



**Poverty Roundtable Report:  
Poverty Rate Down, Community Involvement Up,  
More Poverty Reduction Initiatives in the Works**

**HAMILTON, ONTARIO (June 5, 2008)** - Hamilton is making inroads in the fight to reduce poverty thanks to a community-wide collaboration led by the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR). This morning, the HRPR and many of its partner organizations came together for the 2008 *Report to the Community*, sharing progress and outlining next steps to continue engaging the community in *Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child*.

Since forming in 2005, the HRPR has attracted more than 300 individuals to its leadership teams, working groups or as partners. An additional 900 organizations have linked with HRPR to help shift more families from poverty to prosperity. Together, they're pushing Hamilton's poverty rate in the right direction. New income figures from Statistics Canada show that while the Ontario poverty rate is on the rise, Hamilton's rate declined from 20 per cent in 2001 to 18.1 per cent in 2006.

"We've created a leading edge model of collaboration to tackle complex issues and we are starting to see poverty rates in the city turn around," says Mark Chamberlain, chair of the Roundtable. "There are still too many people living in poverty in Hamilton, but we are encouraged to see cross-sector collaboration having a positive impact."

HRPR works for change with an emphasis on the root causes of poverty. Its strategies, announced March 2007 focus on creating a Hamilton where every child progresses through five critical points of investment: quality early learning and parenting; skills through education, activity and recreation; targeted skills development at the post-secondary level; employment; and asset building and wealth creation.

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This multi-layered, shared approach is earning Hamilton local, provincial, national and international respect and has given HRPR opportunities to frame the Ontario Poverty Strategy.

"Most importantly, though, it's helping us drive real results for Hamilton's low-income children and their families," says Liz Weaver, director of the Roundtable.

In 2007, working with the community, the HRPR:

- **Enhanced income support**, launching the Affordable Transit Pass Pilot Project to assist 1,200 low-income workers; hosting 19 free tax clinics to help low-income families complete their tax forms and receive their benefits; and returning more than \$2 million to 6,500 low-income families through the City of Hamilton's municipal portion of the National Child Benefit.
- **Engaged youth and neighborhoods**, talking to nearly 34,000 individuals and groups; partnering with citizens, the Affordable Housing Flagship, United Way of Burlington & Greater Hamilton, Hamilton Community Foundation and the City to transform the Oriole Crescent and north end neighbourhoods; engaging thousands of local citizens in dialogue around the impact of poverty through the book, *Looking for X*; and growing the network of youth leading community change efforts with the Hamilton Youth Voice Against Poverty and Youth Engagement and Action Hamilton.
- **Aligned community investments**, encouraging the City of Hamilton, United Way and Hamilton Community Foundation to target \$5 million annually to poverty reduction efforts.
- **Increased corporate investment**, providing resources to enrich the learning experience for Hamilton students through 10 new school partnerships with the Hamilton Spectator, RBC, Hamilton Port Authority, United Way, City of Hamilton Police Services and Public Works, Evans Philip Law Firm and Mark's Work Warehouse leading the way; and today, launching the 'Hope Mountain Community Backpack Challenge' in partnership with Kidsfest and TrueCity to fill 2,100 backpacks with school supplies to be distributed to children in need through the Hamilton school boards.
- **Integrated programs and services**, linking 900 Hamilton businesses, organizations, government departments and educational institutions in an effort to deliver new health services, early years programs, school-based and after-school programs, employment and mentoring supports for at-risk youth and affordable housing programs.

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"On the yardstick measuring each of the five critical points of investment, we are making clear gains," adds Ms. Weaver. "Our biggest win, however, is the progress we've made working together. We know that true innovation and systems change will be driven by collaboration. Today is an amazing example of the energy, enthusiasm and commitment stakeholders across the community are investing to grow Hamilton's prosperity and viability."

Hamilton still has a significant poverty rate in Ontario, with 18.1 per cent of residents living at or below the poverty line. The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was co-convened by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation in May 2005 to better understand the issues and focus attention on the poverty challenge. Since then, it has been working collaboratively with individuals and community organizations to expedite poverty reduction solutions.

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