




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

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| TO: | Mayor and Members City Council |
| DATE: | July 10, 2024 |
| SUBJECT: | Encampment Response Update – June 2024 (City Wide) |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | City Wide |
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| SUBMITTED BY: | Al Fletcher, Alr.Fletcher@hamilton.ca Acting Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department |
| SIGNATURE: |  |

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 June 26, 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.

INFORMATION

Program Trends:

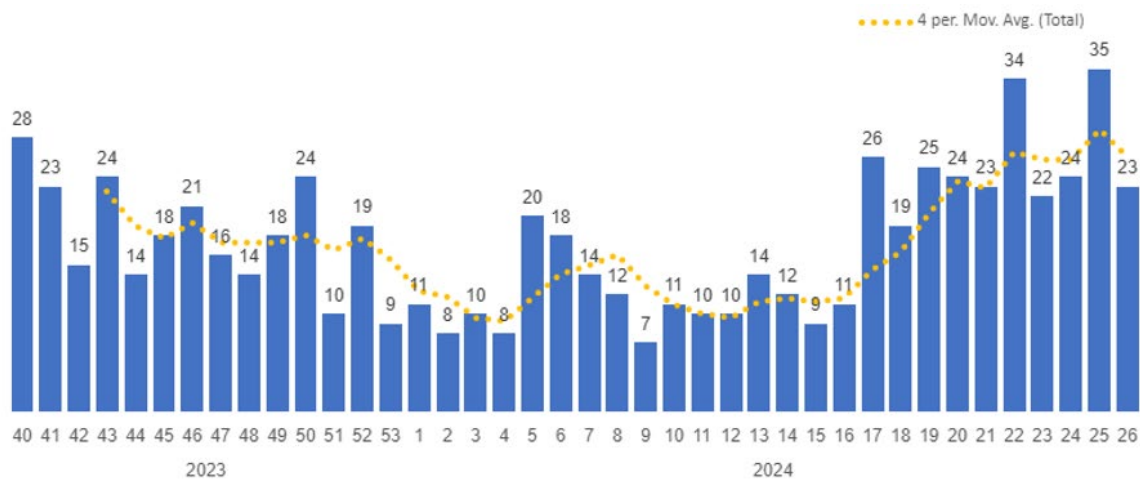
OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.
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Identification of New and Existing Sites with Compliance Concerns

New encampments continue to be identified throughout the City by several different sources, including concerned citizens, businesses and business improvement areas, and internal staff from other City departments. In addition, existing encampments have also come in and out of compliance, resulting in initial compliance checks from Housing Focused Street Outreach.

In June 2024, there was a modest decline in the number of new and existing sites flagged for potential compliance issues, following the sharpest increase noted in April 2024. Specifically, 104 sites were identified by Housing Focused Street Outreach in June 2024, which represents a decrease from 114 in May 2024. Nevertheless, this figure remains higher than the average of 70 sites per month recorded to date.

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



Compliance issues remain apparent, as individuals continue to favour outdoor living during warmer temperatures. There are growing compliance challenges in Wards 2 and 3, with the highest demand for compliant sites available in lower City wards that are in close proximity to essential services and support networks.

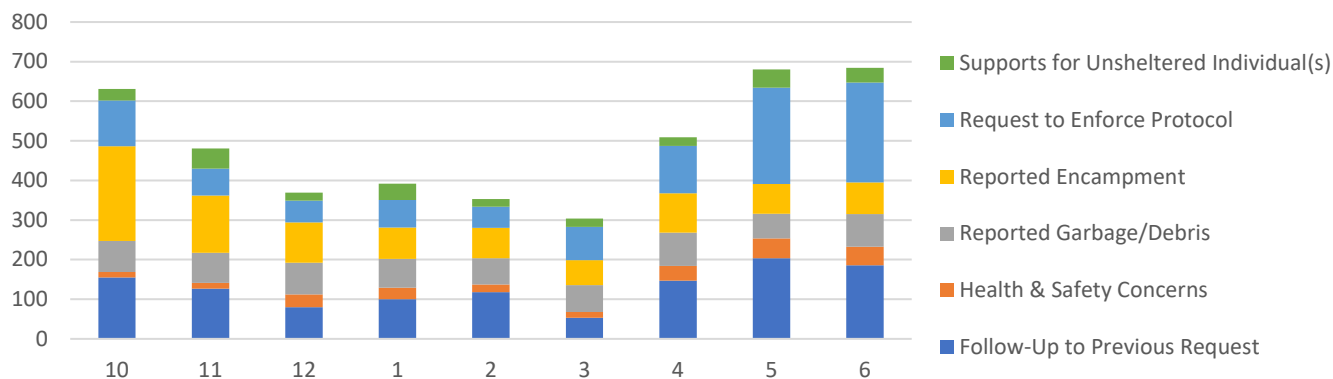
Compliance Trends

In June 2024, a total of 105 potential 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 38 (36%) locations and 6 newly identified sites were deemed compliant on the first visit (6%). In total, 48 sites (45 on public property, 3 on private property) were escalated to the Municipal Law

Enforcement, resulting in 50 trespass notices being served to individuals on public property who were in contravention of the Protocol. The three most common reasons for escalation were proximity to private property (12%), on private property (10%), and having more than five tents on a site (10%).

Complaint and Service Request Trends

Figure 2: Complaint and Service Request Trends, Monthly



Increase in Follow-Up Correspondence

Since a low of 328 complaints and/or requests for service in March 2023, the total has steadily increased to 774 in June 2024. One contributing factor to this upward trend is the enhanced capacity from newly added staff who can promptly address citizen concerns. The number of follow-up actions in June 2024 decreased to 182, down from a peak of 204 in May 2024.

Increase in Requests to Enforce

There has also been a significant increase in the number of requests to enforce the Encampment Protocol at a particular site, or across the City. Previously, the public was reporting encampments instead of requesting enforcement, but recently there has been a shift away from more neutral reporting towards an immediate request to enforce. This is likely a result of a greater comprehension of the Protocol, as well as growing frustration amongst housed neighbours of specific sites.

In June 2024, Housing Focused Street Outreach observed an increase in requests received through the unsheltered inbox specifically regarding the number of encampments and requests for enforcement. The total number of requests increased to

332 from 318 in May 2024, which falls above the average to-date of 246. Some factors that could be contributing to this notable increase in requests received for encampment enforcement could include increased public traffic due to warmer temperatures and increased community awareness on the Encampment Protocol.

Outreach Update:

In April 2024, Housing Focused Street Outreach introduced a new methodology to categorizing and tracking interaction outcomes with individuals living unsheltered, in lieu of the availability of HIFIS. The new approach allowed Outreach staff to streamline data entry and supports more efficient tracking of multiple outcomes that may occur within a single interaction (i.e., Outreach staff may build rapport, help someone to acquire income supports, and present an available shelter space all in one conversation). As a result of a new approach and additional staffing, the totals increased in April 2024 than they were in previous months and the results continued to increase in June 2024.

In June 2024, staff identified 2353 interaction outcomes with individuals living unsheltered. The interactions were disaggregated into the following categories:

Figure 3: HFSO Interaction Outcome Results: June 2024

| Interaction Outcome Category | June 2024 | Total (%) |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Rapport Building & Engagement | 1137 | 48% |
| Protocol Awareness & Education | 196 | 8% |
| Housing Supports & Referrals | 179 | 8% |
| Financial aid & income support referrals | 189 | 8% |
| Physical health-related support referral | 61 | 3% |
| Mental health-related support referral | 22 | 1% |
| Harm reduction-related support referral | 138 | 6% |
| Indigenous-specific supports | 34 | 1% |
| Pet-related supports and referrals | 106 | 5% |
| Other supports | 87 | 4% |
| Shower / washroom program referral | 29 | 1% |
| Shelter referral - Successful | 1 | 0% |

| Interaction Outcome Category | June 2024 | Total (%) |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Shelter referral – Declined | 22 | 1% |
| Shelter referral – Other | 13 | 0% |
| Drop-in referral made | 139 | 6% |
| Winter service referral | 0 | 0% |
| Total non-unique outcomes | 2353 | 100% |
| Provision of goods | 1105 | N/A |

Housing Focused Street Outreach staff also introduced a new process to track the provision of goods to individuals living unsheltered, in lieu of HIFIS, which includes items like bottled water, snacks, harm reduction supplies, footwear and clothing, and sunscreen.

Enforcement Update

In June 2024, Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team (EET) experienced 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 and the associated time the Encampment Engagement Team spent on responding to encampment related concerns in June 2024.

Figure 4: Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team Response to Encampment Related Concerns, June 2024

| EET Response to Encampment Related Concerns | June 2024 |
|---|-----------------------|
| Number of times EET attended parks (with MLE or conducted re-checks or conducted site visits) | 84 |
| Total time spent issuing Notices with MLE | 281 Minutes (4.6 hrs) |
| Total number of Notices issued by MLE | 51 |
| Total time spent enforcing Notices | 37.25 Hours |
| Total time spent assisting other agencies or enforcing private property | 3.5 Hours |

As detailed in the May 2024 Encampment Response Update to Council, Hamilton Police Services Encampment Engagement Team is implementing a tiered approach to respond to enforcement requests, focusing on prioritizing responses.

With increasing demand to address compliance concerns, it is anticipated that this prioritization framework may result in a backlog at current service levels.

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. 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 and forward the site to Municipal Law Enforcement, if required.

With the recent addition of Outreach and administrative staff dedicated to identifying and escalating new sites internally within Housing Focused Street Outreach, the service achieved its target in June 2024 93% of the time. This surpasses both the 2023 average of 75% and the year-to-date average for 2024 of 91%. Since the Protocol was established in August 2023, Housing Focused Street Outreach has successfully completed its engagement process within seven days of identifying a site in 97% of cases.

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 June, Municipal Law Enforcement met its service level at 32/45 (71%) sites escalated by Housing Focused Street Outreach. Delays in meeting service level requirements are due to a number of factors including impacted resources as a result of the Cyber Security incident, a significant increase in the number of sites escalated overall and, lengthy enforcement operations at other noncompliant sites.

Additional Updates

Canada Day Event at Bayfront Park

A collaboration between the Housing Focused Street Outreach Team and the Tourism team exemplified effective inter-departmental teamwork in Hamilton. Working together, they ensured the success of the Canada Day event at Bayfront Park by addressing a critical issue swiftly and compassionately. Two individuals, located in a compliant area of the park under the Encampment Protocol, were identified as being in an unsafe zone that posed a risk to the fireworks display. Through coordinated efforts, the teams facilitated the relocation of these individuals to a safer location, thereby enabling the fireworks to proceed as planned. This proactive and collaborative approach not only upheld safety protocols but also ensured that Hamiltonians could come together to celebrate Canada Day safely and securely as a community.

Access to Washrooms and Showers Update

The City of Hamilton continues to make two recreational centres available for individuals experiencing homelessness to use for shower and maintain their hygiene. To date, the centres have received modest uptake, collectively averaging 25 users per week in June 2024. This is above the to-date average of 14, and likely reflects greater knowledge of the program amongst the unsheltered community.

Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters Update

There are no updates available regarding Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters at this time.

Encampment Liaison Committee (ELC) Update

The second meeting of the Encampment Liaison Committee occurred on Thursday June 4, 2024, after the inaugural meeting was held in January 2024. The meeting was originally scheduled for March 2024, but was re-scheduled due to the cybersecurity attack. This will be a standing meeting that will occur on the second Tuesday of every month.

Partners from key frontline agencies and organizations, including Indigenous partners, as well as people with lived/living experience have been invited to discuss peer supports and other gaps and program improvements. Discussions were focused around attaining more participation from individuals with lived experience and the recruitment of three Peer Support Workers to support the Housing Focused Street Outreach team.

Additional Trends and Data:

Total Unique Individuals Living in Encampments

In June 2024, Housing Focused Street Outreach engaged with approximately 271 individuals, marking an increase from May's total of 219 and surpassing the 2023 average of around 204 individuals experiencing homelessness.

Several factors likely contributed to this rise, including expanded outreach staffing, improved data collection practices, warmer weather conditions, and a preference among some individuals for compliant outdoor spaces over shelter or less suitable temporary accommodations. Predicting when these numbers might stabilize is uncertain, though it is anticipated to occur later in the summer as conditions evolve.

Cleaning and Maintenance

In June 2024, Parks Section staff cleaned and maintained 208 sites, the highest monthly total in the past year, and significantly higher than the previous high of 191 the previous month. With more movement across the City into newly identified sites, in conjunction with several existing compliant areas, the demand for cleaning and maintenance at sites has never been higher. To address the demand, Parks Section staff are conducting regular pickups at all known compliant sites and working with individuals living at the site to determine a location to leave their garbage and debris. Parks Section staff have also attained a contractor to help with responding to the increased need of maintenance at sites. Of the 208 sites that were responded to, Parks Section staff responded to and maintained 124 sites in June 2024, while the newly attained contractor maintained 84 sites in June 2024.

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.

| Indicator | Category of Measurement | June 2024 | Prev. Month | 2023 Avg. | June 2023 |
|--|--|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| 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 | 774 | 737 | 545 | N/A |

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| Indicator | Category of Measurement | June 2024 | Prev. Month | 2023 Avg. | June 2023 |
|---|---|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| 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 | N/A | N/A | 47 | N/A |
| 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 | 271 | 219 | 114 | N/A |
| 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 | 2237 | 2107 | N/A | 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 | 1105 | 915 | N/A | N/A |

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| Indicator | Category of Measurement | June 2024 | Prev. Month | 2023 Avg. | June 2023 |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on public property | Volume of Escalated complaints | 45 | 57 | 20 | N/A |
| Escalated items actioned to Municipal Law Enforcement from HFSO (i.e., MLEOs were involved in response) on private property | Volume of Escalated complaints | 3 | 3 | 9 | N/A |
| Total number of Trespass Notices issued on public property | Response type to escalated complaint | 50 | 80 | 64 | N/A |
| Number of instances where compliance was achieved immediately on public property, without issuing of Voluntary Compliance Notice | Response type to escalated complaint | 0 | 4 | 4 | N/A |
| Number of encampment sites cleaned and/or maintained by Parks Section staff or a designated contractor | Park cleaning and maintenance | 208 | 191 | 97 | N/A |

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.