



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	June 19, 2024
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Response to the Office of the Chief Coroner Ontario Forensic Pathology Service (HSC24026) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Robyn Perry (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7801 Shannon Honsberger (905) 546-2424 Rob Mastroianni (905) 546-2424 Ext. 8035
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	<i>Michelle Baird</i>

## COUNCIL DIRECTION

N/A

## INFORMATION

On November 7, 2023, The Ministry of the Solicitor General, Office of the Chief Coroner Ontario Forensic Pathology Service provided a Patient Safety Review Committee Report (PSRC 2022-10). This report was issued to the City of Hamilton as well as the Good Shepherd Centre Hamilton, the organization that operates the Emergency Shelter in which a person passed away in November 2020. The tragedy was deemed an accidental death due to drug toxicity. A reply is expected from both the service provider and the City. The response will be considered a public document and may be released to interested parties upon request. The purpose of this Information Report is to inform Council of the Coroner’s report and responses to its recommendations.

The City is included as a recipient of the report given our role as the Service Manager of local homelessness funding that resources emergency shelters. We take the lead on contracts, operating standards, and recommending best practice. As such, we have influence into the operation of shelters that we fund. However, the City does not directly

---

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.

own or operate any emergency shelters and is not the sole funder of these organizations.

The death and subsequent report occurred prior to Council approval of the City's adoption of the updated Hamilton's Emergency Shelter Standards. The Standards were presented to Emergency and Community Services Committee in report HSC23007 in September 2023. The document was co-written by emergency shelter operators and informed by people with living experience as well as community groups. It outlines the standards of service and care that are mutually agreed upon and guide the work of emergency shelters, including harm reduction practices that overlap with the intentions of the Coroner's recommendations.

The Coroner's report makes four recommendations to both the City and the specific shelter, as outlined below. Considering the local operational viability, potential benefit of the recommendations, and the City's ability to influence shelter operations, staff have prepared a response for each. All responses have been developed in collaboration with the City's Legal Services Division.

1. Daily room checks should be conducted in a way to ensure the wellbeing of the client. A room check consent should be obtained between the shelter and client with clear client expectations in how the daily room checks should be conducted to ensure safety.  
Response: This is already implemented and is practiced at all shelter locations; the only exception is the weekly checks for the family shelters' apartments.
2. A buddy peer system, supported by and overseen by the shelter, could be considered for use in shelters.  
Response: While the overarching policy is to abstain from substance use in shelters, the City encourages people to use available technology, safe use spaces, and inform someone if they are using. It would be inappropriate to facilitate other shelter stayers to take on the responsibility of monitoring other shelter stayer's substance use.
3. Harm reduction measures should be expanded with any available technologies to ensure residents are responsive.

Response:

The Shelter Standards set out minimum expectations around harm reduction practices in shelter This includes things like, emergency shelter operators having a harm reduction policy and procedures in place that will make explicit that the shelter operates using a harm reduction approach and that the policy and procedures include, but are not to be

---

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.

limited to, responding to overdose; wellness checks; how harm reduction supplies are distributed, collected, and disposed of. Further, shelter operators and the City share best and promising practice and discuss any system-wide implications and adaptations at regular monthly meetings of the Emergency Shelter Coordination Table. The City and shelter operators also sit on several community tables regarding harm reduction. However, the City encourages shelter operators to expand their harm reduction services to include new technologies. To support this expansion, Public Health Services has made available limited program funding to cover the cost of implementing bathroom monitoring technology. Some shelters already utilize or committed to utilizing harm reduction technologies and staff continue to collaborate with partners to explore continued use.

4. Application of the Duty of Care Principal for all shelters – designed for and by shelter staff and the clients that use them.  
Response: In 2023, the City finalized Hamilton’s Emergency Shelter Standards. This document outlines service and care standards for all emergency shelters, including the approach to harm reduction. Through this document, the City has set expectations around reasonable efforts to ensure safety within shelters. The Duty of Care Principle can be defined in general as a legal obligation that may be imposed on an individual or organization to take reasonable care to avoid conduct that poses an unreasonable risk of harm to others.

#### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix “A” to Report HSC24026 – Patient Safety Review Committee Report (PSRC–2022-10)

Appendix “B” to Report HSC24026 – Office of the Chief Coroner and Ontario Forensic Pathology Service Response to Recommendations

Appendix “C” to Report HSC24026 – Hamilton’s Emergency Shelter Standards, see Section 6.4 “Substance Use, Harm Reduction and Safer Use”