




# COMMUNICATION UPDATE

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members City Council
<b>DATE:</b>	April 9, 2025
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Parks Summer Program - Service Levels and Operations Schedule (ES2503) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Cynthia Graham Director, Environmental Services Public Works Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

This Communication Update is being provided for the Mayor and members of City Council to highlight the annual Council-approved service levels in the City of Hamilton's (City) parks, performed by the Parks Section of the Environmental Services Division.

## Park Waste Collection Services

To help promote cleanliness and reduce litter across Hamilton's parks, waste receptacles are strategically distributed throughout the park system. These receptacles play a key role in encouraging responsible disposal of waste and maintaining an inviting environment for park visitors year-round.

The services operate on a seasonal cycle. During the summer months (May through October), receptacle coverage is expanded to meet the increased demand brought on by higher park usage. In contrast, the winter season (November through April) sees a scaled-back approach. At this time, receptacles that are difficult to access due to snow or limited maintenance are temporarily removed and reinstated once conditions improve in the spring. Approximately 670 receptacles are adjusted in this way annually.

In total, the City maintains 2,017 waste receptacles during the summer, and 1,347 during the winter in park and open space locations. The number and location of receptacles may shift throughout the year in response to emerging needs, such as community events, seasonal programs, or in areas impacted by illegal dumping or

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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.

vandalism. This flexible approach allows staff to adapt to changing demands while upholding city cleanliness standards and supporting public use of green spaces.

### **Ground Litter Removal**

Before mowing and trimming takes place, Parks staff carry out ground litter removal across all municipal parks. This essential task ensures that debris, refuse, and other loose materials are cleared from turf areas, pathways, and general park spaces.

The bulk of this work is performed by seasonal summer students who are hired specifically to support the parks maintenance program. However, their efforts are significantly bolstered by the participation of dedicated community volunteers, who regularly assist in keeping parks clean and welcoming. This partnership between the City staff and the community helps enhance service delivery and fosters a shared sense of responsibility for Hamilton's public spaces.

### **Spring Clean-Up**

Before mowing begins in late April/ early May, staff conduct a large-scale spring clean-up of general parkland, and when time permits, woodlots and naturalized areas. This includes collecting and removing litter, debris, and repair of winter damage. The clean-up typically lasts about four weeks and may vary based on site size, staffing, and weather. Most summer students that handle this work begin in May.

### **Turf Management Program**

Routine mowing and trimming are fundamental to maintaining healthy turf and are integral to our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices. With pesticide use restricted in parks, staff focus on healthy grass growth as a natural weed management method. In 2025, staff will continue to manage various parks City wide to maintain safe and attractive turf for public enjoyment.

This program also includes monitoring turf health, strategically applying fertilizer, top dressing, aeration, and grass seed for our sports fields providing an efficient and cost-effective utilization of staff and equipment to provide a top tier athletic surface.

Mowing schedules follow a tiered structure depending on field or park type:

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<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Mowing/Trimming Frequency Maintenance Standards</b>	<b>Anticipated Number of Cycles *</b>
Late April/May - October Only		
Class A and B Sports fields	1 time / 5 working days	21 or 22 cycles
Class C and D Sports fields	1 time / 7 working days	17 or 18 cycles
Citywide, Community, Neighbourhood general parklands	1 time / 7 working days	17 or 18 cycles
Parkette	1 time / 7 working days	17 or 18 cycles

\* Cycles completed per year are weather dependent and can be influenced by equipment and vehicle breakdowns

Parks staff will commence cutting once the fields and parks are dry enough to support heavy equipment without causing damage to the turf. Damage by machinery tires will severely impact the quality of sports fields for the entire season. Prior to the full commencement of the grass cutting program, full-time and seasonal staff will be utilized by completing infrastructure and asset inspections, litter and illegal dumping control, spring clean-up (which includes leaf and debris removal and small-scale pruning and trimming), storm clean-up, over-seeding, and fertilizing.

Mowing and trimming activities are performed by Parks maintenance staff and equipment/resources are shared across district boundaries where necessary to respond to issues such as equipment breakdowns or park event programming in order to maintain consistent program service levels. Please be aware all parks are being cut in a specified order to maximize efficiency based on geography and daily workload. Dandelion growth in the coming month may impact on the visual aesthetics of the park, but for overall efficiency and equity for all customers, service delivery schedules require strict adherence.

### **Naturalized Areas and Biodiversity**

The City of Hamilton is home to an extensive network of natural open spaces that showcase important natural heritage features, ecological corridors, and diverse habitats. Many municipal parks either contain designated naturalized areas or border existing natural landscapes, requiring thoughtful integration and the use of natural buffers to protect and enhance these sensitive environments.

Maintenance within these areas is purposefully limited and carefully managed to promote the growth of native vegetation, allowing ecosystems to function in a self-sustaining and resilient manner. By reducing human interference these natural zones are given the opportunity to regenerate, support pollinators, improve soil health, and

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foster wildlife habitats. This approach aligns with the City's commitment to preserving and enhancing local biodiversity while contributing to broader climate resilience goals.

Where appropriate, or as part of dedicated naturalization projects, educational signage may be installed to help residents understand the ecological value of these areas and the intentional nature of their appearance. What may seem like unmanaged growth is, in fact, a vital part of a long-term strategy to support Hamilton's biodiversity and natural ecosystem health.

By balancing active park use with ecological stewardship, the City continues to promote sustainable land management practices that benefit both the environment and the community.

**Possible Service Level Reductions**

Every season brings unpredictable weather and equipment breakdowns, and throughout the summer it may be necessary to implement some reduction in service. If this is required, aesthetic work will be reduced, including grass trimming around fence lines and other objects. This change will likely generate concerns from the public but has no lasting negative impact on parks properties or program delivery. It can also be corrected quickly later in the season when mowing pressure is reduced when grass growth rates slow down.

Should you require further information, please contact Rory Doucette, Manager, Parks at extension 7358, or [rory.doucette@hamilton.ca](mailto:rory.doucette@hamilton.ca).

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

N/A