



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members Public Health Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	May 15, 2023
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	2023 Hamilton Community Heat Response Plan (BOH23019) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Shelley Rogers (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1275 Matt Lawson (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5823
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Kevin McDonald Director, Healthy Environments Division Public Health Services
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable.

## INFORMATION

This report provides information related to the 2023 Hamilton Community Heat Response Plan (see Appendix “A” to Public Health Committee Report BOH23019) and work presently being undertaken to develop a Heat Response Strategy in alignment with the City of Hamilton’s 2022 Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan<sup>1</sup>.

### Background

For 2023, Public Health Services’ Healthy Environments Division assumed responsibility for coordinating the Community Heat Response Committee and for updating the Community Heat Response Plan for the current year.

The Community Heat Response Plan involves multiple City department divisions as well as community partner agencies and service providers. Public Health Services monitors weather forecasts and communications issued by Environment Canada regarding initiated Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings. When a Heat Warning or

<sup>1</sup> Appendix “D” to Report CM22016/PED22058(a)/HSC22030(a) - City of Hamilton Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan, 2022. <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=335322>.

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.

Extended Heat Warning is issued by Environment Canada, Public Health Services amplifies the warning by providing communication internally, to community partners, local media outlets and updates the City of Hamilton website for public information. The partnering agencies and services providers of the Community Heat Response Committee then implement the Community Heat Response Plan according to their defined roles and responsibilities.

Examples of actions taken when a Heat Warning or an Extended Heat Warning is issued include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Public Health Services' Healthy Environments Division sends out notification of the Heat Warning or Extended Heat Warning via the "Rave Alert" messaging system to community partners and external stakeholders as well as an email notification of the Heat Warning to members of Council, internal departments and local news media outlets;
- Partnering agencies and service providers offer "cooling spaces" where members of the public are invited to come spend time in order to reduce their exposure to the heat;
- Public Health Services monitors and assesses surveillance data from hospitals and health sector agencies with respect to community health impacts resulting from extreme heat;
- Activation of the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may occur if there is a need to discuss further interventions. Note: Only members of the EOC Management Team may request the activation of the EOC (virtual activation could also be considered);
- Scheduled public, family, adult and senior swims are provided free-of-charge, at City of Hamilton indoor and outdoor pools (capacity limits in effect); Recreation's "Supie" Program remains operational but modified to a more passive nature; and
- Mobile water is distributed by the Salvation Army in the downtown core.

Other interventions in response to extreme heat have been initiated beyond the Community Heat Response Plan. Ontario Works provides a discretionary, one-time benefit issued to recipients of social assistance living independently in the community and who have a documented severe medical condition where, without air-conditioning in a medical professional's opinion, their condition would be negatively impacted. The City of Hamilton does not cover the cost of air-conditioners for low-income residents.

Also, Public Health Services is working with local housing support agencies to provide educational webinars about heat-related illness to local landlords and property management companies regarding what they should know about extreme heat events and how to protect tenants during these events.

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Updated information regarding the status of Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings, Cool Place locations and hours of operation, and information about the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness can be found on the City's "Heat Warnings and Heat-Related Illness" webpage (<https://www.hamilton.ca/heat>).

### **Extreme Heat Adaptation Actions and Next Steps**

The City of Hamilton Climate Science Report<sup>2</sup> predicts that the number of consecutive days that the temperature rises above 30°C will increase and that heat waves, defined as three days or more where the temperature is over 30°C or 40 on the humidex scale, will be more frequent as well as temperatures over 35°C. Older adults and especially the vulnerable and frail elderly are the most at risk to be hospitalized and die because of factors related to heat.

In 2022, Public Health Services completed an "Advancing Adaptation" pilot project, which was funded through the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Canada by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, alongside financial support from the Government of Canada through the federal Department of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Public Health Services staff worked with the members of the Just Recovery Network who had delivered a series of webinars for Hamilton residents on extreme heat to assess their interest in participating in such an initiative. An Extreme Heat Working Group was formed consisting of community organizations such as Environment Hamilton, Hamilton Round Table for Poverty Reduction, Associate of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, as well as members of the Seniors' Advisory Committee. Public Health Services worked with CityHousing Hamilton to consult with tenants in four buildings to determine interventions to prevent heat related illness. Furniture was provided to make cooling rooms more comfortable for tenants and fifty air conditioning units were purchased for tenants who were at high risk of heat related illness. This intervention was completed using 'one-time' funding and will not be available for additional purchase of air conditioning units or to fund other interventions.

This past March 2023, Public Health Services was tasked with coordinating the 2023 Community Heat Response Committee, updating the Community Heat Response Plan, as needed, and producing a Public Health Committee recommendation report for Q1 2024 detailing a Heat Response Strategy 2024-2027 for the City of Hamilton. The Heat Response Strategy will include an updated Heat Response Plan and interventions identified in the City of Hamilton's Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> City of Hamilton Climate Science Report.

<https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/climate-change-impact-adapatation-plan-science-report.pdf>

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Actions identified in the Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan are:

- Action 3.1 (ID#6): Develop and implement a response program for vulnerable populations to protect residents from climate-related risks (i.e. extreme cold, extreme heat, etc.);
- Action 3.2 (ID#7): Consolidate existing vulnerable persons' contact lists and update/expand them to guide emergency response and/or other assistance programs;
- Action 3.3 (ID#8): Coordinate local efforts to address excessive indoor temperatures in rental housing;
- Action 4.3 (ID#12): Establish buddy systems/help-your-neighbour programs to implement during extreme weather events;
- Action 6.2 (ID#15): Explore opportunities to expand current cooling & warming centre programming and interventions; and,
- Action 6.3 (ID#15): Improve monitoring, data collection, and notification surrounding flooding & extreme weather/temperatures.

As part of the City's recovery from the pandemic, it will be important to assign a consistent lead to this work. The City of Hamilton department/division responsible for the overall coordination of the Heat Response Strategy will be identified in the recommendations to Public Health Committee in Q1 2024. The execution of the Heat Response Strategy will be an inter-departmental initiative involving multiple community partners. Evidence-informed decision making will be used to determine the most effective and sustainable methods for implementing the identified actions and interventions to protect people from the harms of extreme heat exposure. Literature reviews, environmental scans and best practices analyses concerning community-based extreme heat responses are being conducted by Public Health Services to inform the Heat Response Strategy. The recommended actions and interventions will be adapted and applied to Hamilton's local context.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix "A" to Report BOH23019:

City of Hamilton Community Heat Response Plan, May 2023