



# Investigating Hamilton's COVID-19 Shelter Hotel Program

Prepared for

Hamilton Encampment Support Network

In

May 2023

By

Krishian Camargo Noor Al Omran Nora Mossman Tierney Pomfret Jennifer Zhang Evan Gravely

# Contents

Executive Summary	2	
Introduction	3	
Methods	4	
Hamilton City Council Committee Meetings	4	
Google Searches	5	
Community Organization Websites	5	
Contacting Housing Services	5	
Content Analysis	5	
Limitations	6	
Results	6	
Research Question 1 – Data collected on the shelter hotel program	6	
Research Question 2 - Contracted shelter hotels and their operations	7	
Research Question 3 – Shelter hotel transition plans	11	
Discussion	12	
Conclusion	14	
Appendix A: Search Strategy	15	
Appendix B: Timeline of Shelter Hotel Program		
References	18	

## **Executive Summary**

The City of Hamilton's shelter and housing policy changed significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City modified existing congregate shelters in accordance with public health guidelines and funded hotel rooms for use as overflow shelter spaces. We conducted this research in partnership with the Hamilton Encampment Support Network (HESN) to investigate what data was collected about the shelter hotel program, how the shelter hotels operated, and how the program is planned to end. The purpose was to better understand the program's scale and effectiveness and support municipal strategies to help unhoused people.

We looked for publicly available information about the shelter hotel program through Hamilton City Council's meetings, Google searches, and websites of community organizations involved in the program. We also contacted Hamilton's Housing Services Division for more information. We found information on many aspects of the shelter hotel program, including shelter occupancy; capacity; the number of beds allocated to men, women, couples, and families; and length of stay. We did not find information about the number of clients who were housed or transitioned to another shelter or supportive housing program. Due to these information gaps, it was difficult to discern the scale and operational effectiveness of the City's shelter hotel program because information about the program is fragmented across many sources and not all data is publicly available. We also found plans to reduce the City's use of hotel overflow rooms by the end of 2022, but we do not have confirmation that these goals were met.

Overall, we do not have a full understanding of the shelter hotel program due to limitations on publicly available data. We need more comprehensive information to better understand the program's operations, transition plans, and current status.

## Introduction

The Hamilton Encampment Support Network (HESN) is a grassroots organization led by mostly housed community volunteers who aim to support and advocate for the growing community of houseless and unhoused Hamiltonians (*Hamilton Encampment Support Network*, 2021). HESN recognizes that housing is a human right and their work is guided by the principles of de-escalation, harm reduction, and non-interference (*Hamilton Encampment Support Network*, 2021). HESN recognizes that unhoused people are rarely represented in municipal decision-making and that some individuals choose to or must live unsheltered because current services are inadequate. At the same time, unhoused individuals are at risk of being punished with fines for breaking municipal bylaws when they encamp in public parks.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the housing and homelessness crisis in Hamilton and prompted significant changes to the City's shelter and housing policy. In September 2020, the City changed its encampment enforcement protocol so that only unhoused individuals who were deemed unable to access shelter supports were allowed to remain in encampments (van Wagner, 2022). Encampments were pushed to less visible areas and resulted in increased precarity (van Wagner, 2022). The City also created contracts with various hotels across Hamilton to provide additional shelter space for unhoused individuals. During the pandemic, HESN had received testimonials about people leaving hotel shelters due to lack of social distancing and harm reduction support. The testimonials further stated that other people were kicked out of hotel shelters and returned to living in encampments, and that many people who stayed in hotel shelters were not connected with housing supports.

HESN is interested in acquiring more information to understand how hotel shelters are run and how effective they have been at connecting unhoused individuals with permanent housing. HESN partnered with the McMaster Research Shop to conduct a content analysis guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What data is collected on the hotel shelter program, how is it collected, and where is it stored/tracked?
  - Variables of interest: number of people accessing the hotel shelter program; number of people accessing housing supports via the shelter hotel program
- 2. Which hotels did the City of Hamilton enter into shelter contracts with between Mar 1, 2020 and Jan 1, 2023? Of those hotels:
  - b. Which are still operational?
    - i. Of those that closed, when did they close?
  - c. Who, if at all, provides/provided housing support services?

- d. What types of beds are/were available in the hotel (e.g., individual, couple, gender-specific, youth, 2SLGBTQIAA+)? How many of these beds are/were allocated to each category in the hotel?
- e. How many people accessed the shelter hotel between Mar 1, 2020 to Jan 1, 2023?
- f. How long is/was the average stay in the hotel?
- g. How many clients are/were housed or transitioned to another shelter or supportive housing program?
- 3. What are the transition plans, if any, for the shelter hotel program?
  - h. Is the program slated to end? If so, when?
  - i. Will the program be transitioned into a different kind of program (e.g., congregate; small, shared quarters (dormitory style); private rooms; transitional housing)?

This report summarizes the context, methods, and findings of our investigation into the City of Hamilton's shelter hotel program. HESN will use this research, along with the testimonials they have collected, to better understand the scale and effectiveness of the shelter hotel program and to help advocate for better municipal strategies to support unhoused people.

## Methods

## Hamilton City Council Committee Meetings

We accessed publicly available City Council committee meetings through the City of Hamilton's website. We collected information from meeting agendas, minutes, recordings, staff reports, and other attached documents. In consultation with HESN, we chose to review the following committees based on their involvement with the shelter hotel program:

- Emergency and Community Services Committee
  - Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women, Non-Binary and Transgender Community Sub-Committee
- General Issues Committee
- Audit, Finance and Administration Committee

We only reviewed meetings from March 2020 to February 2023 because the shelter hotel program began during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also scanned documents for key terms relating to the hotel shelter program to determine if the meeting was relevant. We chose these key terms in consultation with HESN, and these reflect the varied language used to refer to the shelter hotel program (see Appendix A). We only recorded information that answered at least one of the research questions.

## **Google Searches**

To find information beyond what is provided by City Council committee meetings, we conducted Google searches using key terms and search strings related to our research questions. See Appendix A for a list of keywords and search strings. We conducted these searches using a private browser session to minimize the influence of personalized algorithms on the search results. We filtered the results to only include those published since March 1, 2020. We only recorded information from websites and documents if they answered at least one of the research questions.

## **Community Organization Websites**

We also reviewed the websites of community organizations who were involved in the shelter hotel program, including:

- Good Shepherd
- Mission Services
- YWCA
- YMCA
- Shelter Health Network

We systematically navigated these websites by beginning at their home page and clicking through different web pages. If a search box was available on the website, we searched for key terms such as "COVID-19", "hotel", "overflow", and "emergency". We also conducted Google searches using search operators to maximize results. For example, we used the template ["key term" site:URL of organization] to find relevant results about a key term on a specific website. We only recorded information from these websites if they answered at least one of the research questions.

## **Contacting Housing Services**

We contacted City of Hamilton staff in the Housing Services division to request publicly available information about the shelter hotel program. We were directed to the City of Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Dashboard, which uses data from Open Hamilton.

## **Content Analysis**

We created a data extraction table to record relevant information from online web pages and documents. For each source, we recorded the date it was published/updated, the URL we used to access it, which search method led to the source, and specific information relevant to each research question. We identified a total of 33 sources from our search.

#### Limitations

One limitation of our search strategy was the possibility of missing online sources. Since we only reviewed certain committee meetings, there is a chance that we missed meetings from other committees that were relevant to our research questions. Another potential limitation of our search strategy includes our Google results. Since Google search results differ based on the device and browser, we cannot be certain that we reviewed every relevant resource available. We may have also missed certain Google search strings that would have returned unique results. Additionally, while we created a list of key organizations' websites to review, there is a chance that we missed other websites that were also relevant.

Another major limitation is the short time frame of this project. Since this project only spanned 15 weeks, we did not have much time dedicated to following up with relevant stakeholders. We could have benefitted from speaking to more stakeholders to fill in the gaps on certain topics related to our research questions.

## Results

We created a timeline to document key dates when decisions were made about the shelter hotel program (see Appendix B).

## Research Question 1 – Data collected on the shelter hotel program

We found documents sharing data about the number of people accessing shelter hotels (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a; de Jager et al., 2021; General Issues Committee Meeting 20-015, 2020; General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012, 2021; General Issues Committee Meeting 21-027, 2021), the number of beds/rooms available at shelter hotels (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a; de Jager et al., 2021), and staff redeployments to shelter hotels (Fontana et al., 2021). We found financial data related to the program, such as costs for hotel rooms and services (Mastroianni et al., 2021; Smith, 2020), funding allocated to the program (de Jager et al., 2021; Perry, 2022), and the Housing Services Division's projected debt because of "isolation services, drop-ins, and hotel rooms needed for expanding temporary shelters" (Fleming & Robertson, 2022). City staff made comments about the length of stay in shelters (General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012, 2021), vaccination rates among unhoused people in shelters or temporary housing (General Issues Committee Meeting 21-021, 2021), and instances of domestic violence in a hotel (Emergency & Community Services Committee Meeting 21-013, 2021). Though we did not find data about these variables, we assume that data is collected for City staff to make these comments. We also found a procedure manual with information about record-keeping at hotels (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). Staff recorded client entry and exit, daily bed logs, daily line lists for clients in mandatory self-isolation stays, and inventory of site supplies (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). Notably, we did not find information about the number of people accessing housing supports via the shelter hotel program.

Data is collected upon arrival at shelter hotels. Clients fill out several forms as part of the intake package (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b):

- Pre-Screening Form (Optional)
- Limits to Confidentiality
- Isolation Hotel Intake Form
- Medication Log
- Emergency Summary Sheet
- Homeless-Serving System Common Consent Form (for HIFIS)
- Authorization for the Disclosure of Information Form

Additionally, data was collected during the 2021 Point in Time Connection survey from November 15 to 19, 2021 (Housing Services Division, 2022). One question asked participants where they stayed last night, with city-funded hotel/motel being one option (Housing Services Division, 2022). This provided information about the number of people accessing the shelter hotel program during that period (Housing Services Division, 2022).

The City uses the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to store and track data about its programs, including emergency shelters and hotels (Zelisko et al., 2022). HIFIS is a Homeless Management Information System that coordinates real-time information for multiple service providers in the same geographic area (Homelessness Learning Hub, n.d.). HIFIS connects the shelter hotels with emergency shelters, intensive case management and rapid rehousing providers, YWCA Transitional Living, YWCA Carol Anne's Place, Mission Services Willow's Place, and City of Hamilton Social Housing (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b).

The City's Housing and Homeless Dashboard also shares the monthly number of hotel overflow rooms and their monthly occupancy rates (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a). Graphs are displayed on the dashboard and datasets can be downloaded through Open Hamilton (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a). Information on the dashboard comes from HIFIS and Housing Services' Internal Records (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a).

## Research Question 2 – Contracted shelter hotels and their operations

Shelter hotel locations, opening, and closures

We did not find names of specific hotels when searching the documents submitted at City Council committee meetings. However, we found that initial agreements with three hotels began on July 1, 2020 (Kreps, 2020b). After conducting Google searches, we found a procedure manual from the City stating that "specific locations are not shared with the general public" (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). However, two news articles revealed that the City entered into contracts with the Sandman Hotel (Moro, 2020a) and the Four Points by Sheraton (Moro, 2022).

We did not find documents that comprehensively state which hotels are still operational and when hotels closed. The Sandman Hotel ended its contract with the City during the week of August 22, 2020, due to "ongoing behavioural issues" on the property and in the area (Moro, 2020a). At the time the news article was written, the City was setting up a new agreement with a different hotel with enhanced security (Moro, 2020a). During the week of December 9, 2021, the City decided to pause admission to couples due to "rising instances of domestic violence" (Emergency & Community Services Committee Meeting 21-013, 2021). A news article shared details of a release mentioning that the sanction is "temporary" pending a safety review of intake procedures (Mitchell, 2021). Though the article links to the original release, the page is no longer available. Admissions were suspended at the Four Points by Sheraton in January 2022 due to a COVID-19 outbreak (Moro, 2022). By July 2022, there were plans to reduce shelter hotel capacity: up to 30 families by September 30, 2022 and end overflow rooms for single men and women by December 31, 2022 (Mastroianni, Zelisko, Parlette, et al., 2022; Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022). On November 1, 2022, new admissions to the shelter hotel program ceased (Chase, 2022). As of February 1, 2023, there were still 42 hotel overflow rooms available, but the data does not specify if this is only for families (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a).

#### Community organizations and supports provided at hotels

Community organizations were involved in running the shelter hotels. A procedure manual from the City states that two hotels will have staff onsite, while a third hotel will not (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). Staff teams consist of one City staff and one Agency staff, with Agency staff members taking the lead in directing the work on site (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). Mission Services of Hamilton Inc. managed the site for single men (Kreps, 2020a, 2020b; Mission Services of Hamilton, 2021) and couples (Kreps, 2020a), while Good Shepherd Centre Hamilton managed the site for single women (Kreps, 2020a, 2020b). One news article also states that Mission Services ran an overflow program for women at the Four Points by Sheraton (Moro, 2022). While psychosocial and medical supports are available, the procedure manual does not clearly indicate that housing support services will be provided (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). However, shift duties include coordinating access to supports on behalf of the client and discharge planning, which may involve "attempting to find housing" for clients (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). The manual also states that "when asking a client to leave... staff may reach out to other shelters in search of a vacant bed" (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b).

#### Number of hotel spaces available

Temporary hotel spaces were available for men, women, families, and couples (Mastroianni et al., 2021; Zinkewich, 2021). A procedure manual from the City provides more details about beds allocated at each hotel: Hotel #1 had spaces for single women, lesbian couples with no children, and transgender persons; Hotel #2 had spaces for

men, couples with no children, and transgender persons; and Hotel #3 had spaces for families with children (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). A news article specifies that the Four Points by Sheraton had overflow beds for women and couples (Moro, 2022).

The Housing and Homelessness Dashboard (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a) provides a monthly count of hotel overflow rooms from April 2020 to February 2023 (see Figure 1). Peak capacity was recorded in February 2022 at 261 rooms.

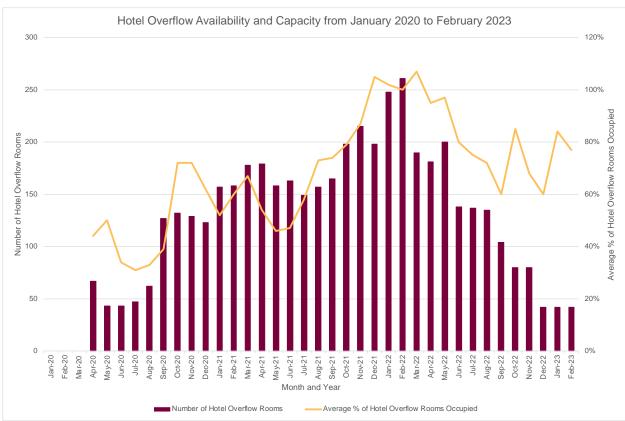


Figure 1: Hotel Overflow Availability and Capacity from January 2020 to February 2023. Data is from the Housing and Homelessness Dashboard (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a). The number of hotel overflow rooms is reported at the end of each month because capacity can change daily. The average percentage of hotel rooms occupied may not reflect the number of people accessing hotel rooms since more than one person can occupy a room.

Other sources provide details about the number of beds/rooms allocated to each category. A report submitted to the City's Emergency & Community Services Committee states that from March 2020 to December 2022, peak capacities were 105 rooms for family hotel overflow, 56 rooms for single women's overflow, and 121 rooms for additional flex capacity hotel overflow (men/couples) (Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022). The Sandman Hotel provided 35 rooms for unhoused men before it ended its contract with the City in August 2020 (Moro, 2020a). Mission Services operated a 100-

bed shelter at a Hamilton hotel for men (Mission Services of Hamilton, 2021). A news article also documents an increase in spaces for women and men during the COVID-19 pandemic (Moro, 2020b). Emergency shelter beds for women increased from 46 to 101 with the addition of hotel rooms, while the men's system increased from 194 to 262 beds with the addition of "surge" spaces (Moro, 2020b).

#### Number of people who accessed shelter hotels

The Housing and Homelessness Dashboard (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a) provides the monthly percent of hotel overflow rooms that were occupied from April 2020 to February 2023 (see Figure 1 on p.9). Occupancy reached or exceeded 100% from December 2021 to March 2022. Peak occupancy was recorded in March 2022 at 107%. A report provides the average occupancy at each hotel, but only from November 1 to December 31, 2020 (de Jager et al., 2021):

- Men and couples hotel: 77% in November 2020, 72% in December 2020
- Family hotel: 90% in November 2020, 54% in December 2020
- Single women hotel: 94% in November 2020, 93% in December 2020

We found sources that provided the number of people accessing shelter hotels at specific time points:

- A news article published on April 12, 2020 stated that the City has relocated 14 families and 13 women into hotel rooms (Van Dongen, 2020).
- From November 15 to 19, 2021, 68 out of 545 individuals stayed at city-funded hotels the night before they were surveyed for the 2021 Point in Time Connection (Housing Services Division, 2022).
- As of June 2022, 233 individuals and 48 families were in the shelter hotel program (Mastroianni, Zelisko, Parlette, et al., 2022). The City saw an average of 25 rooms occupied and a peak of 95 rooms occupied, with current occupancy at 83 rooms (Mastroianni & Zelisko, 2022).
- As of July 2022, there were approximately 81 single women in the shelter hotel program (Perry, 2022).

City staff also spoke at committee meetings and provided numbers on specific dates. At the General Issues Committee meeting on October 7, 2020, Paul Johnson, who was General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities at the time, stated that "as late as yesterday, I heard that 2 or 3 people, I think they were women, were moved into hotels" (*General Issues Committee Meeting 20-015*, 2020). Following a fire at J.C. Beemer Park on November 24, 2021, City staff supported a couple in accessing the emergency overflow shelter hotel (*General Issues Committee Meeting 21-027*, 2021).

#### Length of stay at hotels

We did not find any information about the average length of stay at shelter hotels except one comment during the General Issues Committee meeting on June 2, 2021 (*General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012*, 2021). City staff saw increased length of stay in shelters, which they attributed to staff being redeployed to shelter work and fewer staff working on housing placement (*General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012*, 2021). They did not mention numerical estimates and it is unclear if this trend was also seen in hotels specifically (*General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012*, 2021).

#### Number of clients housed or transitioned to another program

We did not find information about the number of shelter hotel clients who were housed or transitioned to another shelter or supportive housing program. The Housing and Homelessness Dashboard shows the monthly number of individuals housed through City-funded homelessness programs, specifically the Intensive Case Management (ICM), Rapid Re-housing (RRH), and Transitional Housing Programs (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a). However, these programs are separate from hotel temporary overflow sites (Housing Services Division, 2021). We also found a procedure manual stating that "when asking a client to leave... staff cannot guarantee the client that they can secure a shelter bed or alternative accommodation" (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b).

## Research Question 3 – Shelter hotel transition plans

Transition plans for the shelter hotel program were first mentioned in June 2021 (*General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012*, 2021). During a General Issues Committee meeting, the City anticipated a decline in temporary housing supports as City staff worked on permanently housing individuals and moving from emergency supports back to traditional housing services (*General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012*, 2021). In an Emergency & Community Services Committee meeting, approval was given to "further investigate transitional adaptations to the hotel program" (Mastroianni et al., 2021). The Director of Housing Services stated that there was a "need for continued flexibility over a period of 1-2 years", mentioning that the emergency housing measures would need to continue up until March 31 of 2022 to "give flexibility to transition from emergency supports" (*Emergency & Community Services Committee Meeting 21-006*, 2021). This continuation of emergency housing services extended the program for up to 55 beds until March 31, 2022, and allocated funding of \$7.1M for July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021, and the amount of \$3.6 M from January 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022 (Mastroianni et al., 2021).

In July, an evidence-based transition plan for the shelter system was mentioned in the City Manager's 2020-2021 Review, but no details are provided about this plan (Zinkewich, 2021a). The end date of the program was updated at this time by City Housing Services, mentioning a transition plan to "ensure that the City is no longer reliant on hotels for emergency shelter overflow for more than 30 families as of

September 30, 2022, eliminating hotel overflow for single men and women as of December 31, 2022" (Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022). Actions listed under this goal include "placing people in more permanent housing,...leveraging housing supports,...continue to sustainable emergency shelter solutions,...monitor shelter occupancy and decommission spaces,...consultation and analysis in summer 2022,...recommending interim solutions,...[and] ensure the unique needs and perspectives of Indigenous community members are incorporated" (Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022).

Transition plans were briefly mentioned once again in Adaptation and Transformation Update 4, which was published in December 2021 (Mastroianni & Zelisko, 2021). This report says that "use of hotels [are] being reduced and eventually phased out", mentioning that current use of the "former Cathedral Boys School to an emergency women's shelter until June 30, 2022" would assist in this transition and reduce reliance on hotels (Mastroianni & Zelisko, 2021).

The 2023-2025 Multi-Year Outlook and Capital Financing plan was presented in August 2022 (Robertson, 2022). This plan states that approval has been given to begin implementation of a transition plan for the homeless-serving system (Robertson, 2022). The first phase of this plan would go until the end of Q1-2023, spanning from January to March 2023 (Robertson, 2022). This plan reports that "it is expected that the phased transition to a more permanent shelter system will occur over the next twenty months" (Robertson, 2022). From the date this plan was presented to the General Issues Committee, this transition plan would be slated to end in April 2024 (Robertson, 2022).

The ending and transition plans for the shelter hotel program are last mentioned in a City communication update (Chase, 2022). This update informs us that new admissions to the program ceased by November 1, 2022, with the program planned to "end with gradual and safe decommissioning of overflow hotel spaces by December 31, 2022" (Chase, 2022). City of Hamilton staff are mentioned to be "work[ing] collaboratively on a housing-focused case management plan", and that "plans are in place to work towards positive discharges for residents" (Chase, 2022).

## Discussion

Our findings suggest that data was collected on many aspects of the shelter hotel program. This includes shelter hotel occupancy, capacity, and length of stay. We also found financial data related to the program, staff redeployment statistics, and mentions about COVID-19 vaccination rates and instances of domestic violence. Data is stored and tracked through HIFIS, which allows connections to service providers in the community. Housing Services also maintains internal records that inform the Housing and Homelessness Dashboard. Overall, data is collected and tracked for most of the variables specified in our research questions. The only information we could not find was the number of people accessing housing supports via the shelter hotel program. It is unclear whether housing support services were provided at shelter hotels, though the

procedure manual suggested this may be part of shelter staff duties (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). It is possible that this information was not collected because staff cannot guarantee other accommodations if a client is asked to leave (City of Hamilton, n.d.-b). It is also possible that this information is collected but not shared. The Housing and Homelessness Dashboard provides this type of information for other City-funded programs, but not shelter hotels (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a).

The biggest barrier to our research was that very little information about the shelter hotel program is shared publicly. The Housing and Homelessness Dashboard (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a) provides monthly shelter hotel occupancy rates and capacity (number of rooms), but it lacks the level of detail we see in some City reports. For example, Report HSC21007 provides the average occupancy in November 2020 and December 2020 for each type of hotel overflow room (de Jager et al., 2021). For most other research questions, information was fragmented across City documents and other websites. For example, City documents do not share hotel names and locations publicly, but we gathered this information from news articles.

There are some discrepancies between pieces of information. City reports consistently mention that Mission Services managed the hotel for single men and couples, while Good Shepherd managed the hotel for single women (Kreps, 2020a, 2020b). However, one news article states that Mission Services managed an overflow for women at the Four Points by Sheraton (Moro, 2022). Without knowing which specific hotels were contracted by the City, we cannot confirm if the overflow mentioned in the news article is part of the City-funded shelter hotel program. However, this discrepancy does question the reliability of information that we only found through external sources because we cannot confirm whether they match information provided by the City. Additionally, we noticed that data on shelter hotel occupancy and capacity does not match between the Housing and Homelessness Dashboard and some City reports. This discrepancy may be caused by the change in how beds are reported in the Housing and Homelessness Dashboard as of March 2023 (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a). Historical data was updated to reflect this change (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a), which may explain the mismatch with reports from earlier years.

Transition plans for the shelter hotel program are presented as goals with no confirmation if they were achieved at the timepoints specified. Before new admissions to shelter hotels ceased on November 1, 2022 (Chase, 2022), there were plans to end hotel overflow spaces for men and women by December 31, 2022 (Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022). Meanwhile, hotels for shelter overflow would support up to 30 families by September 30, 2022 (Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022). According to the Housing and Homelessness Dashboard, there were 42 hotel overflow rooms in January 2023 and February 2023 (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a). We do not know if these rooms are only for families or whether the number of rooms aligns with the number of families that the City planned to support.

## Conclusion

This study examined the types of data collected on the City of Hamilton's shelter hotel program, publicly available information about its operations, and the City's transition plans for the program. We reviewed City Council committee meetings and key websites, conducted Google searches, and contacted Housing Services. Our findings indicate that data was collected about the number of available beds/rooms at shelter hotels as well as the number of people accessing these hotels. The City also collected financial data related to the program. The City did not publicly share which hotels it contracted. However, we learned through news articles that the City did enter into contracts with the Sandman Hotel (Moro, 2020a) and the Four Points by Sheraton (Moro, 2022). The Sandman Hotel ended its contract on August 22, 2020 (Moro, 2020a). The hotel shelter program was slated to end admissions in November 2022, with plans to gradually decommission overflow hotel spaces for single men and women by the end of 2022 (Chase, 2022). As of February 2023, there were 42 hotel overflow rooms available (City of Hamilton, n.d.-a).

We were unable to find all the information required to answer our research questions because of the lack of information shared publicly. As a result, we do not have a full understanding about the shelter hotel program. Though it appears that the City collected data on many variables, we only found fragments that were publicly available. We need more comprehensive information to fill in the gaps, sort through discrepancies, and better understand the program's transition plans and current status. Regardless, this report pieces together the fragments we were able to find in a single space. This information is a step towards better understanding the scale and effectiveness of the shelter hotel program, while identifying gaps in our understanding that can be filled through future investigational efforts.

# Appendix A: Search Strategy

## **Key Terms**

- shelter hotel program
- encampments
- COVID-19, pandemic
- emergency shelters
- overflow
- access
- program evaluation
- COVID-19 measures: safety, health, protocols
- isolation hotel

## Google Search Strings

- City of Hamilton shelter hotel
- City of Hamilton shelter hotel numbers
- Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System
- Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System Hamilton
- HIFIS
- HMIS
- Hamilton overflow emergency shelter hotel
- Hamilton covid shelter hotel number of beds
- Hamilton emergency shelter sandman

# Appendix B: Timeline of Shelter Hotel Program

This is not a comprehensive timeline of all our sources, rather a selection of sources with substantial information about changes to the program's operations.

Year	Key Events
2020	June 19 Emergency & Community Services Committee  • Report HSC20020 (Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness) outlines the "expansion of shelter operations into three hotels" (Kreps, 2020a)  • Approved until June 30, 2021
	July 1: Contracts with hotels begin (Kreps, 2020b)
	<ul> <li>July 13 Emergency &amp; Community Services Committee</li> <li>Report HSC20020(a) (Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 1) confirms that "the Housing Services Division has negotiated agreements with three hotels for a total of 65 beds for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021" (Kreps, 2020b)</li> </ul>
	Week of August 22: City <b>ends contract with The Sandman Hotel</b> due to "ongoing behavioural issues". According to a news article on August 22, the City was "firming up a new agreement with a different hotel and security will be enhanced" (Moro, 2020a)
2021	June 2 General Issues Committee  • City staff mention plans "over the coming months" to ramp up work to place people in permanent housing, closing down temporary facilities and moving back to traditional shelter system (General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012, 2021)
	June 3 Emergency & Community Services Committee  • Report HSC20020(c) Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 3 states the continued operation of hotels until March 31, 2022 and approval of an "evidence-based transition plan for Hamilton's emergency shelter system through post-COVID recovery" (Mastroianni et al., 2021)
	November 24: J.C. Beemer Park Encampment Fire  • City staff were able to support a couple access the emergency overflow shelter hotel (General Issues Committee Meeting 21-027, 2021)
	<ul> <li>December 9 Emergency &amp; Community Services Committee</li> <li>Report HSC20020(d) Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 4 does not make specific recommendations about hotels, but mentions that "use of hotels for emergency sheltering [for men] will be reduced and eventually phased out" and plans to "[reduce] reliance on hotel usage" for women (Mastroianni &amp; Zelisko, 2021)</li> </ul>

	Week of December 9: <b>Paused admission of couples</b> due to rising instances of domestic violence ( <i>Emergency &amp; Community Services Committee Meeting 21-013</i> , 2021; Mitchell, 2021)
2022	January 7: Admissions suspended at The Four Points by Sheraton due to a COVID-19 outbreak (Moro, 2022)
	June 16 Emergency & Community Services Committee  • Report HSC22039 (Emergency Shelter Overflow for Families Update) states that "the Housing Services Division will be pausing new program admissions to the family emergency shelter hotel overflow program effective immediately, with the goal of reducing spaces to pre-pandemic levels to match previously-approved funding levels as of September 30, 2022" (Mastroianni & Zelisko, 2022)
	<ul> <li>July 7 Emergency &amp; Community Services Committee</li> <li>Report HSC20020(e) Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 5 states the Housing Services Divison's strategy Housing Services Division has developed an initial transition strategy to ensure "that the City is no longer reliant on hotels for emergency shelter overflow for more than 30 families (a slight increase from the 25 families supported pre-COVID) as of September 30, 2022 and eliminating hotel overflow for single men and women as of December 31, 2022" (Mastroianni, Zelisko, &amp; Tedesco, 2022)</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>August 11 Emergency &amp; Community Services Committee</li> <li>Report HSC20020(f) Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 6 confirms the same transition plan that was outlined in Update 5: "ensuring that the City is no longer reliant on hotels for emergency shelter overflow for more than 30 families as of September 30, 2022 and hotel overflow for single men and women as of December 31, 2022" (Mastroianni, Zelisko, Parlette, et al., 2022)</li> </ul>
	September 30: <b>Planned</b> change so that hotel overflow supports no more than 30 families (Mastroianni, Zelisko, Parlette, et al., 2022; Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022)
	November 1: <b>New admissions to the hotel overflow program cease</b> (Chase, 2022)
	December 31: <b>Planned</b> end of hotel overflow for single men and women (Mastroianni, Zelisko, Parlette, et al., 2022; Mastroianni, Zelisko, & Tedesco, 2022)
2023	Data from the Housing and Homelessness Dashboard shows that there were 42 hotel overflow rooms available by February 1, 2023 (City of Hamilton, n.da)

## References

- Chase, J. (2022). Winding down COVID-19 Overflow Hotel Shelter Services. City of Hamilton. https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/2022-11/comm-update-Winding-Down-COVID-19-Isolation-Shelter-Services-nov1.pdf
- City of Hamilton. (n.d.-a). *Housing and Homelessness Dashboard*. Retrieved April 11, 2023, from https://housing-and-homelessness-dashboard-spatialsolutions.hub.arcgis.com
- City of Hamilton. (n.d.-b). *Procedure Manual: Isolation Hotels Program.*https://cnh3.ca/wp-content/uploads/City-of-Hamilton-COVID-19-Sheltering-Site-Procedure-Manual.pdf
- de Jager, Y., Mastroianni, R., & Zelisko, N. (2021). Winter 2020 Housing and Emergency Shelter Supports (HSC21007). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=260184
- Emergency & Community Services Committee Meeting 21-006. (2021, June 3). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqukwrCgBbM
- Emergency & Community Services Committee Meeting 21-013. (2021, December 9).

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QN1CESUYOGU
- Fleming, K. P., & Robertson, D. (2022). Tax and Rate Operating Budgets Variance

  Report as at April 30, 2022 Budget Control Policy Transfers (FCS22042). City

  of Hamilton. https://pub
  - hamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=330629

- Fontana, L., McMullen, B., & Grant, M. (2021). COVID-19 Related Recruitments and Redeployments as of March 1, 2021. City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=261634
- General Issues Committee Meeting 20-015. (2020, October 7). https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Players/ISIStandAlonePlayer.aspx?Id=4e452e02-78aa-4037-be50-0fd446188fc8
- General Issues Committee Meeting 21-012. (2021, June 2). https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Players/ISIStandAlonePlayer.aspx?Id=9643ce7f-4d8f-4e06-b45c-1ec7c2de4988
- General Issues Committee Meeting 21-021. (2021, November 3). https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Players/ISIStandAlonePlayer.aspx?Id=4d4ba11a-9837-4561-861a-dc4907999ceb
- General Issues Committee Meeting 21-027. (2021, December 8). https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/Players/ISIStandAlonePlayer.aspx?Id=ff447b33-5131-41f7-a7bd-4b9e58df01f3
- Hamilton Encampment Support Network. (2021). https://hesn.ca/
- Homelessness Learning Hub. (n.d.). *The Homeless Individuals and Families Information*System (HIFIS). https://homelessnesslearninghub.ca/learningmaterials/homeless-individuals-and-families-information-system-hifis/
- Housing Services Division. (2021). *Housing and Homelessness in Hamilton: Quarterly Data Snapshot*. City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=297139

- Housing Services Division. (2022). *City of Hamilton Point in Time Connection Results*2021. City of Hamilton. https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/PIT2021-City-of\_hamilton-Results.pdf
- Kreps, B. (2020a). Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing

  Homelessness (HSC20020). City of Hamilton. https://pubhamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=225731
- Kreps, B. (2020b). Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing

  Homelessness Update 1 (HSC20020(a)). City of Hamilton. https://pubhamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=228833
- Mastroianni, R., & Zelisko, N. (2021). Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 4 (HSC20020(d)). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=297138
- Mastroianni, R., & Zelisko, N. (2022). *Emergency Shelter Overflow for Families Update*(HSC22039). City of Hamilton. https://pubhamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=327991
- Mastroianni, R., Zelisko, N., Parlette, V., & Tedesco, G. (2022). Adaptation and

  Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 6

  (HSC20020(f)). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=333500
- Mastroianni, R., Zelisko, N., & Tedesco, G. (2021). Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 3 (HSC20020(c)). City of Hamilton. https://pub
  - hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=273410

- Mastroianni, R., Zelisko, N., & Tedesco, G. (2022). Adaptation and Transformation of Services for People Experiencing Homelessness Update 5 (HSC20020(e)). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=329987
- Mission Services of Hamilton. (2021, February 23). *Mission Services During COVID-19*. https://mission-services.com/mission-services-during-covid-19/
- Mitchell, D. (2021, December 7). Hamilton pauses admission of couples to emergency shelters amid domestic violence incidents. *Global News*.

  https://globalnews.ca/news/8431802/hamilton-pauses-admission-couples-emergency-shelters/
- Moro, T. (2020a, August 22). For those living on Hamilton's margins, tents instead of shelter beds. *The Hamilton Spectator*. https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2020/08/22/for-those-living-on-hamiltons-margins-tents-are-better-than-shelter-beds.html
- Moro, T. (2020b, December 10). Hamilton women's shelter expansion on horizon. *The Hamilton Spectator*. https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2020/12/10/hamilton-womens-shelter-expansion-on-horizon.html#:~:text=The%20plan%20is%20to%20relocate,and%20create%2025%20more%20spaces
- Moro, T. (2022, January 7). Hamilton shelters halt admissions amid COVID-19 outbreaks. *The Hamilton Spectator*. https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2022/01/07/covid-outbreak-homeless-shelter-omicron.html

- Perry, R. (2022). Housing with Supports for Women, Transgender and Non-binary Community Members (Arkledun) (HSC22047). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=333500
- Robertson, D. (2022). 2023-2025 Multi-Year Outlook and Capital Financing Plan Update (FCS22064). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=335386
- Smith, J. (2020). COVID-19 Services and Expenditures Funded by Federal and

  Provincial Governments and Approved by the COVID-19 Emergency Delegated

  Authority By-Law from June 1, 2020 to July 24, 2020. City of Hamilton.

  https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=306676
- Van Dongen, M. (2020, April 12). FirstOntario Centre transformed into 'surge' shelter for homeless Hamilton residents during COVID-19 pandemic. *Toronto Star*. https://www.thestar.com/ths/news/hamilton-region/2020/04/11/citys-biggestarena-transforms-into-a-homeless-shelter-as-hamilton-covid-19-cases-climb-to-232.html
- van Wagner, E. (2022). Case Study: Hamilton—A human rights analysis of
  encampments in Canada.

  https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Hamilton\_encampme
  nts\_case\_study-EN\_1.pdf
- Zelisko, N., Mastroianni, R., & Tedesco, G. (2022). Reaching Home and Social Services

  Relief Fund Phase 5 Funding Update (HSC22032). City of Hamilton. https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=327991

Zinkewich, L. (2021). COVID-19 Recovery Framework (CM21003). City of Hamilton.

https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=285437