


# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	January 15, 2025
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Encampment Response Update – October to December 2024 (HSC25008) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Amanda Ciardullo (905) 546-2424 ext. 3824 Danielle Blake (905) 546-2424 ext. 3731
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## COUNCIL DIRECTION

On August 18, 2023, Council ratified an Encampment Protocol to be utilized by City staff to respond and manage encampments, tents, or temporary structures within public lands in the City of Hamilton. Subsequently on July 12, 2024, Council approved amendments to the Encampment Protocol to mitigate impacts on those living in and around encampments which included increasing distance provisions for encampments to help reduce impacts on neighbourhoods.

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 regarding the Encampment Protocol through monthly, ongoing Information Reports to the 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. This report will provide an update for the months of October 2024 to December 2024.

## INFORMATION

### Program Trends:

### Identification of New and Existing Sites with Compliance Concerns

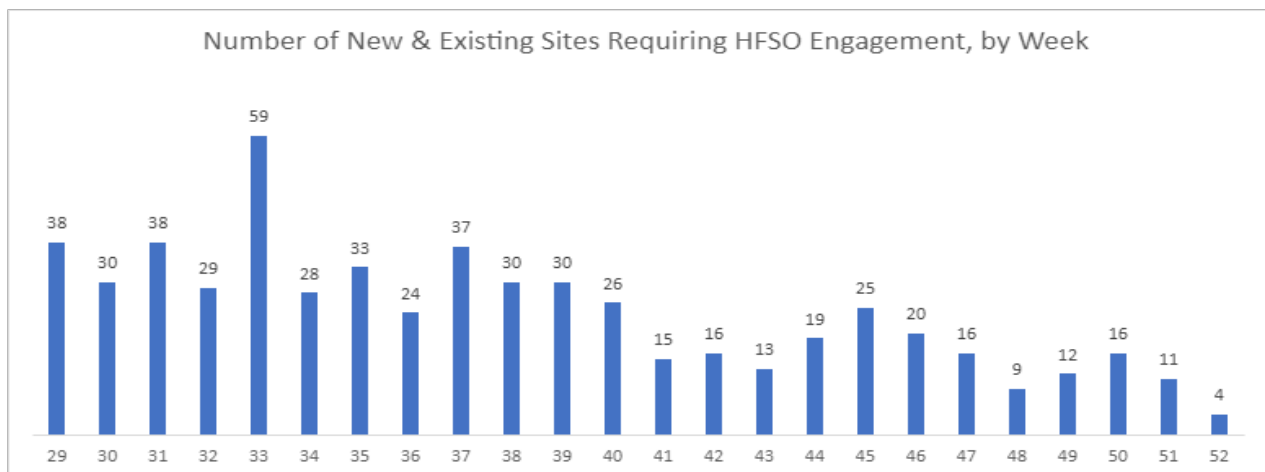
New encampments continue to be identified throughout the city through various sources, including concerned citizens, businesses, business improvement areas, and internal staff from other City departments. Additionally, existing encampments have fluctuated in compliance status, resulting in initial compliance checks from Housing Focused Street Outreach.

Compliance issues persisted in Q4 of 2024, with growing challenges observed particularly in Wards 2 and 3. These wards continue to experience the highest demand for compliant sites, especially in areas close to essential services and support networks.

In October 2024, the Housing Focused Street Outreach team conducted engagements visits and compliance checks for a consistent number of sites compared to October 2023. A total of 89 sites were identified, down from 120 in September 2024 but similar to the 90 sites reported in October 2023. In November 2024, the team identified 76 sites, reflecting a decrease from the prior month but an increase compared to the 69 sites identified in November 2023. For December 2024, the team identified 47 sites.

The data indicates a steady decline in the number of identified sites over the last three months of the year. This trend aligns with patterns typically observed during the colder months and may be partially attributed to the recent expansion of the emergency shelter system, which increased the availability of shelter beds.

Figure 1: New and Existing Sites requiring Engagement by HFSO, by Week



### **Compliance Trends**

Housing Focused Street Outreach staff respond to complaints or service requests regarding encampments within 72 hours. During these engagements, the team connects with individuals living in encampments to assess their needs and link them to internal and community support services.

When an encampment is found to be in violation of the established protocol, Housing Focused Street Outreach staff escalate the matter to the Municipal Law Enforcement officers within 72 hours of the initial complaint. The two Municipal Law Enforcement Officers alongside the two Hamilton Police EET Officers respond within 4 business days to confirm if the encampment is in a prohibited area. The two Hamilton EET Officers as approved by Council, attend the encampments sites to ensure the health and safety on Municipal Law Enforcement Officers, and if required enforce the trespass notices. The three most common reasons for escalation to Municipal Law Enforcement were proximity to private property, presence on private property, and proximity to roads.

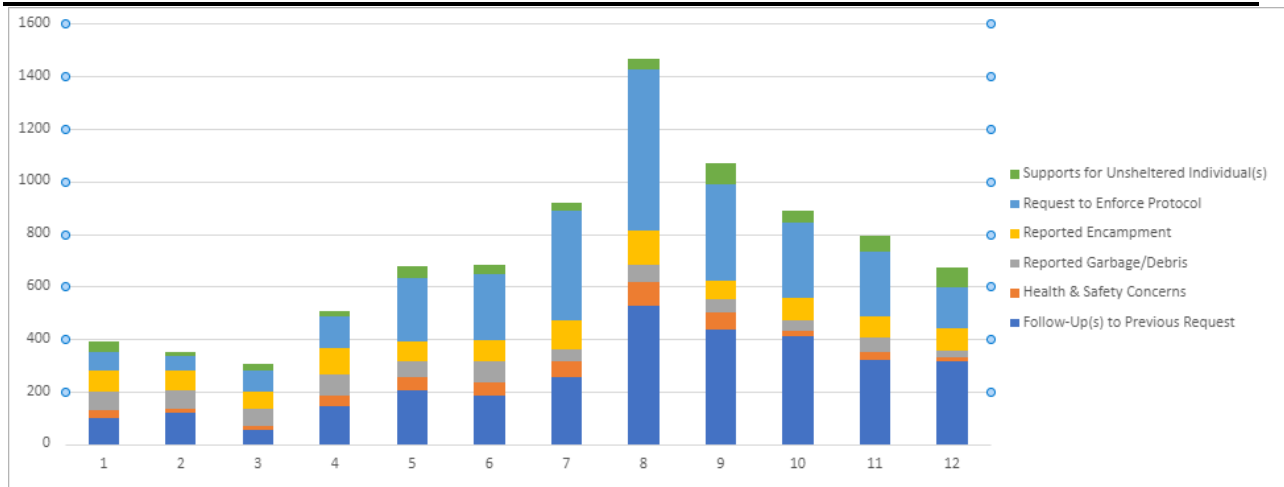
The following table summarizes the total number of sites identified through various sources and highlights trends observed between October 2024 and December 2024 during outreach and compliance visits.

<b>Compliance Trend</b>	<b>December 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>October 2024</b>
# of sites identified to HFSO	47	76	80
% of sites with no tents observed when visiting	27%	21%	28%
% of sites being compliant when visiting	5%	4%	4%
% of sites escalated to MLE for non-compliance	51%	71%	61%

### **Complaint and Service Request Trends**

Figure 2: Complaint and Service Request Trends, Monthly

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**Correspondence Received from the Community**

The volume of complaints and service requests has continued to decline since peaking at 1,464 in September 2024, decreasing to 889 in October 2024, 791 in November 2024, and further to 671 in December 2024. This downward trend can be attributed, in part, to the enhanced capacity provided by newly added staff on the Outreach team, which has facilitated ongoing education about the Encampment Protocol and support in identifying compliant spaces. Similarly, the number of follow-up actions required by the Outreach team dropped from 436 in September 2024 to 413 in October 2024, 321 in November 2024, and 315 in December 2024.

**Enforcement Requests Received from the Community**

In 2024, there has been a notable increase in community requests to enforce the Encampment Protocol, rather than simply reporting the presence of an encampment. This shift from neutral reporting to enforcement-focused requests likely reflects a growing public understanding of the Encampment Protocol, coupled with increasing frustration among housed neighbours regarding specific sites.

However, recent months have seen a decrease in the number of enforcement requests submitted through the unsheltered inbox. Requests declined from 366 in September 2024 to 287 in October 2024, 245 in November 2024, and further to 154 in December 2024. Despite this downward trend, the figures remained above the year-to-date average of 231.

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Several factors may explain the recent decline in enforcement requests. These include enhanced outreach efforts, which have facilitated proactive engagement and education, potentially reducing the perceived need for enforcement, or following enforcement the unsheltered individual did not return to the non-permitted location. Seasonal trends, such as colder weather leading to a natural reduction in encampments, and the recent expansion of the emergency shelter capacity.

These trends suggest that while enforcement requests remain elevated, they may continue to decrease as proactive measures and community education efforts progress.

**Outreach Update:**

In October 2024, the Outreach team recorded 1,554 interaction outcomes with unsheltered individuals, followed by 1,273 interaction outcomes in November 2024. In December 2024, the team reported 1,442 interaction outcomes. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of these interactions across various categories.

Figure 3: HFSO Interaction Outcome Results: October - November 2024

<b>Interaction Outcome Category</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
Rapport Building & Supportive Conversations	630	349	632
Protocol Awareness & Education	137	90	100
Housing Supports & Referrals	180	66	154
Financial aid & income support referrals	141	67	109
Physical health-related support referral	37	18	58
Mental health-related support referral	22	22	23
Indigenous-specific supports	37	22	36
Pet-related supports and referrals	96	46	63
Other supports	107	48	85
Shower / washroom program referral	14	6	4
Shelter referral - Successful	3	9	26
Shelter referral – Declined	34	28	48
Shelter referral – Other	13	29	42

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<i>I.e. no space, no suitable space, no access permitted due to service restrictions</i>			
Drop-in referral made	92	56	45
Weather event referrals	11	11	12
Total non-unique outcomes	1554	1273	1442
Provision of goods <i>I.e. snacks, water, harm reduction supplies</i>	969	406	899

Housing Focused Street Outreach staff also track the provision of goods to individuals living unsheltered, which includes items like bottled water, snacks, harm reduction supplies, footwear and clothing, and sunscreen. Further, the Cathedral Café drop-in no longer distributes harm reduction supplies, putting additional pressures for these goods on the Housing Focused Street Outreach team.

**Hamilton Police Services’ Encampment Engagement Team Update**

Hamilton Police Services’ Encampment Engagement Team (EET) continued to experience an increased number of calls related to encampments. These calls encompass various aspects of the City’s established Encampment Protocol, aimed at balancing public safety with compassionate outreach.

The below table outlines the number of encampment-related concerns and the corresponding time spent by the Encampment Engagement Team and Municipal Law Enforcement in responding to these issues during October, November, and December 2024.

As outlined in previous Encampment Response Updates to Council, Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team remains committed to implementing a tiered, prioritized approach to handling enforcement requests. Given the increasing demand for addressing compliance concerns, it is anticipated that this prioritization framework may result in a backlog if service levels remain unchanged.

Figure 4: Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team Response to Encampment Related Concerns, October - November 2024.

<b>EET Response to Encampment Related Concerns</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
Number of times EET attended parks	82	43	44

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<b>EET Response to Encampment Related Concerns</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
(with MLE or conducted re-checks or conducted site visits)			
Total time spent issuing Notices with MLE	496 Minutes (8.26 hrs)	279 Minutes (5.56 hrs)	69 Minutes (1.15 hrs)
Total time spent enforcing Notices	59 Hours	71 Hours	39 Hours

**Hamilton Paramedic Services Encampment Engagement Team**

In September 2024, the community welcomed the Hamilton Paramedic Service's Encampment Engagement Team to provide health-related supports to individuals living unsheltered. As part of the Mobile Integrated Health program, paramedics provide non-urgent care and services that adhere to Medical Directives established by the Centre for Paramedic Education and Research, Medical Director and the local base Hospital. The Community Paramedic Program works in partnerships with Primary Care providers, Ontario Health at Home Support Services, and other Community Healthcare partners, to supplement but not duplicate care where needed.

In October 2024, the Hamilton Paramedic Services Encampment Engagement Team (EET) had 153 unique client interactions in the community with unhoused individuals, in November 2024, the EET had 207 unique client interactions in the community, in December 2024, the EET had 152 unique client interactions in the community requiring non-urgent medical care. The below table outlines the number of visits the EET responded to non-urgent health related concerns for individuals living in encampments between October and December 2024.

Figure 4: Hamilton Paramedic Services Encampment Engagement Team Response to Health-Related Concerns, October to December 2024.

<b>EET Response to Health-Related Concerns in the Community</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
Number of Encampments Sites Visited	19	29	25
Unique Encampments Visited	65	54	63
Number of Medical Provisions exercised	207	138	50

## **Hamilton Fire Department Fire Prevention Team Update**

### **Education & Awareness**

In November 2024, in response to complaints of propane tank use in tents, Fire Prevention staff attended two (2) park sites to provide in-person fire safety education, stopping this use.

In December 2024, the fire safety flyer (information resource) for persons living unsheltered was updated and 340 flyers were distributed to staff/locations within the Encampment Response team.

### **Types of Incidents Trends**

Most incidents that the Hamilton Fire Department responded to during the months of October to December 2024 were for burning complaints, which is a common complaint across the City. This is when residents call to report that they see or smell smoke. Open air burning (fires) are not permitted without a permit. In the cases of open air burning at locations involving people who are unsheltered, Fire Operations staff found that some people were trying to stay warm or were cooking food and extinguished the fires upon arrival of crews/staff. In some open air burning responses no evidence of open air burning was found or the fires were put out prior to fire crew arrival.

In terms of structure/tent fires no significant trends were found (i.e., certain locations experiencing multiple structure/tent fires). The only location that had multiple structure/tent fires in one month was the location of Sherman Access and Charlton Avenue East, which had two (2) tent fires during the month of November.

### **Location Trends**

<b>Locations where incidents occurred three (3) or more times per month:</b>	
<b>October 2024</b>	Bayfront Park: 4 incidents Charlton Avenue East & Wentworth Avenue: 4 incidents Wolverton Park: 4 incidents
<b>November 2024</b>	Beasley Park: 3 incidents Durand Park: 3 incidents Gage Park: 7 incidents
<b>December 2024</b>	Beasley Park: 3 incidents Gage Park: 7 incidents Sherman Access & Charlton Avenue East: 3 incidents



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<b>Response Type</b>	<b>October 2024</b>	<b>November 2024</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
Burning Complaint	58	61	37
Grass or Brush Fire	1	3	2
Accumulated Combustibles*	7	7	11
Structure/Tent Fire	4	9	6
Number of Injuries reported	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>56</b>

\* Accumulated Combustibles refers to any materials or belongings other than tents that may be on fire.

<b>Breakdown of Total Responses by Ward</b>					
<b>October 2024</b>		<b>November 2024</b>		<b>December 2024</b>	
<b>Ward 1</b>	2	<b>Ward 1</b>	3	<b>Ward 1</b>	3
<b>Ward 2</b>	26	<b>Ward 2</b>	33	<b>Ward 2</b>	16
<b>Ward 3</b>	26	<b>Ward 3</b>	31	<b>Ward 3</b>	29
<b>Ward 4</b>	4	<b>Ward 4</b>	6	<b>Ward 4</b>	2
<b>Ward 5</b>	11	<b>Ward 5</b>	3	<b>Ward 5</b>	5
<b>Ward 7</b>	1	<b>Ward 8</b>	1	<b>Ward 8</b>	1
		<b>Ward 11</b>	1		
		<b>Ward 12</b>	1		
		<b>Ward 13</b>	1		

**Service Levels**

**Housing Focused Street Outreach**

The ratification of the Encampment Protocol established a 72-hour service level for response to complaints and/or service requests related to encampments. In line with this, Housing Focused Street Outreach is required to visit the site and engage with the individuals within three days to inform them about the Encampment Protocol and escalate the site to Municipal Law Enforcement if necessary.

Following the recent addition of Outreach workers and administrative staff dedicated to identifying and escalating new sites, the team successfully met their service targets 71% of the time in October 2024 and 81% of the time in November 2024. In December 2024, the team continued to meet these targets, achieving a rate of 91%. These results are consistent with the 2023 average of 75%. The slight variation in performance is likely due to increased number of individuals residing in encampments, as well as

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additional engagement activities linked to the shelter expansion that have become part of the Outreach team's daily responsibilities.

### Municipal Law Enforcement

As per the Encampment 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 the last quarter of 2024, the Municipal Law Enforcement encampment team (1 supervisor and 2 officers) faced significant staffing vacancies which resulted in the recruitment and hiring of a new supervisor and officers. Recruitment, training and hiring of new staff as well as availability of the HPS EET team contributed to a decreased service level in the last quarter of 2024. Although trespasses notices were issued throughout Q4, the issuance did not always meet the 4 day timeline. In October 2024, service level targets were achieved at only 4 out of 43 sites (9%), while in November 2024, service levels dropped to 1 out of 52 sites that were escalated (2%). By December 2024, the team did not meet its service level at any sites.

### Additional Updates

#### Access to Washrooms and Showers Update

The City of Hamilton continues to make two recreational centers available for individuals experiencing homelessness to use for showers and maintain their hygiene. To date, the centers have received modest uptake, collectively 90 non-unique visits were reported to the shower program in October 2024, 111 non-unique visits were reported in November 2024, and 49 non-unique visits were reported in December 2024.

#### Temporary Shelter Expansion Update

### Temporary Outdoor Shelter

The temporary outdoor shelter is a key element of the City's ongoing strategy to address homelessness in Hamilton. It aligns with Council's decision to provide additional low-barrier shelter space in response to the Mayor's directive for the establishment of a temporary outdoor shelter. This initiative is not a standalone project but an integral part of a comprehensive system that includes housing support programs, rapid re-housing, drop-in services, outreach and emergency supports.

Construction at the temporary outdoor shelter site is progressing well, with asphalt work now fully completed. A perimeter fence has been installed to ensure security and community safety, and community building is now on site. Ongoing work includes electrical installations, waterline testing, and disinfection. Additionally, improvements have been made to the Caroline side of the property, which now has pedestrian crossing with AODA treatments.

The coordination of a service plan is actively underway, including the development of service level policies and procedures in preparation for the opening of the Temporary Outdoor Shelter. Staff are working closely with Good Shepherd on a weekly basis to finalize these policies and confirm the details of the site.

### **192 Shelter Bed Expansion**

The City is responding to the critical need for shelter services by activating an additional 192 beds through strategic partnerships with community providers. As of December 23, 2024, 107 of these 192 beds have been successfully onboarded. The Housing Focused Street Outreach team plays a key role as the primary referral agent for these beds, making significant progress in assisting unhoused individuals in encampments with transitioning into available shelter accommodations.

Further updates on the progress of this shelter expansion will be provided to Council in Q1 of 2025.

### **Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters Update**

Staff continue to work with Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) to explore opportunities to implement their model in the community. Feasibility studies are currently underway on City owned properties to collaborate with HATS on a separate location from the temporary outdoor shelter. HATS are engaging with emergency shelter providers in the community to develop an agreement for the operator of the site.

### **Additional Trends and Data:**

#### **Total Unique Individuals Living in Encampments**

In October 2024, Housing Focused Street Outreach engaged with approximately 299 unique individuals experiencing homelessness, a figure consistent with September's total of 290 and still exceeding the 2023 average of around 204 individuals.

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In November 2024, the outreach team engaged with 277 unique individuals, continuing the trend of significant engagement. In December 2024, the team engaged with 251 unique individuals, maintaining a high level of outreach despite the colder weather.

Several factors likely contribute to the numbers of individuals engaged, including the expansion of outreach staffing, improvements in data collection practices, and the ongoing lack of available shelter space in the emergency shelter system.

While it is difficult to predict when these engagement numbers will stabilize, it is anticipated that stabilization may occur early in 2025 as conditions evolve and with the enhanced capacity created in the emergency shelter system.

### Cleaning and Maintenance

In October 2024, Parks Section staff cleaned and maintained 189 sites, a slight decrease from 226 sites in September 2024. This was followed by 164 cleanups in November 2024 and 158 cleanups in December 2024. The demand for cleaning and maintenance remains high due to increased movement into newly identified encampment sites across the city, as well as the need to manage existing compliant areas.

To address the demand, Parks Section staff have implemented regular pickups at all known compliant sites and are working collaboratively with individuals living at these locations to designate areas for garbage and debris disposal.

A contractor has also been retained to assist with the increased workload. In October 2024, Parks Section staff maintained 81 sites, while the contractor managed 108 sites. In November 2024, of the 164 sites cleaned and maintained, the contractor handled 95 sites. In December 2024, of the 158 sites serviced, the contractor managed 85. This partnership has been essential in meeting the ongoing maintenance needs.

### Indicators

The following indicators have been developed 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.

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	2023 Avg.
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	1045	911	790	545
Approximate 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 <u>not</u> yet provided consent to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).	Total unique individuals living in encampments	299	277	251	114
Total supports (e.g., rapport building conversations, referrals, information) provided to individuals living unsheltered from Housing Focused Street Outreach	Supports provided to individuals living in encampments	2523	1679	2341	N/A
Total goods (e.g., water, snacks, harm reduction materials) provided to individuals living unsheltered from Housing Focused Street Outreach	Basic needs provided to individuals living in encampments	969	406	899	N/A
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on public property	Volume of Escalated complaints	41	44	11	20

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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.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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Indicator	Category of Measurement	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	2023 Avg.
Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on private property	Volume of Escalated complaints	2	10	1	9
Total number of Trespass Notices issued on public property	Response type to escalated complaint	26	56	26	64
Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property.	Response type to escalated complaint	3	3	2	4
Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor	Park cleaning and maintenance	189	164	158	97

*Note: ^ Information not accessible due to HIFIS shutdown*

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](mailto:Danielle.Blake@hamilton.ca).

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

N/A