



## **Rat complaints on rise across Hamilton, say city officials**

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It would seem rats are everywhere in Hamilton.

Stoney Creek Coun. Doug Conley said he has received 50 calls over the last seven months from residents complaining about rats. He had calls about the pests from two homeowners located beside each other Oct. 15.

“I’ve had a lot of calls about rats in upper Stoney Creek,” he said. “When construction goes on, the complaints increase.”

Stoney Creek Coun. Maria Pearson said the rat complaints from her ward “have been the worst this year. I’ve had many calls.”

Statistics would seem to agree with politicians’ assessment about the rising number of rat complaints. City officials say there were 300 complaints about rats up to Sept. 11. In August alone, there were 100 complaints, compared to about 40 during the same month in 2016.

City officials said the rat problem could get worse once the construction begins on the \$1 billion light-rail transit project. It seems, said politicians, that any road construction, sewer replacement or building demolition project displaces hidden rat populations and forces them to find new locations.

Ward 4 Coun. Sam Merulla said he held a recent public meeting on the issue and the solution for homeowners was don’t keep food or water in the backyard.

“Rats are attracted to water and food sources,” said Merulla.

He said they love bird feeders and if there is pet food or feces around, rats will be attracted to those items.

“If everyone did their part, we would solve the problem,” said Merulla. “if you don’t have food or water sources, they won’t come to your house.”

Hamilton's public health staff are proposing to create additional rat control measures including using bylaw enforcement, targeted sewer baiting program and following the city's integrated pest management plan. In addition, an education awareness plan is underway informing residents to eliminate waste, control weeds and bushes and clean up any food items that are outside.

Susan Harding-Cruz, manager of vector borne diseases, told members of the Board of Health at their Oct. 16 meeting if sewers are contributing to the rat infestation, staff from public health and public works will start baiting the areas.

The pest management plan will also be included in the pre-construction strategies for the LRT construction, which is scheduled to begin in 2019 and last until 2024, along the 14 km from McMaster University to Eastgate Square.

Officials say the largest construction project in Hamilton's history is certain to disturb large numbers of rats and force them into other areas of the city.