet ongoing needs where possible, while also enhancing prevention, diversion and

permanent housing placement supports. Ongoing policy and planning considerations related to conditional support of HATS will be assessed through an analysis of alignment with Divisional responsibilities and commitments through agreements such as the Federal Reaching Home Program and the Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program, as well as Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) and Coming Together to End Homelessness: Systems Planning Framework.

The HHAP, updated in 2020 following extensive community consultation and review, identified shared core values that guide Housing Services and will assist in determining strategic policy alignment through the implementation of the HATS proposal, including:

- rights based and anti-discrimination: efforts must acknowledge inequalities related to racism, oppression and discrimination and intentionally work to eliminate them;
- person-centred supports: people are supported in ways that make sense for their unique circumstances and their economic, cultural and gendered realities;
- risk and protective factors: successful community responses to homelessness and housing insecurity work to increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors in people's lives;
- evidence based, measurable and impact-driven: people in our community deserve housing and homelessness responses that are based on intentional planning and good evidence and that have measurable positive impacts and outcomes;
- efficient and effective use of community resources: human and financial resources spent to address housing and homelessness are investments in our community that reduce public costs in other areas;
- integrated and comprehensive community planning: to ensure integrated planning is authentic, transparency and communication must be at the core of our work; and,
- place and neighbourhoods: place matters. People will exercise choice over where they live. A full range of quality housing options contributes to neighbourhoods that are healthier and more dynamic. Healthy neighbourhoods are also a place where community and less formal supports can flourish and support people to feel connected and included in all elements of civic life.

Additional considerations for continuation of funding or support throughout the proposed period between 2022 to 2024 should continue to be assessed through the lens of the core values listed above, as well as through accountability and business processes in line with Divisional benchmarking that outline clear and transparent evaluation metrics aligned with achieving measurable outcomes in reducing homelessness.

Next Steps

Housing Services Division is currently in the process of updating Standards for the Emergency Shelter System, working closely with shelter operators and people with lived expertise. Consultations are ongoing until the end of 2022, with updated Standards expected in February 2023. Also, as a part of this process is a review of the size of the emergency system, including analysis of shelter built-form and related best-practice.

Emergency sheltering remains one component of a well-functioning, integrated system of care for people experiencing homelessness, and investments in housing placement support would ideally occur in a 4:1 ratio alongside investment in emergency shelter. Hamilton's current emergency shelter system remains a vital resource for unhoused residents in Hamilton (from October 2021 through October 2022, 3044 unique individuals accessed the shelter system) and offers extensive support for meeting basic needs, case management supports to build and work towards housing goals, and connections to a range of health and community services.

Recognizing the impacts of trauma on individuals, families and communities and the complex mental health, addictions, and system involvement background of many individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness, there remains a critical and persistent need to support those experiencing chronic homelessness with complex needs through a permanent supportive housing intervention, combining housing, intensive case management and clinical health services. Staff continue to explore strategies and actions to address persistent mental health and addictions issues for those seeking emergency shelter and housing supports, while also continuing to advocate for additional investments from other levels of government to adequately support those with complex needs in our community.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Should Council wish to invest in Hamilton's homelessness serving system in other ways, alternative interventions for a similar annual investment of \$100 K could include one of:

- housing loss prevention and housing placement support, including: first or last month's rent, rental or utility arrears for approximately 90 singles, 55 families or 25 couples at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, including Indigenous community members supported directly by Indigenous service providers. These households may otherwise need emergency shelter;
- portable housing allowances of \$350/month for approximately 23 households to secure permanent housing, with support from existing Intensive Case Management and Rapid Re-housing programs to maintain their tenancy; or,
- continued funding to support access to health, mental health or addictions support essential to maintain housing for a minimum of 15-20 clients of Intensive Case Management and Rapid Re-housing programs.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report HSC22015(a): Updated HATS Report to City of Hamilton