Council Direction:

n/a

Information:

Hamilton Emergency Services - Fire Division (HES-Fire) has developed a community based fire prevention and education program that will target high-risk neighbourhoods in the City of Hamilton (City). The first phase of this project will pilot interventions in the lower city, specifically Wards 2 and 3, where over 40% of all residential structure fires occur.

The following key principals must underpin all departmental Fire Prevention activities.

- Public safety
- Public education
- Community collaboration
- Code enforcement
- Neighbourhood focus
- Evidence based solutions and decisions

This program will align current departmental objectives of Fire Prevention with the City's Strategic Plan, Corporate Priority Plan and the emerging neighbourhood and community
development strategy. An effective fire prevention program is essential to minimizing losses to life and property caused by fire and related emergencies. New fire prevention and public education activities will contribute significantly toward becoming a much safer community. A coordinated, community based and well-managed fire prevention program provides a safe environment for all those who live, work, or visit the community. Hamilton is a diverse community and a community based fire prevention program will provide an opportunity to reach the many diverse communities while gaining a better understanding of the various cultures and more importantly establishing a trusting relationship.

Our objectives for this project are:

1. Public Safety through adherence to the Ontario Fire Code. The major goals of fire inspections include the following:
   - To raise the public’s awareness of fire safety considerations in their immediate surroundings, both at work and at home;
   - To identify fire hazards that must be eliminated for a safer environment;
   - To record inspection information for inclusion in the public record, and
   - To verify the proper functioning/maintenance of installed fire protection systems and other building fire protection equipment/features.

2. Develop new or modify existing programs that meet the needs of the various communities served. These must be developed collaboratively with leaders within the various communities and neighbourhoods in order to determine how best to communicate fire safety messages or implement programs. This can be accomplished by building strong partnerships with:
   - BIAs
   - Community Groups
   - Social Service Agencies
   - Public Health Services
   - Emergency Medical Services
   - Hamilton Police Services
   - Faith Groups
   - Schools

3. Increase focus on personal interactions and by educating and assisting families to make their homes safe.

4. Make the Fire Prevention Section an additional face of Hamilton Fire in the community. Ensure that new hires reflect the make-up of our diverse and complex community and have the specific skill sets for the new roles.
5. Improve community perception of HES-Fire as approachable, adaptive, collaborative, responsive, caring and resourceful. Enhance skill sets of HES-Fire personnel so they can achieve these goals.

6. A more proactive versus reactive approach to fire prevention. Solution-based and problem solving programs will be implemented after reviewing trends and statistics. This will ensure that public education is reflective of the fire problem within the neighbourhood.

7. More visible and approachable officers in the community that are able to better address community needs and inquiries outside of just the scope of fire.

Fire Prevention staff working to establish and enhance community links and resources is consistent with the City’s strategic objectives of supporting a healthy community. It also supports the City’s corporate priority plan by aligning work plans across the organization.

Furthermore, this initiative is consistent with other initiatives underway in the Corporation. It is also something that has been highlighted over the last number of months through the media as it relates to the significant disparities in health outcomes between various neighbourhoods in Hamilton. What this project will do is assist in identifying potential areas of action and conditions for success meant to facilitate specific change in key neighbourhoods.

Financial/Staff Implications:

There are no financial or staff implications.