



City of Hamilton Report for Information

To: Chair and Members
General Issues Committee

Date: April 9, 2025

Report No: HSC25025

Subject/Title: Temporary Emergency Shelter Expansion –
Implementation Update

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Recommendations

- 1) That Report HSC25025 respecting Temporary Emergency Shelter Expansion – Implementation Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- This update provides a status update on the full implementation of the temporary shelter expansion approved through Report HSC24027(b) / FCS24028 / PED24162 - Reducing Homelessness and Managing Encampments (approved September 25, 2024), following the Mayoral Directive to Staff (MDI-2024-02).
- Approved recommendations established 272 new temporary emergency shelter beds including the 80-bed Temporary Barton Tiffany Shelter (250 Hess Street North) and 192 additional emergency shelter beds across multiple locations.
- The Temporary Barton Tiffany Shelter (TBTS) is now fully operational, providing safe, low-barrier shelter spaces, with coordinated intakes prioritizing unhoused residents from encampments, including couples and those with pets.
- All 192 temporary emergency shelter beds are fully operational, expanding Hamilton's emergency shelter system to better meet the needs of unhoused residents and respond to encampments.
- The full implementation of the temporary shelter expansion has coincided with a measurable reduction in encampments, as the City continues to take a coordinated, compassionate approach that prioritizes supporting encampment residents in safely transitioning into newly created shelter spaces.

Financial Considerations

N/A

Background

On August 6, 2024, a Mayoral Directive to Staff (MDI-2024-02) was issued to identify options for procuring and implementing temporary shelter structures in Hamilton, covering cost assessments, funding sources, vendor selection, and site feasibility.

Work in response to the Mayoral Directive informed the development of the recommendations approved by Council on September 25, 2024, through Report HSC24027(b) / FCS24028 / PED24162 - Reducing Homelessness and Managing Encampments, to temporarily expand emergency shelter capacity, including:

- creating 192 additional temporary emergency shelter beds across multiple providers to address immediate shelter system pressures;
- establishing a Temporary Outdoor Shelter at Barton/Tiffany, prioritizing residents in encampments, including couples and those with pets, with an operator in place to oversee site management and resident supports; and,
- ensuring appropriate site mitigation measures to protect shelter residents from any potential contamination present at the Barton/Tiffany site.

Analysis

Since Council approval, significant coordination has occurred across multiple City departments and community partners to implement critical expansions to Hamilton's emergency shelter system. These initiatives have successfully added 272 new temporary shelter beds, representing an 80% increase in Hamilton's shelter capacity since September 25, 2024. This substantial increase has coincided with a measurable reduction in encampments, as the City continues its compassionate and coordinated approach, prioritizing residents experiencing unsheltered homelessness for intake and direct placement into these newly created shelter spaces. Staff will continue to monitor trends in shelter occupancy, encampment activity, and service needs to assess the effectiveness of these interventions, ensure ongoing support for residents, and identify opportunities for further service improvements.

The establishment of the Temporary Barton Tiffany Shelter (TBTS) aligns with the City's broader commitment to a compassionate and housing-focused response to homelessness, as outlined in the City's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and Housing Sustainability & Investment Roadmap. Extensive planning, site assessments, and cross-departmental collaboration enabled the safe and supportive opening of TBTS, providing low-barrier accommodations prioritized specifically for encampment residents, including couples and those with pets. Good Shepherd, as the site operator, manages daily operations and coordinates critical services - such as mental health and addiction supports - assisting residents in accessing immediate resources while working towards successful transitions into stable, permanent housing.

The simultaneous creation of 192 temporary emergency shelter beds across multiple community providers has also significantly expanded the City's immediate emergency response capacity. This expansion has directly alleviated pressures on existing services, creating safer pathways for unsheltered residents to transition out of encampments and into stable shelter environments. Housing Services staff continue to collaborate closely with shelter operators and community partners to ensure ongoing support, effective referral processes, program monitoring and evaluation, and connections to permanent housing resources.

While these expansions address urgent shelter needs, they are intentionally temporary measures within Hamilton's broader housing strategy, which emphasizes sustainable solutions across the housing continuum. Staff continue to advocate for coordinated investment from senior government partners to address Hamilton's critical housing needs, including permanent supportive housing, affordable housing, and expanded mental health and addiction services, reinforcing a comprehensive local response to homelessness.

Opening of the Temporary Barton Tiffany Shelter (TBTS)

The TBTS is now fully operational, marking a major milestone in the City's approach to providing low-barrier shelter spaces for unhoused residents. Since Council approval, extensive work has gone into the planning, construction, and operational setup of the site. This effort required cross-departmental coordination and collaboration, along with external support from planning and construction partners to lead key aspects of site activation, including:

- contracting of external environmental experts to assess the site and provide recommendations for on-site mitigation related to site contamination;
- site preparation, including levelling, erosion and sediment control, and grading, in order to facilitate the installation of mitigation measures;
- completion of site servicing and infrastructure improvements, including fencing, electrical and waterline installations, and the development of additional on-site amenities;
- coordination of shelter unit delivery, with unit testing on arrival to confirm health and safety standards prior to occupancy;
- installation of 40 shelter structures (80-beds), a community building, and shared washroom, shower, and laundry facilities; onboarding of Good Shepherd as the site operator, ensuring 24/7 staffing and support services for residents, as well as site management and maintenance;
- development of an operational service plan integrating safety, security, and critical support services, including mental health and addiction recovery programs, delivered on-site or through community partnerships;
- creation of a referral pathway and prioritization criteria to support residents transitioning from encampments to TBTS; and,
- implementation of a phased move-in approach to prioritize safety, service coordination, and resident support.

As the site is now operational, a priority remains to engage in ongoing coordination and collaboration between Healthy and Safe Communities, Public Works, and Planning and

Economic Development Departments, as well as Good Shepherd, Hamilton Police Services and other community partners to address both site-specific needs and broader community impacts, ensuring a safe, supportive, and well-integrated response through the TBTS.

A key focus of this initiative has been to address gaps in Hamilton's shelter system, particularly for individuals who do not access traditional shelter spaces due to various restrictions or barriers. By prioritizing a housing-focused approach, TBTS is providing case management, mental health support, and pathways to permanent housing, reinforcing the City's commitment to long-term housing solutions.

192 Temporary Emergency Shelter Bed Expansion

In addition to the TBTS, the City has successfully expanded its emergency shelter system by 192 additional beds, significantly increasing capacity across multiple shelter providers. These new temporary beds were distributed across a range of existing agencies/facilities to maximize service reach, including:

- 45 women's spaces offered through Interval House, YWCA, Mission Services, and Good Shepherd,
- 82 men's spaces offered by Good Shepherd, Salvation Army, and Mission Services,
- 20 mixed adult spaces provided by Wesley; and,
- 45 asylum beds expanding the Wesley asylum seekers temporary housing program (which accepts referrals exclusively from encampments and shelter facilities) creating 45 spaces within existing emergency shelters for those residents requiring higher level of supports.

Since Council approval, significant work has gone into finalizing agreements with shelter providers, ensuring proper referral pathways, and integrating data and reporting mechanisms to track shelter use and outcomes. The emergency shelter providers and their staff mobilized rapidly through this process to bring these new temporary beds online, ensuring that these additional supports were available through the winter months.

The full onboarding process was completed in January 2025, and all 192 beds are now fully operational. Staff continue to work closely with shelter operators and community partners to ensure individuals have access to emergency shelter and the necessary supports to transition into permanent housing.

Referral and Transition Process from Encampment to Shelter

The City of Hamilton remains committed to providing compassionate support for residents experiencing unsheltered homelessness, while maintaining public spaces that are safe and accessible for everyone. The Coordinated Encampment Response Team - comprising Housing Services and Street Outreach, Municipal Law Enforcement, Public Works, and Hamilton Police Services' Social Navigator Program - works collaboratively to help individuals transition from encampments to safer and more stable shelter options.

Staff prioritize a compassionate, voluntary approach, assessing individual health, social, and housing needs, and developing personalized plans that facilitate direct transitions from encampments into newly available shelter spaces. Assistance provided includes transportation, managing personal belongings, and connecting residents with ongoing services to support the eventual transition to permanent housing.

Next Steps

With the 80-bed TBTS and the 192-bed temporary emergency shelter expansion now fully implemented, staff will continue to assess the effectiveness and community impact of these investments. As a first step, City staff will bring forward a report to Council in Q2 2025 reviewing the procurement process, overall budget, and key learnings from the TBTS implementation. Given the expedited timeline and the City's first-time execution of a project of this nature, the review will highlight lessons learned and opportunities for improvement to guide future initiatives.

While the expansion of Hamilton's emergency shelter system has been essential in providing immediate support for unhoused residents, these interventions remain temporary. Housing Services staff continue to gather capital and operating cost data to support a financially sustainable, evidence-based approach to permanent shelter system expansion, with findings to be reported back to Council in Q2 2025.

Recognizing the significant scale of Hamilton's needs related to housing and homelessness, Housing Services, in collaboration with the Government Relations and Strategy team and Housing Secretariat, will continue to advocate for coordinated planning, collective impact, and sustainable funding partnerships across all levels of government. Housing Services remains committed to enhancing the flexibility of the emergency shelter system while prioritizing prevention, diversion, and permanent housing placement supports as foundational elements of the City's comprehensive response to homelessness.

Alternatives

N/A

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Priority 2: Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods

- Outcome 1: Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness

Previous Reports Submitted

- [Reducing Homelessness and Managing Encampments \(HSC24027\(b\) / FCS24028 / PED24162\)](#), September 18, 2024, General Issues Committee.

Consultation

- Public Works Department, Environmental Services Division

Appendices and Schedules Attached

N/A

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