



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY HEAT RESPONSE STRATEGY
2024

DRAFT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2023, Public Health Services informed the Public Health Committee it would prepare a Heat Response Strategy recommendation report to go forward in the first quarter of 2024. The Heat Response Strategy includes extreme heat-related actions that were included in the City of Hamilton's Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan (2022)¹ and recommended updates to the Community Heat Response Plan². The Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan was approved by Council in 2022 and includes actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change on a local level. The City's Community Heat Response Plan outlines actions that are implemented by the Community Heat Response Committee during Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings. Both plans work in conjunction to address extreme heat in Hamilton.

Preparation of this Strategy was led by Public Health Services in consultation with the Extreme Heat Working Group and other City of Hamilton staff who provide direct services to higher risk demographics and equity deserving groups. This Strategy should be reviewed annually and updated as required.

¹ City of Hamilton Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan: <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=335322>

² City of Hamilton Community Heat Response Plan: <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=363334>

EXTREME HEAT WORKING GROUP

The Extreme Heat Working Group originated as part of the Advancing Adaptation Pilot Project³. The project was conducted by Public Health Services in collaboration with City Housing Hamilton and in consultation with the Extreme Heat Working Group. In 2023, the group expanded to include members of the Community Heat Response Committee, additional community groups, individuals representing equity deserving groups, environmental groups, and other entities with interest in this work. Members include:

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)	Hamilton 350
Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities	Hamilton and District Apartment Association
Canadian Health Association for Sustainability and Equity	Hamilton Community Legal Clinic
City Housing Hamilton	Hamilton Public Library
City of Hamilton, Housing Services	Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
City of Hamilton, Office of Climate Change Initiatives	Hamilton Street Railway (HSR)
City of Hamilton, Parks and Cemeteries	Native Women's Centre
City of Hamilton, Public Health Services	Salvation Army
City of Hamilton, Recreation	Seniors Advisory Committee
Environment Hamilton	Victorian Order of Nurses (VON)
	Wesley
	YWCA Hamilton

The group met monthly from June 2023 through December 2023 to discuss the expansion of the City's prior Community Heat Response Plan and extreme heat items identified in the City's Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan.

³ Advancing Adaptation Implementation through Collaboration:
<https://icleicanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-Hamilton-Case-Study-Advancing-Adpatation-Project-Implementation-Cohort.pdf>

SCOPE

The Heat Response Strategy includes City of Hamilton’s Corporate Actions only. This Strategy does not give specific direction to external partners. Instead, City Staff are committed to engaging and supporting external partners to implement actions that align with the Heat Response Strategy. Items covered in the Heat Response Strategy will be limited to the expansion of the City’s Community Heat Response Plan and the following actions included in the City’s Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan (2022):

- Develop and implement a response program for vulnerable populations to protect residents from extreme heat
- Consolidate existing vulnerable persons’ contact lists and update/expand them to guide emergency response and/or other assistance programs
- Coordinate local efforts to address excessive indoor temperatures in rental housing
- Establish buddy systems/help-your-neighbour programs to implement during extreme heat events
- Explore opportunities to expand current cooling centre programming and interventions
- Improve monitoring, data collection, and notification surrounding extreme heat

NOT IN SCOPE

The Heat Response Strategy does not include response actions for Air Quality or Cold Alerts. This Strategy does not include Emergency procedures when the Emergency Operations Centre is activated. Actions and initiatives of Community Partners are not within the scope of this Strategy; however, City Staff will engage and support Community Partners to implement the Heat Response Plan and Heat Response Strategy. Greenhouse gas emissions mitigation is not included in the scope of this Strategy.

AUTHORITY

This Strategy includes heat-related items from the Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan as well as updates to Hamilton’s Community Heat Response Plan. The City of Hamilton’s Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan was approved by City Council in 2022. Hamilton’s Community Heat Response Committee was formed in 2002. The Community Heat Response Plan was introduced in 2008.

Approval and authorization of the Heat Response Strategy will be at the discretion of City of Hamilton Public Health Committee, Board of Health and Council.

EVALUATION

The Community Heat Response Plan and Heat Response Strategy will be reviewed annually for operational effectiveness. Progress of strategic actions will be reviewed by the Office of Climate Change Initiatives.

2.0 HEAT WARNING INFORMATION SYSTEM

HEAT WARNINGS AND EXTENDED HEAT WARNINGS

Public Health Services monitors weather forecasts and communications issued by Environment Canada regarding initiated Heat Warnings. Environment Canada issues Heat Warnings when there are **two or more consecutive days** forecasted with daytime highs greater than or equal to 31°C and nighttime lows greater than or equal to 20°C **or two or more consecutive days** with a humidex of 40°C or greater.

Extended Heat Warnings are issued locally by the Medical Officer of Health when there are **three or more consecutive days** observed with daytime highs greater than or equal to 31°C and nighttime lows greater than or equal to 20°C **or three or more consecutive days** with a humidex of 40°C or greater.

When a Heat Warning or Extended Heat Warning is issued, 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 service providers of the Community Heat Response Committee then implement the Community Heat Response Plan according to their defined roles and responsibilities.

ESCALATION OF EMERGENCY

If the Emergency Operations Centre is activated due to an extreme heat event, City of Hamilton staff will follow the City of Hamilton Emergency Plan.⁴

⁴ City of Hamilton Emergency Plan: <https://www.hamilton.ca/home-neighbourhood/emergency-services/emergency-preparedness>

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

INTERNAL CITY RESPONSE

The City of Hamilton will perform the Roles and Responsibilities outlined in the Community Heat Response Plan during Heat Warnings and Extreme Heat Warnings. Actions included in the Heat Response Strategy will be conducted by the assigned lead division/section teams.

COMMUNITY PARTNER RESPONSE

City of Hamilton staff will work with and support Community Partners participating in the City’s Heat Response.

4.0 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

CITY OF HAMILTON WORKING IN HOT WEATHER PROCEDURE

The City of Hamilton has Hot Weather Safety Guidelines⁵ that apply to City of Hamilton employees.

5.0 HEAT RESPONSE STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

EVIDENCE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Recommendations within the Heat Response Strategy have been identified using a variety of methods including “Adaptation Strategies for Reducing Extreme Heat Health Impacts: A Rapid Review”⁶, consultation with the Extreme Heat Working Group and actions previously identified from the Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan.

⁵ Hot Weather Safety Guidelines: <http://www2.hamilton.ca//NR/HRFormsDocs/HEAT-STRESS-GUIDELINE.pdf>

⁶ The Institute of Health Economics, Albert Canada, *Adaptation Strategies for Reducing Extreme Heat Health Impacts: A Rapid Review*, <https://www.ihe.ca/advanced-search/adaptation-strategies-for-reducing-extreme-heat-health-impacts-a-rapid-review>

HEAT RESPONSE STRATEGY ACTIONS

Action Number	Strategy	Description	Status	Lead	Partners
1	Education and Outreach	Distribution of cooling items to educate and encourage individual heat adaptive behaviours. Engage public about risks of extreme heat and preventative measures. Distribution of educational materials. Education on how to prepare for extreme heat events. Information line provides resources available through telephone to general regarding risk and safety information. Distribution of water bottles and access to drinking water.	Already in Practice	Public Health Services	City Housing Hamilton, Public Works, Recreation, Hamilton Public Library, Various City Departments
2	Heat Warning Notification	Alerts issued to public to advise of heat warnings and extended heat warnings with heat safety tips.	Already in Practice	Public Health Services	Communications
3	Cool Places	Air-conditioned public spaces as well as public swims and spray pads to provide respite during heat warnings. Expansion of services to highest-risk population during heat warnings.	Already in Practice	Recreation, Hamilton Public Library	Public Works

Action Number	Strategy	Description	Status	Lead	Partners
4	Cooling and Energy Efficiency Support	<p>Subsidies and/or rebates for improving energy efficiency in homes or buildings. (i.e. Better Homes Hamilton Project Supports this).</p> <p>Advocacy to other levels of government to provide affordable and accessible cooling (e.g. application for an air conditioner) for at-risk people who qualify (e.g., based on income status and/or a prescribed medical need).</p> <p>Development of draft “Adequate Temperature By-Law”</p>	<p>Piloting</p> <p>Already in Practice</p>	<p>Planning and Economic Development (Office of Climate Change Initiatives)</p> <p>Ontario Works</p> <p>Licensing and By-Law Services</p>	Public Health Services
5	Vegetation Cover Expansion and Maintenance	Reducing artificial surfaces, through increasing vegetation in parking areas, alleyways, streets, and other infrastructure.	Already in Practice	Public Works, Planning and Economic Development	Public Health Services
*6	Wellness Check-Ins	Leveraging emergency and community services to assist at risk populations during heat events to provide welfare calls/check-ins.	New	Paramedics	Public Health Services

Action Number	Strategy	Description	Status	Lead	Partners
*7	Shade Structures	Installation of shade structures in areas identified using heat and equity mapping.	New	Public Works (Environmental Services)	Planning and Economic Development (Office of Climate Change Initiatives) Public Health Services
8	Heat-Related Illness Population Health Surveillance	Real-time surveillance of local population health data during the extreme heat season (i.e. Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance, Paramedic Data).	New	Public Health Services (Epidemiology and Evaluation)	Paramedics
*9	Misting stations	Installation of misting stations in identified priority locations.	New	Public Works (Environmental Services)	Planning and Economic Development (Office of Climate Change Initiatives), Public Health Services
*10	Transportation	Free or discounted transportation during heat warnings and extended heat warnings to cool places.	New	Public Works (Transit)	Public Health Services

*Pending Deliberations by General Issues Committee