

TACKLING POVERTY in HAMILTON *We can do it!*

UPDATE – February 2006

The *Tackling Poverty in Hamilton* initiative began in May 2005 with the establishment of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction – a group with community members and representatives from business, voluntary organizations and the public sector.

The completion of the roundtable's four-year community plan to prevent and reduce poverty was originally slated for late January 2006, with implementation of the plan to follow. Due to the complexity of the initiative, the completion of the plan is now planned for late spring, with a public announcement to follow.

This document serves as an update and summary of the work completed to date.

- **May through December 2005**

- Poverty-related research documents and community consultations in Hamilton from the past five years were reviewed as a reference point for the additional research and consultation carried out by the roundtable.
- Hamilton linked with “Vibrant Communities”, a national movement to reduce poverty in communities across Canada. Best practices used in other communities to reduce poverty were reviewed by the roundtable.
- Research was conducted into the size and scope of Hamilton's poverty challenge, and a number of educational documents about Hamilton's poverty problem were produced (Project Overview, Quick Facts, Learning from Previous Community Consultations, and Investing in Social Development).
- A Low Income Advisory Committee was formed. It is the only advisory committee to the roundtable, and provides a forum for individuals affected by poverty in their own lives to provide input to the direction of the poverty initiative and help develop strategies for solutions.
- Eleven “engagement” sessions were held with groups representing various sectors in Hamilton. The purpose of the sessions was to gather insight about the scope of Hamilton's poverty challenge, gain a better understanding of how it affects the city, and to identify some possible solutions.
- Representatives of the roundtable also met with additional groups and individuals in order to build support for the project, e.g. politicians, community leaders.

- As a result of the engagement sessions and other meetings, multi-sector support was committed to the Tackling Poverty in Hamilton project.
 - The roundtable discovered that there is community-wide concern about the level of poverty in Hamilton and an understanding that it affects the city's overall prosperity.
 - The Hamilton Spectator, whose editor-in-chief is a member of the roundtable, committed to make poverty a priority area for news coverage and commentary – the first time the newspaper has identified a public policy focus.
 - A public/private partnership for a social housing project has been formed, led by two roundtable members.
 - An academic research network to support the initiative has come together with membership from Mohawk College, McMaster University and Redeemer University College.
- **Winter 2006**
 - A summary of the fall 2005 community engagement process has been produced.
 - Using research gathered to date, both from Hamilton and other communities, the roundtable determined that the starting point of the first community plan will be to prevent poverty in children and youth.
 - A web site has been launched (www.hamiltonpoverty.ca).
 - A community newsletter has been launched.
 - The date for completion of the four-year community plan is scheduled for late spring 2006, with the public launch of the plan to follow.