



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	July 1, 2022
SUBJECT:	Encampment Coordination Team Update - June 2022 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Angela Burden General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

Background:

On March 31, 2022, City Council approved:

- (a) That an Encampment Coordination Team be created as a pilot to the end of 2022 with an estimated cost of \$305,000, funded first from COVID-19 Government Funds (eligible costs), then COVID-19 Reserve (eligible costs), then departmental budgets surplus and finally by the Tax Stabilization Reserve; and,
- (b) That all reporting from staff related to encampment coordination and response in Hamilton be brought forward to the General Issues Committee for discussion and decisions.

This is the third monthly update for the dedicated Encampment Coordination Team which began on April 11, 2022.

Information:

The coordinated, cross-department and multi-stakeholder response to encampments continues to prove effective in achieving compliance with the Parks By-law, continuing to address potential health and safety risks, as well as facilitating person-centred engagement opportunities and individualized connections to community-based supports, including housing/shelter options. Also, having dedicated Municipal Law

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.

Enforcement Officers (MLEO) is proving effective in achieving early voluntary compliance as Officers have developed relationships with unsheltered individuals in our community, can engage in positive interactions and better understand the impacts of homelessness on mental and physical well-being.

During the month of June 2022, 175 actioned items were received; 7 of which were duplicate calls. Staff investigated 112 encampment sites on City and private property. For the 112 investigations the following results were achieved:

- At 83 encampments voluntary compliance was achieved (67 City/16 private);
- 29 complaints were unfounded (20 City and 9 private) (not encampment sites, but garbage and debris, partying locations, etc.);
- It was necessary to issue Notices of Trespass at 6 encampment sites on City property and voluntary compliance was achieved without any further intervention; and,
- Parks staff provided cleanup and maintenance at 47 sites in City Parks.
- Approximately 30 unique individuals that we are aware of currently remain unsheltered and regularly living in encampments throughout the City.
- 39 unique individuals (both in encampments and otherwise) engaged with Outreach for supports/referrals (examples include: referrals to shelters &/or other community supports, housing searches, open bank accounts, obtain ID, etc.).
- 11 unique individuals were assisted by Outreach through Housing Services Ontario Works Case Managers in obtaining or stabilizing their Social Assistance.

In an effort to put the health and safety of people first, Encampment MLEO's attended a training session by Public Health Services, Harm Reduction staff on opioid poisoning and response with the use of a naloxone kit. These Encampment MLEO's now carry naloxone kits to be able to administer to individuals in the event of an overdose and a life-threatening situation. Also, it should be noted that Encampment MLEO's sought medical attention for several people living in encampments where it was deemed to be urgently required.

While compliance with the Parks By-Law in terms of "encampments" is readily achieved, there are on-going concerns and public complaints about behaviour and illegal activities (e.g. alcohol and drug consumption) on City property in view of the public, as well as persistent garbage and debris. As reported in an earlier update, while not within the formal mandate of the Encampment pilot, staff are spending inordinate amounts of time dealing with on-going challenges in a few downtown locations near external outreach services where people congregate. Dealing with these locations is a continuous, ongoing challenge for staff from various divisions across the City (i.e. Municipal Law Enforcement, Outreach Services, Parks, Facilities, etc.) Entering these City Parks/properties to enforce the By-law or clean up garbage and debris presents a safety risk for staff. Staff continue to meet to discuss remedies, however on-going efforts to

resolve encampments and continuous park clean ups in these locations are proving not to be successful.

There are several encampments in 'hard to reach' locations which also pose a challenge for the Encampment Response Team when located in areas such as the escarpment or in deep ravines, where weather conditions also play a factor in response timelines to ensure staff's safety. Despite these challenges, the response timelines as directed by Council have consistently been met to date.

MLEO's continue to engage with property owners who are dealing with encampments on private property. Meetings are currently planned with CN Rail to discuss the numerous complaints and concerns the city receives regarding garbage and debris left on their property as a result of an encampment site. While it is the responsibility of a private property owner to clean and maintain their property, Encampment Response staff continue to provide support in an attempt to achieve voluntary compliance of encampment individuals who are trespassing. If voluntary compliance is not obtained the property owner can provide Hamilton Police Service, the authority to enforce the *Trespass to Property Act* if required. Staff will continue to report on results when dealing with large private property stakeholders.

Unsheltered individuals who engage with MLE Officers during encampment inspections and are in violation of the Parks By-law are asked to dismantle the site within 12-72 hours or sooner depending on the situation. These individuals are increasingly moving to areas of the City where their presence is more discrete which creates challenges for Housing-focused Outreach staff, whose mandate is to locate individuals and connect them with services and other resources in the community they may require. Not maintaining ongoing interaction can result in a detrimental effect on the mental and physical well-being of unsheltered individuals in the community, so we are monitoring this closely.

At this point in time many unsheltered individuals are declining referrals into emergency shelter, despite space consistently being available. Some formerly unsheltered individuals who do access emergency shelter may stay, while others may move between encampments, shelter and other community institutions. Potential reasons for this may include lack of accommodation for couples and pets within the emergency shelter system, and additionally, a more institutional environment in the community may not always be suitable, or of interest to unsheltered individuals due to previous trauma, substance use, and/or complex mental health challenges.

Affordability of housing as well as adequate and sufficient wraparound supports remains the most significant barriers to housing those who remain unsheltered and living in encampments. Despite ongoing interactions with Outreach staff, some unsheltered

**SUBJECT: Encampment Coordination Team Update - June 2022 (City Wide) -
Page 4 of 4**

individuals, especially those with high acuity, are finding it hard to access housing options due to the lack of mental health and healthcare services required to support successful tenancies.

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