Communication Update

To:	Mayor and Members of City Council
Date:	November 27, 2026
Subject/Report No.:	Winter Response 2026/27
Ward(s) Affected:	All
Submitted By:	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities
Signature:	

Summary

To provide Council with information on the emergency and winter response plan for the 2026-2027 season.

Background

In response to the growing homelessness crisis, the City of Hamilton increased emergency shelter system capacity by 80%, adding 272 beds to the system between 2024 and 2025. The shelter expansion was intended to address the seasonal gap that is typically bridged by winter response measures, as shelter services deliver stronger wrap-around supports for vulnerable individuals. The original intent was to phase-out seasonal service delivery as the City's expanded its shelter capacity. However, despite expanded shelter capacity, community need continued to outpace growth. This required the delivery of seasonal emergency supports beyond the expanded shelter system last winter. As need continues to outpace growth across our system today, seasonal emergency services are still required and will be made available during the 2026-27 season.

Details

Emergency winter response programs remain an important part of Hamilton's homelessness-serving system as the need for services continues to outpace system-growth in our community.

- Despite expanding emergency shelter system capacity in 2024 in an effort to provide more services year-round and reduce the need for winter response services, dedicated seasonal programs continue to remain a key part of Hamilton's homelessness-serving system.

- For the 2026-27 season, three providers have been contracted to provide winter response services across different locations. Provider agreements are currently underway with Carol Anne's Place and Willow's Place Agreements advancing as anticipated and according to timeline.
- **NEW** A warming center for men and couples, operated by St. Matthew's House, will be located at 200 Main St. E. Contract is being finalized.
- All locations and services are expected to be in operation as of December 1, 2026.

YWCA Carol Anne's Place – 75 McNab St S

YWCA CAP, located at 75 MacNab Street South, will provide 10 warming spaces in addition to the existing 25 permanent spaces. CAP will also provide 5 additional warming spaces cold weather alerts. The program will operate nightly from 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. throughout the winter months.

Mission Services Willow's Place – 196 Wentworth St. N

Mission Services Willow's Place, located at 196 Wentworth Street North, will provide 45 overnight warming spaces. In addition to the regular hours of Willow's Place (9 a.m. – 9 p.m., seven days per week), the Warming Centre will operate, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during the winter months.

St. Matthew's House 24/7 Warming Centre – 200 Main St E

The St. Matthew's House 24/7 Winter Warming Centre at 200 Main St E will provide 24/7 support for up to 50 men and couples, and will also include a hospital discharge program, funded by Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS), and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton (SJHH) and supported by the Greater Hamilton Health Network (GHHN), for an up to an additional 50 individuals from 5:00 pm to 8:00 am daily.

All winter response services intend to be operational by December 1, 2026, and will offer services until March 31, 2027. In summary, Warming Centre spaces will include:

- 80 spaces for single women and gender diverse individuals with an additional 5 spaces made available during a cold weather alert.
- Up to 100 spaces for single men, gender diverse individuals and couples

Next Steps

- Finalize contracts for all providers.
- Monitor and evaluate Winter Response programs as they are delivered.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

N/A