### INFORMATION REPORT

**Hamilton**

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<th>WARD 1 IMPLEMENTATIONS</th>
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<th>Chair and Members</th>
<th>Telephone: 905 546-3343</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency &amp; Community Services Committee</td>
<td>Facsimile: 905 546-3344</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue: Fires in Westdale Area Student Housing</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:jkay@hamilton.ca">jkay@hamilton.ca</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>From: Jim Kay</td>
<td>From: General Manager / Chief</td>
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<td>- General Manager / Chief</td>
<td>- Telephone: 905 546-3343</td>
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<td>- Hamilton Emergency Services</td>
<td>- Facsimile: 905 546-3344</td>
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<td>Date: May 1, 2008</td>
<td>- E-mail: <a href="mailto:jkay@hamilton.ca">jkay@hamilton.ca</a></td>
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<td>Re: Results of Pilot Project in Ainslie Wood and Westdale Neighbourhoods (HES08010) (Ward 1)</td>
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### Council Direction:

Hamilton City Council at its meeting of March 28, 2007, approved Item 6 of the Emergency and Community Services Report 07-004, as follows:

“....THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Hamilton Emergency Services be directed to work with the Ward 1 Councillor, the Ainslie Wood and Westdale Neighbourhood Community Association (AWWCA), and the McMaster Student Union (MSU) to undertake a pilot project in which approximately 45 houses in three different neighbourhoods in Ainslie Wood and Westdale (including family homes and student homes) are inspected on a voluntary basis in order to gather information and assess fire safety.”

### Information:

The AWWCA and the MSU collectively identified the areas for the pilot project, which they considered to be representative of three (3) typical neighbourhoods surrounding McMaster University. The areas identified were as follows:

1. Houses in the area to the east side of McMaster – on both sides of King Street West from Haddon to Dalewood (approximately 20 houses);

2. Houses in the area to the south side of McMaster – on both sides of Emerson from Royal to Ward (approximately 12 houses); and,

3. Houses in the area to the west side of McMaster – on the west side of Norfolk Avenue North from Sanders to Main Street West (approximately 13 houses).
The inspections were entirely voluntary and commenced in September 2007 and were completed in late February 2008 and were all conducted by the same Fire Inspector.

Prior to the inspections, the Inspector hand delivered a notice (attached as Appendix A to Report HES08010) to all 45 addresses. This notice was designed with involvement by the Ward 1 Councillor, AWWCA, MSU, and Hamilton Emergency Services (HES) Fire Division. The intent of this notice was to give the residents and/or owners advance notice of the pilot project and its intent, and to solicit their voluntary participation.

The 45 homes were found occupied as follows:

- Three (3) houses were not entered;
- One (1) house was vacant;
- One (1) house was occupied by a commercial occupancy with no residential component;
- Five (5) houses were occupied as “traditional single family dwellings” (no students);
- Three (3) houses were occupied as duplexes;
- One (1) house was occupied as a triplex;
- Five (5) houses were occupied by less than or equal to four (4) students; and
- Twenty-six (26) houses were occupied by more than four (4) students.

Details regarding the three (3) houses not entered are that in two (2) cases, the owners declined an inspection for personal reasons and/or based on the program being voluntary. The best information obtained from these two (2) houses is that one (1) is occupied by two (2) persons as a single family dwelling and the other is occupied by an unknown number of students and the owner advises the house is safe. The Fire Inspector involved in this project is still trying to obtain entry at the third house in this category and has a tentative inspection date of May 7, 2008 pre-arranged with the owner.

Based on the above information, a total of 40 homes were entered and inspected for compliance with the Ontario Fire Code. The inspection results are as follows:

a) The five (5) houses occupied as “traditional single family dwellings” were all in full compliance with Ontario Fire Code requirements necessitating a working smoke alarm (battery acceptable) on each floor level and outside all sleeping areas;

b) The three (3) houses occupied as duplexes were all in compliance with Ontario Fire Code requirements (Retrofit Section 9.8) regarding smoke alarms, exits, fire separations and fire extinguishers but two (2) of the three (3) houses required a
general inspection by the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) to identify and correct any electrical hazards and to provide a written record as proof;

c) The one (1) house occupied as a triplex was in full compliance with Ontario Fire Code requirements (Retrofit Section 9.5) regarding smoke alarms (A/C interconnected system and single station battery units), exits, fire separations, and fire extinguishers;

d) The five (5) houses occupied by less than or equal to four (4) students are required by the Ontario Fire Code to comply with the same fire safety requirements as a house occupied as a “traditional single family dwelling”, i.e. a working smoke alarm (battery acceptable) on each floor level and outside all sleeping areas. All five (5) houses inspected were found in compliance; and

e) The 26 houses occupied by more than four (4) students were evaluated for determination of occupancy classification in order to properly apply the Ontario Fire Code. The number of students occupying the 26 houses was found to be within the range of five (5) to 10 with an average occupant load of six (6). An inspection was conducted of the physical layout of the house as well as extensive questioning of the landlord and the student residents regarding particulars of lease, maintenance and living arrangements in order to determine whether the landlord or the students exercise the greater degree of control over the property. The findings assist in determining application of either Ontario Fire Code lodging house requirements (Section 9.3) or requirements equivalent to those required by a “traditional single family dwelling”. In the 26 houses inspected, the students were found to be in control of the houses rather than the landlord, and there was no indication that the houses were operating as lodging houses. All 26 houses were found to meet the minimum Fire Code requirement of a working smoke alarm (battery acceptable) on each floor level and outside each sleeping area.

Although not required, 14 of the 26 houses also had an A/C interconnected smoke alarm system; 16 of the 26 houses were equipped with at least one (1) portable fire extinguisher; and, 22 of the 26 houses had battery smoke alarms in each bedroom (exceeding the minimum requirement of one [1] on each floor level).

The purpose of the pilot project was to inspect a sampling of houses (45) in three (3) different neighbourhoods in McMaster University’s catchment area for the purpose of gathering information and assessing fire safety. The results from the 40 homes inspected provide the following information:

- 12.5% (five [5] of 40) of the houses inspected were occupied as a “traditional single family dwelling” which were all found to be in full compliance with the Ontario Fire Code;

- 7.5% (three [3] of 40) of the houses inspected were occupied as a duplex. 33% (one of three [1 of 3]) of the duplexes were in full compliance with the Ontario
Fire Code. The remaining 66% (two of three [2 of 3]) were in compliance with the Ontario Fire Code with the exception of the requirement to have an electrical inspection of the house conducted;

- 2.5% (one [1] of 40) of the houses inspected were occupied as a triplex and found to be in full compliance with the Ontario Fire Code;

- 12.5% (five [5] of 40) of the houses inspected were occupied by less than or equal to four (4) students and were found to be in full compliance with the Ontario Fire Code;

- 65% (26 of 40) of the houses inspected were occupied by more than four (4) students and were found to be in full compliance with the Ontario Fire Code. In fact, 54% (14 of 26) of the houses had non-required A/C interconnected smoke alarm systems, 62% (16 of 26) of the houses had non-required portable fire extinguishers and 85% (22 of 26) of the houses had non-required smoke alarms in each bedroom exceeding the minimum requirement of one (1) on each floor level; and

- 100% (26 of 26) of the houses inspected were equipped with working smoke alarms and a large percentage of the houses met or exceeded the Fire Code’s minimum standards for amounts and types of smoke alarms.

In summary, results of the pilot project would appear to confirm that the houses in the study area do not present an undue fire safety risk and that 95% (38 of 40) of the houses inspected were found to be in full compliance with the Ontario Fire Code based on their current occupancy. The compliance rate between occupancies was equivalent, with the exception of the duplex category which varied due to the Fire Code requirement for an electrical inspection which is specific only to duplex occupancies within the Code. There is no equivalent project data in a different area of the City to use as a comparator for this pilot project’s data. Based on other inspection and enforcement activities conducted by HES-Fire, the 95% compliance rate would be considered to be a favourable result.

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Jim Kay
General Manager / Chief
Hamilton Emergency Services
Important Notice

Ainslie Wood and Westdale residents and students alike have expressed concern from time to time about fire safety in area homes. In response, Ward 1 Councillor Brian McHattie, Hamilton Emergency Services – Fire Department, McMaster Students Union, and the Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association of Resident Homeowners Inc. (AWWCA) have put together a pilot project to determine whether houses are safe.

Your house has been included in the pilot project area. This project involves voluntary inspections by an HES-Fire Inspector of approximately forty five houses in three different neighbourhoods in Ainslie Wood and Westdale in order to gather information and assess fire safety.

It should be stressed that these inspections are entirely voluntary.

The areas identified for the pilot project are as follows:
- Houses in the area to the east side of McMaster – on both sides of King St W from Haddon to Dalewood (approximately 20 houses)
- Houses in the area to the south side of McMaster – on both sides of Emerson from Royal to Ward (approximately 12 houses)
- Houses in the area to the west side of McMaster – on the west side of Norfolk Ave N from Sanders to Main St W (approximately 13 houses)

These inspections will occur during the fall months (September to November) between the approximate hours of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Your cooperation in allowing entry for the Inspector and being available to answer questions regarding occupancy particulars, leasing arrangements, rental particulars, etc. will be greatly appreciated. Having details and copies of leases would be particularly helpful in assisting the Fire Inspector in classifying the occupancy and determining relevant requirements.

We would appreciate your participation in order that adequate information can be gathered to ensure safe housing is being provided for students.

Note: any student living in rental accommodation outside of the pilot project area who has concerns or questions regarding the safety of their rental unit is encouraged to contact HES – Fire’s Fire Prevention Division at 905.546.2424 x1380 weekdays between 8:30a.m. and 4:30p.m. Additional information can also be found on the HES-Fire website at http://www.hamilton.ca/Fire.