




INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
DATE:	January 17, 2024
SUBJECT:	Encampment Response Update – December 2023 (HSC23066(c)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Mike Jones (905) 546-2424 ext. 3824 Danielle Blake (905) 546-2424 ext. 3731
SUBMITTED BY:	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On August 18, 2023, Council ratified an Encampment Protocol to be used by City staff to respond and manage encampments, tents, or temporary structures within public lands in the City of Hamilton.

To provide ongoing accountability and transparency to the City's encampment response program and the implementation of its encampment protocol, staff were directed to communicate with Council and Ward Councillors regarding the Encampment Protocol through monthly, ongoing Information Reports to General Issues Committee and include data and trends, operational updates, and any continuous improvement measures implemented to further efforts toward providing ongoing accountability and transparency to the City's encampment response program and the implementation of its encampment protocol.

INFORMATION

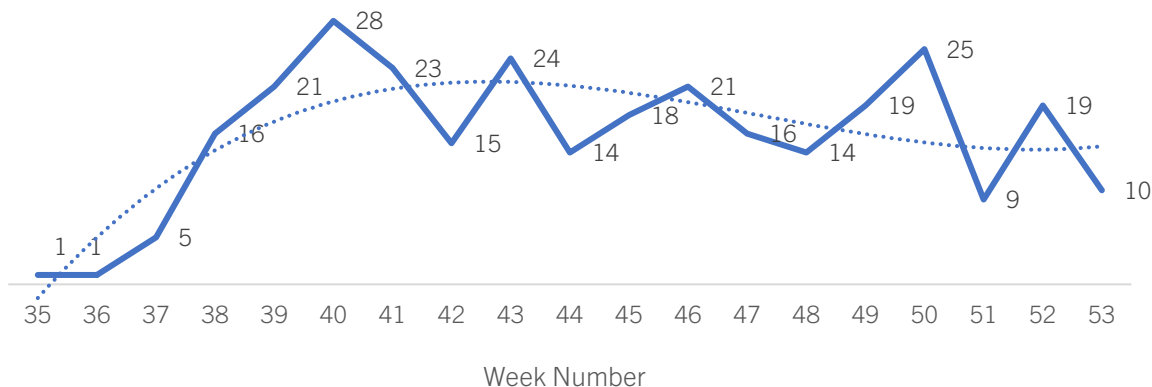
Trends Regarding Identification of New Sites

New encampments continue to be identified throughout the City by several different sources, including concerned citizens, businesses and business improvement areas,

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and internal staff from other City departments. As first reported in October's monthly report, new sites peaked in Week 40 (September 25, 2023 – October 1, 2023). Since then, there has been a steady decrease in new sites identified (see chart below).

It is likely that new sites identified will continue to plateau, as movement around the City begins to stabilize into compliant spaces and individuals previously staying in encampments seek indoor spaces or couch surf temporarily with friends and family during the colder months.



Compliance Trends

In December, a total of 66 different sites were identified through various modalities to Housing Focused Street Outreach. Of the sites identified to Housing Focused Street Outreach, there were no tents observed upon visiting 27 (41%) locations, four new sites were deemed compliant on first visit (6%) and one site was deemed out of scope because it was outside of the City of Hamilton.

In total, 37 sites (27 public property, 10 private property) were escalated by Housing Focused Street Outreach to Municipal Law Enforcement in December, resulting in 20 trespass notices being served to individuals on public property who were in contravention of the Protocol. This total is lower than the 2023 average of 64 and the number of trespass notices has trended down every month since the Protocol was ratified (126 in August, 75 in September, 58 in October, 42 in November).

Complaint and Service Request Trends

In general, the number of complaints and/or requests for service has decreased month-over-month since the ratification of the Protocol, from a high of 897 in September, to 410 logged in December. Complaint and service request totals were considerably lower during the holiday season when compared to the average weekly volume.

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As a percentage of the total complaints received each month, reporting and requests to enforce the Protocol within encampments has dropped from 54% in September, to 41% in December. Conversely, the percentage of complaints and service requests related to garbage and debris increased from 12% in September, to 21% in December. With more encampments staying affixed to their current compliant locations, and as temperatures continue to drop, individuals living unsheltered are gathering items to minimize the impact of the cold weather, i.e., blankets, insulation, wood.

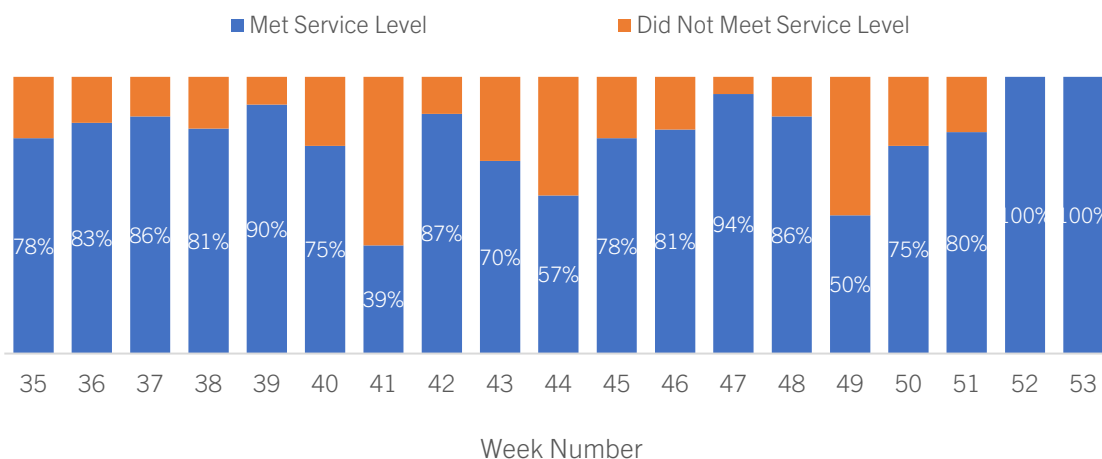
Another area that has seen an increase in complaints and service requests is health and safety concerns, which were 2% of the total emails to unsheltered in September and have risen to 8% in December. The majority of these complaints also reflect issues associated with colder weather, highlighting the visibility of propane tanks and other heating materials being observed at sites and potential risk to individuals living unsheltered and their neighbours.

Service Levels

Housing Focused Street Outreach

The ratification of the Encampment Protocol established a three-day service level for response to complaints and/or service requests related to encampments. As such, Housing Focused Street Outreach has three days to visit the site and engage with the individuals at the site to inform them of the Encampment Protocol.

Including both existing and new encampments, the following chart reports on Housing Focused Street Outreach’s ability to meet service levels by week.



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In December, Housing Focused Street Outreach has met its service level 87% of the time, above the 76% average since the Encampment Protocol was ratified.

Municipal Law Enforcement

As per the Protocol, Municipal Law Enforcement Officers will determine compliance timelines depending on the presenting circumstances, for the issuance of notices or actions to be taken in respect to the encampment, temporary shelter, or tent, within a maximum of four (4) total days from the issuance of notice, unless exceptional circumstances exist.

In December, Municipal Law Enforcement met its service level for 32 of the 37 (86%) sites escalated by Housing Focused Street Outreach, not including those currently under active investigation. The investigations that did not meet the required service level were during the shutdown over the holiday period when there was limited staffing coverage available.

Updates:

Access to Washrooms and Showers Update

Since its opening on September 18, the Eastwood shower program finished 2023 with 30 non-unique individuals utilizing the showers, while there were 146 non-unique individuals who accessed Norman Pinky Lewis Recreation Centre's shower program in 2023.

The Eastwood program will no longer offer services as of January 8, 2024. Instead, a shower program will be offered at nearby Bennetto Community Centre.

Weekly data regarding access of individuals who are living unsheltered to washroom programs will continue to be reported in the Weekly Encampment Dashboard.

Encampment Liaison Committee Update

City staff have started work on the creation of an Encampment Liaison Committee that will include City staff, key stakeholders in the community, as well as individuals with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness. The group will meet regularly to discuss overall encampment response in the community and discuss approaches to sustain continuous improvement.

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Presently, a draft Terms of Reference and governance model is under development, with the intent of scheduling the Committee's first meeting for January 2024.

New Participants on Coordinated Response Team

With a transition to colder weather, there has been an increase in fires and combustible materials (i.e., fuel, propane) located at encampments throughout the City. To ensure that the necessary expertise is available when making decisions and to ensure staff are coordinating using the most recently available information, management from City of Hamilton's Fire Department are an ongoing contributor.

In addition, management from the City of Hamilton's Parking Enforcement team have also been included in the Coordinated Response Team's meeting schedule, to provide expertise around parking violations in the City, and to coordinate and strategize a response that provides an opportunity for Housing Focused Street Outreach to engage prior to an enforcement response.

Additional Trends and Data

Total Unique Individuals Living in Encampments

The total number of individuals that Housing Focused Street Outreach interacted with in December 2023 was approximately 217. This is slightly down from November's total of 223, and slightly higher than the 2023 average.

As previously mentioned, individuals living in encampments are more likely to seek indoor accommodations in the colder months, either via emergency shelter and winter warming spaces, or by temporarily couch surfing with family and friends.

Supports for Individuals Living in Encampments

In December, Housing Focused Street Outreach provided basic needs supports to 132 non-unique individuals and housing-related supports to 230 non-unique individuals. These totals are less than those reported in November, but consistent with the year-to-date reported averages, and significantly higher than the totals reported in December 2022.

Escalated Complaints

There were a combined 37 (27 public property, 10 private property) complaints regarding non-compliant sites that were escalated by Housing Focused Street Outreach

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to Municipal Law Enforcement in December. This is slightly above the average number of sites escalated since the Protocol was ratified in August.

Cleaning and Maintenance

In December, Parks Section staff cleaned and maintained 117 sites, lower than a peak of 157 locations in November, but still the second highest total since the Protocol was ratified in August. In general, the total of sites cleaned and maintained by Parks staff has trended upwards.

Indicators

The following indicators have been established to assess the success of the program on an interim basis and will be reported on regularly to provide accountability to the public and people with lived experience, and transparency regarding the City’s approach to encampment response.

Indicator	Category of Measurement	Dec 2023	Prev. Month	2023 Avg.	Dec 2022
Total complaints and/or requests for service requiring response or follow-up by Housing Focused Street Outreach (HFSO)	Volume of complaints and/or requests for service	410	517	647	N/A
Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSO), who have provided consent to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).	Total unique individuals living in encampments	77	133	90	46

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.

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	Dec 2023	Prev. Month	2023 Avg.	Dec 2022
Number of unique individuals/households reached who are unsheltered and/or regularly living in encampments throughout the City (defined by connection to HFSSO), who have not yet provided consent to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).	Total unique individuals living in encampments	140	90	111	N/A
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSSO) with their basic needs per month	Support basic needs of individuals living in encampments	132	253	129	28
Number of interactions where individuals received support (from HFSSO) with their housing needs per month	Support housing-related needs of individuals living in encampments	230	555	269	79
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on public property	Volume of Escalated complaints	27	21	20	N/A
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSSO (i.e., Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were involved in response) on private property	Volume of Escalated complaints	10	11	9	N/A

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	Dec 2023	Prev. Month	2023 Avg.	Dec 2022
Total number of Trespass Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	20	42	64	N/A
Total number of Trespass Notices issued on private property	Response type to escalated complaint	0	0	0	N/A
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	2	3	4	N/A
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on private property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice	Response type to escalated complaint	0	0	0	N/A
Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor	Park cleaning and maintenance	117	157	97	17

All indicators meet the criteria of being valid and reliable and can be replicated by City staff and reported monthly.

Please direct any inquiries to Danielle Blake, Manager, Housing Focused Street Outreach, at (905) 546-2424 ext. 3731, or by email at Danielle.Blake@hamilton.ca.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A