

# TACKLING POVERTY in HAMILTON *We can do it!*

May 5, 2006

## Community Update

### Collaboration Expert Working with Roundtable

Transforming Hamilton's anti-poverty initiative to a community-wide collaboration is the next step towards the goal of reducing and preventing poverty in Hamilton.

Close to 300 community leaders, agency, business and government representatives met with collaboration expert Jay Connor at a series of six meetings in late April to learn about the changes in thinking and approach necessary to achieve community-wide outcomes. Jay is the founder and CEO of the Michigan-based Collaboratory for Community Support, a consulting organization that works with communities in achieving solutions to defined challenges. He was invited to Hamilton by the Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and led the meetings over April 20 and 21.

Jay shared his experience from working with more than 70 communities in North America and described the pitfalls of agencies and funders working in silos. "All of the resources and various entities are trying to do the right thing. I've yet to find a community that doesn't have good people doing good things. But no matter how strong those resources are, we're not going to be successful unless we collaborate across those silos."

He used a quote from movie producer Francis Ford Coppola to make the point. When Coppola was asked the secret of making a good movie versus a poor one, he said, "Get everyone involved to make the same movie."

Jay said the establishment of a "neutral party" group is necessary to ensure the goal to prevent and reduce poverty is achieved by working "across silos" and focusing on outcomes instead of tactics. "This group will be the 'keeper of the keys' to ensure the broad community vision is achieved."

Mark Chamberlain, chair of the roundtable, said the meeting series was a valuable exercise. "The discussions went over the allotted time in every instance, and that showed us that there was a tremendous amount of engagement and appreciation for what Jay had to say."

"I came away with a strong sense that Hamilton is prepared and excited about working in a different way," Jay said after the meetings. "The energy and enthusiasm I heard was a demonstration of Hamilton's readiness to proceed to action."

Jay Connor will continue to work with the roundtable over the next few weeks to explore what the "neutral party" could look like in Hamilton.

## **Progress Report from the Roundtable**

- The search for a permanent project director for the poverty initiative is almost complete. It's expected that an announcement will be made by mid-May. Meanwhile, Paul Johnson, who has been our interim project director since mid-2005, has returned to his role as executive director at Wesley Urban Ministries three days per week. He will remain involved with the roundtable two days per week.
- The roundtable will meet again in mid-May and review the draft of the four-year framework for reducing and preventing poverty in children and youth.
- The roundtable is now looking at its long-term leadership and governance. Over the next year the roundtable's role will evolve to a new, community collaborative governance structure. The current roundtable members have committed to remain involved for another year.

## **News and Resources**

Looking for more information about the *Tackling Poverty in Hamilton* initiative? Check out our web site: [www.hamiltonpoverty.ca](http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca). You'll find current news as well as background information and resources. Most recently, Jay Connor's hand-outs have been posted there under the "NEWS" section.

*We welcome your questions and comments. Please contact Paul Johnson, project director, at 905-523-5600, or [p.johnson@hcf.on.ca](mailto:p.johnson@hcf.on.ca).*