

August 2, 2024

ADDRESSING ENCAMPMENTS IN BRAMPTON
TO: MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS
COPY TO: CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM

SUBJECT

This briefing note outlines the activities, interventions, challenges and recommendations in addressing the growing number of encampments across the City of Brampton, including the 2024 efforts within the encampments along the Etobicoke Creek Trail.

BACKGROUND

Encampments and homelessness are on the rise across the country due to a lack of and access to deeply affordable housing options, underfunding of supports for equity seeking populations, and the rising cost of living. According to a study prepared by research firm Blueprint ADE and commissioned by the Metamorphosis Network, residents of Peel Region receive \$578 less annually, per person, than the average resident of Ontario municipalities receives for municipal and social services funding from the Province of Ontario, and that the cumulative gap in funding is over \$868 million per year. This funding shortfall impacts services like housing, childcare, schools, seniors' care, mental health programs and youth programs. Reducing homelessness requires collaboration of all orders of government, an approach that includes policy changes and significantly more funding from the federal and provincial governments for community and supportive housing.

The City of Brampton has seen a growing number of encampments, with the largest concentration centered around the Etobicoke Creek Trail near Main Street and Vodden Street. The City of Brampton, Region of Peel, Peel Regional Police and local Councilors met several times in the first few months of 2024 to discuss and identify short-term and long-term solutions given the significant public health and safety risks that have not been adequately addressed by traditional interventions. This included 26 fires to date, numerous fire hazards and sharps, encampments in close proximity to playgrounds, flood zone risks, and reports of theft and other crime.

On March 21, 2024, Region of Peel Council passed a [motion](#) related to ending chronic homelessness and encampments. This motion included critical information from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) which identified flood risks within the Etobicoke Creek Valley as a major concern for encampment residents in these areas, their pets and belongings. On April 17, 2024, the City of Brampton passed [motion C063-2024](#) and sent a letter to the Region of Peel asking to expedite the transition of encampment residents from the Etobicoke Creek Trail to other accommodations and out of flood zones.

In addition to the response required immediately, the Region of Peel is developing an Encampment Policy Framework and Protocols, which is expected to be brought to Regional Council in fall 2024. The encampment policy framework and protocols aim to improve services to the homeless living in encampments while mitigating the negative impacts that encampments can have on nearby residents and businesses. The new protocols will include a risk matrix and assessment tool to help identify hazards, prioritize, and determine necessary actions. Encampments will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine the best option. The process of assessing risk may be lengthy in some cases. If an encampment is deemed low risk, it is possible it may remain in place. A [recent update](#) was shared with Region of Peel Council on July 11, 2024.

CURRENT SITUATION

Etobicoke Creek Trail

Due to the large number of inquiries to the area Councilors and other city departments from residents and nearby businesses about the encampments along the Etobicoke Creek Trail, a strategy to send regular updates via a mailing list was initiated on March 1, 2024. To date, 22 email updates have been shared. The City of Brampton continues to correspond with residents and business owners about specific concerns related to the area. There have also been four public resident meetings in 2024 related to this specific area.

There were 26 fires from January – June 2024 in this area, with fires being more frequent during the winter months. Fire and Emergency Services consistently visits encampments to remove fire hazards and provide fire safety education.

2024 Fires in the Etobicoke Creek Trail					
January	February	March	April	May	June
4	10	7	5	0	0

An interim procedure was developed to identify solutions and provide direction to address the safety risks involving the encampments along the Etobicoke Creek Trail, specifically Tara Park, Calvert Park, Duggan Park and along Ken Whillans Drive. Response and restoration events focused on removing litter, unauthorized structures, hazardous items and debris to restore the park and ensure it remains a healthy and safe community space for all. As part of the interim procedure and in accordance with the [Trespass to Property Act](#), signage was installed on May 15, 2024 along portions of the Etobicoke Creek Trail to highlight the [Park Lands By-law 161-83](#). The signage also included information to make encampment residents aware of the resources and services available and direct the public to Brampton’s 311 number to report an encampment or need in the area. In addition, the interim procedure included the issuance of trespass notices to encampment residents after weeks of working with them to reduce safety risks and mitigate unsafe conditions. Before trespass notices were issued, 42 encampment residents relocated to the motel.

The following chronology provides a summary of responses and restoration timelines:

- **March 7:** Restoration Clean-up Event #1 at Calvert Park, Tara Park and Duggan Park removed 18 20-cubic yard bins of garbage and debris, 20 propane containers
- **April 16:** Restoration Clean-up Event #2 at Calvert Park, Tara Park and Duggan Park removed six 20-cubic yard bins of garbage and debris, 14 propane containers
- **May 8:** The Region of Peel secured and reserved 21 motel rooms for the Etobicoke Creek Trail encampment residents and began offering the spaces as an alternative housing option
- **May 15:** Signage stating by-law 161-83 installed along Etobicoke Creek Trail
- **May 24:** 25 additional motel rooms secured and reserved for the Etobicoke Creek Trail encampment residents by the Region of Peel
- **May 28:** Restoration Clean-up Event #3 at Calvert Park removed two 20-cubic yard bins of garbage and debris, six propane containers
- **May 29:** Issuing of 7-day trespass notices to remaining encampment residents along the Etobicoke Creek Trail from Williams Parkway in the north to Church Street in the south
- **June 5:** Trespass notices period expired
- **June 5:** Security began regular daily patrols of the area
- **June 5-6:** Restoration Clean-up Event #4 at Calvert Park, Tara Park and Duggan Park removed eight 20-cubic yard bins of garbage and debris, 18 propane cylinders

In conjunction with work from external partners, and led by the City of Brampton, the implementation of the interim procedure led to 51 encampment residents being housed in motel rooms, and a 95% reduction of encampments in the area from May 21 to June 6, 2024. Some encampment residents chose to move to alternate locations and staff assisted with transportation arrangements. One encampment remained following the expiration of trespass notices and one new encampment has been set up in the area since then.

Best Practices when Issuing Trespass Notices

After debriefing about the issuing of trespass notices with all internal and external partners, the following tactics were agreed upon as best practices:

1. *Securing and reserving adequate shelter spaces* to coincide with the number of trespass notices issued, so not to infringe on human rights as outlined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
2. *Allowing time for encampment residents to relocate.* Before trespass notices were issued by the City of Brampton, Peel Outreach Services made encampment residents aware of the impending trespass notices and provided reliable information about their relocation options and logistics. Before trespass notices were issued, 42 encampment residents relocated to the motel.
3. *Daily check-ins with encampment residents* by Security Services and Peel Outreach Services during the trespass notice period allowed teams to better plan.

4. *Daily operational meetings with internal and external groups* to share the latest information and discuss strategies. There were 14 daily operational meetings with all groups specific to issuing trespass notices in this area from May 23 – June 27, 2024, and over 20 more involving various city departments and partners.
5. *Preparing for worse case scenarios* by keeping Peel Regional Police and Strategic Communications informed; having Peel Regional Police set-up nearby once trespass notices expired.
6. *Support and patience for remaining encampment residents once the seven-day trespass notice period expired.* Bins and backpacks were offered several times to remaining encampment residents and they were encouraged to pack their belongings. Requests for bins by encampment residents increased throughout the day.
7. *Expedited cleaning of abandoned encampment sites* by an external contractor. This removed the potential for new individuals to move into old encampment spaces. This also supported the goal of cleaner and safer parks as abandoned sites were in an unsafe state.

Challenges

On the morning of June 5, 2024, 16 active encampments were in the trespass area. By the end of the day there was one. However, three ongoing challenges continue to risk the success of the efforts along the Etobicoke Creek Trail:

1. The need to have security monitor the trespass area 24/7 to prevent new encampments from being set up.
2. The lack of suitable alternative shelter spaces for the remaining encampment residents. Each encampment resident has a set of unique requirements and needs that are not always met through the regular shelter system. Peel lacks low barrier shelters for individuals with addictions. Some users of the shelters have also expressed feeling unsafe in the congregate setting. There is a need to improve the existing shelter system to be more culturally responsive, offer low barrier options, and allow pets.
3. The limitations of Security Services to enforce trespass notices
 - a. without the assistance of Peel Regional Police, or
 - b. while encampment residents remain in their tents, or
 - c. without a court injunction.

Financial Implications

Financial expenditures for the City of Brampton related to the encampments along the Etobicoke Creek Trail include staffing costs from Security Services, the Community Safety and Well-Being Office (CSWO), Parks Maintenance and Forestry, Fire and Emergency Services, Animal Services and Legal Services. Other costs incurred relate to park signage, the storage equipment such as bins for encampment residents, and other materials needed for the response. In addition, there was a need for an external contractor that could clean up

abandoned and potentially hazardous sites, while also providing added security during the clean-up events. Security costs for the ongoing patrols specific to the Etobicoke Creek Trail area are currently \$3,485.52 per day or \$106,017.90 per month. If a similar response was warranted at encampments at multiple locations, costs would increase significantly due to travel time between sites and the challenge of efficiently patrolling multiple sites 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The table below summarizes costs incurred by the City of Brampton related to the specialized response along the Etobicoke Creek Trail and does not include costs related to other areas across the city.

Response Cost for Etobicoke Creek Trail Area from February to June 2024	
Cost Type	Cost (Approximate)
Staff salaries	\$126,000*
Supplies	\$3,811
Contracted Services	\$107,054
Security Patrol	\$130,262
Total	\$367,127

**Please note there are limitations in providing exact salary costs as staff contributed at various levels and capacities.*

In addition to the costs incurred by the City of Brampton, the Region of Peel also incurred costs related to the area specific response. Regional costs in 2024 are projected to be \$8,040,542, which includes Peel Outreach, Welcoming Streets, and additional costs to assist with the Etobicoke Creek response that includes additional staff, hotel rooms, security, and a new place-based Outreach team. There would be significant costs associated with implementing this approach across all encampments in the City of Brampton.

All Encampments in Brampton

Connecting encampment residents to wraparound services that in turn connect them to the appropriate social service or program is essential to address an individual’s needs. Furthermore, encampment residents are often transient and will sometimes move deeper into hard-to-reach ravine or wooded areas when asked to relocate, making it difficult to provide outreach and wraparound services. This summer, approximately two new encampment sites are reported each week, however, 1-2 sites are also declared inactive weekly. As of August 2, 2024, there are 17 known active encampment sites throughout Brampton.

Challenges

In addition to the challenges listed above regarding the one specific area, other challenges experienced by internal and external partners include:

- strained resources, especially staff time
- external contractor costs
- managing request for regular security patrols
- health and safety protocols, including reaching hard to access encampment sites

- the need to find sustainable solutions
- responding to persistent residents who would like to see encampments dismantled
- achieving a balanced approach that serves all housed and unhoused Brampton residents in dealing with the growth of encampments across the city

Ongoing Maintenance, Monitoring and Responsibilities

As this work requires coordination across multiple divisions, levels of government and service providers, there is a need for constant coordination and communication. The growing number of encampments has dictated an elevated response from all partners. The most prominent responses are outlined below. Please note that the daily emails/calls are not captured here.

Region of Peel Encampment Working Group and Steering Committee

The Working Group is responsible for creating a policy framework on homeless encampments and joint protocols. The protocols will include an implementation plan and a roadmap about roles, responsibilities and coordination for supports, enforcement, daily operations, communications and engagement. The Steering Committee meets to provide strategic direction and oversight to Working Group recommendations and deliverables related to the policy framework and protocols and interim encampment responses.

Working Group participants include:

Lead	Region of Peel Housing Services
City of Brampton Representatives	Community Safety and Well-Being Office, Fire and Emergency Services, Security Services, Welcoming Streets, Enforcement and By-Law Services, Legal Services
Other Partners	Peel Outreach, Peel Regional Police, Peel Legal Services, Peel Health Services, Peel Paramedic Services, Town of Caledon, City of Mississauga, Regeneration, Metrolinx, The Compass

Brampton Encampment Response Group Meetings

CSWO hosts and leads weekly meetings with key internal and external partners to identify, discuss and plan coordinated responses for individual encampments across the City of Brampton. A key part of these weekly meetings includes a review of all known encampments throughout Brampton to address needs and hazards. These meetings increase communication, support and better coordinate solutions to address emerging issues related to encampments. There have been 13 of these meetings since they began on May 1, 2024.

Partners include:

Internal Partners	Animal Services, Enforcement and By-Law Services, Fire and Emergency Services, Parks Maintenance & Forestry, Security Services,
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	Service Brampton, Welcoming Streets
External Partners	Region of Peel, Peel Outreach, Peel Regional Police

Response responsibilities:

- *Animal Services*, upon request, aids internal teams where there is a need to interact with encampment residents who have pets.
- *Enforcement and By-Law Services* investigate encampment sites on private property.
- *Fire and Emergency Services* patrol sites weekly to monitor and remove fire hazards.
- *Parks Maintenance & Forestry* attend active encampment sites, as required, to address any safety hazards including the removal of sharps and propane canisters. It may also coordinate the cleanup of abandoned sites and prune trees and shrubs to improve sightlines.
- *Security Services* visit all newly reported encampments to conduct an initial assessment and look for hazards. It also visits known sites on a rotating basis to monitor the situation.
- *Service Brampton (311)* informs stakeholders and dispatches relevant divisions.
- *Peel Regional Police's* Divisional Mobilization Unit (DMU) Team engages with encampment residents to offer support and monitor the encampment.
- *Region of Peel's Outreach Services* visit known sites on a rotating basis to provide wellness checks and offer wrap-around services.

Brampton Encampment Planning Group Meetings

CSWO hosts and leads bi-weekly Brampton Encampment Planning Group meetings with key City divisions to collaboratively identify coordinated and sustainable solutions to address encampments across the city.

Partners include:

Internal Partners	Enforcement and By-Law Services, Fire and Emergency Services, Parks Maintenance & Forestry, Security Services, Service Brampton
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The internal Planning Group will focus on the following high-level enhancements:

- Streamlining current internal processes
- Enhancing real-time data-sharing among divisions
- Identifying sustainable solutions for responding to the rising demand of encampments across the city
- Determining best practices related to communication with residents about nearby encampments including concerns about theft, fire hazards and other safety issues
- Managing expectations of what municipalities can legally do to relocate encampment residents and timelines
- Building capacity to implement finalized Peel Encampment Policy Framework and Protocols

NEXT STEPS

This level of planning, response and implementation requires additional resources and direction as this is beyond regular municipal operations. Staff will provide recommendations in the fall through a Council report to ensure responsive and sustainable practices. The growing demand dictates increased participation from lower tier municipalities and innovative problem solving.

KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages are provided for your use in response to questions from your constituents. Please refer all media calls to the media contact below.

- The City of Brampton is committed to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all residents and is taking a balanced approach to ensure its parks and public spaces remain a safe place for all users.
- The Region of Peel, through Peel Outreach, offers wraparound services to individuals living in encampments and provides wellness checks.
- The City will continue working with Peel Regional Police and the Region of Peel's Outreach team to provide the necessary supports and resources to individuals in need.
- We ask that concerned residents call 311 to report new encampments. When 311 receives a notification of a new encampment, it notifies Brampton's Security Services who visit and monitor the site, along with Peel Outreach.
- The growing number of encampments is an issue for many municipalities across the GTA and southern Ontario.
- The Region of Peel oversees the entire affordable housing and shelter system in Peel.
- The Region of Peel is developing an Encampment Policy and Protocols that the City of Brampton will abide by regarding encampments. This is expected to be implemented next year.
- More information on the City's efforts is [available here](#).

INFORMATION CONTACTS

Subject contact: Community Safety & Well-Being Office
CSWO@brampton.ca

Media contact: Strategic Communications
MediaRelations@brampton.ca

Appendix - Etobicoke Creek Trail Before and After Photos

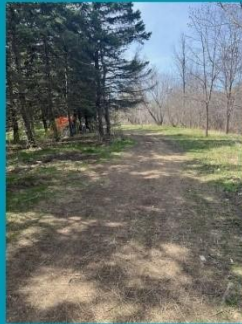
March 7, 2024



April 16, 2024



Before



After

June 5, 2024

