

Community Update

from the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction



January 29, 2008

Ontario Poverty Strategy Update

In November 2007, the Government of Ontario established a Cabinet Committee focusing on poverty reduction chaired by Minister Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Government has committed to poverty indicators and reduction targets, a focused and comprehensive poverty reduction plan and has identified early policy commitments such as dental benefits for low income working families, a long term strategy on affordable housing and investments in education and the work force.

“We have already met with Minister Matthews and shared Hamilton’s approach to poverty reduction,” says chair Mark Chamberlain. “We received a commitment from Minister Matthews to include Hamilton in the consultation process targeted to begin in Spring 2008.”

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR) is working collaboratively with Vibrant Communities and a Cross-Sectoral Working Group on Poverty Reduction to contribute to the Ontario Poverty Strategy.

Ontario Ministry of Finance – Pre-Budget Consultations

The Roundtable presented a policy brief to Minister Dwight Duncan on January 8, 2008 at the pre-budget consultations held in Hamilton calling for investment in poverty reduction strategies. Minister Duncan recognized the poverty reduction community efforts underway in Hamilton in his comments.

HRPR Policy Briefs are available on the web site (www.hamiltonpoverty.ca).

City of Hamilton - Affordable Transit Pass Pilot

The Roundtable has convened community partners to advise and support the City of Hamilton in the delivery of the Affordable Transit Pass Pilot targeted at the working poor. The Affordable Transit Pass Pilot project is scheduled to launch in April 2008. The Roundtable and partners will provide advice around the delivery and evaluation of the pilot program.

Hamilton Neighbourhood Development Strategy – Update

The HRPR is focusing efforts on a **Hamilton Neighbourhood Development Strategy** which is designed to build strong neighbourhoods across the community. Specific efforts will be targeted in low-income neighbourhoods to work alongside citizen leaders to identify and address neighbourhood gaps. 'The Hamilton Neighbourhood Development Strategy will give us a pulse on what is working well in neighbourhoods and where improvements can be made' said Liz Weaver, Director of the Roundtable. "We will be working together with the Hamilton Community Foundation, United Way, City of Hamilton and other partners to invest and build on the assets in Hamilton's neighbourhoods.

The first task of the Hamilton Neighbourhood Development Strategy is to consult with citizens to identify those critical assets which contribute to neighbourhood vitality. This asset-mapping tool will help community groups focus on the strengths of their neighbourhoods. Consultations will take place in Spring 2008.

Investing In Hamilton

The **Hamilton Community Foundation** announced a \$5 million investment which deepens its poverty-reduction efforts in Hamilton. Known as 'Tackling Poverty Together II: Building Strong Communities', the investment will focus on improving the quality of life in key Hamilton neighbourhoods as well as funding broader initiatives that focus on specific populations such as seniors. The strategy also includes a \$500,000 investment to be made toward revitalization in the downtown core. The Roundtable's neighbourhood strategy is designed to align and integrate with the Hamilton Community Foundation's investments.

The **United Way of Burlington, Greater Hamilton**, an HRPR partner, recently announced an investment of \$198,228 for a total investment in 2007 of \$1,396,909 in programs supporting early childhood development and skills through education, activity and recreation in the North End of Hamilton. Funding for the 'From Here to the Bay' program was generated from industry partners located around and linked up to the Hamilton Port Authority.

Starting Point Update

- **Quality Early Learning and Parenting**
- In the Fall 2007, the Hamilton Boards of Education opened nine Parenting and Family Literacy Centres five of which are located in low-income neighbourhoods
- A partnership has been built with the Aboriginal community through the Niwasa Network; Niwasa Preschool Program provides expanded licensed care for 20 children and part-time Early Years Centre for Aboriginal children in the community
- Best Start Network is a member of a local Innovation Table, which provides resources to community to heighten awareness and understanding of science and technology to create tools for an innovation culture
- In September, the city's first-ever joint services delivery plan for Hamilton children was developed by the Best Start Network, City of Hamilton and child care delivery partners.
- **Skills through Education, Activity and Recreation**
- School Age Solutions was consulted by the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board to develop tools for quality after-school care. The Mentorship Manual, to be utilized by Homework Clubs, has been developed
- The RBC Foundation provided a \$40,000 grant to King George School and Wesley Urban Ministries for an after-school program

- **Targeted Skills Development**
- Using a collaborative approach, the Skills Development Flagship is partnering with Goodwill to launch an innovative service delivery employment and skills development model for youth at risk
- HRPR Youth Voice Against Poverty participated in a consultation session for the Goodwill integrated youth centre model
- **Employment**
- The City of Hamilton and Mohawk College are the co-conveners of a job creation roundtable which will work with the Hamilton Civic Coalition. Mark Chamberlain, HRPR chair also chairs the Hamilton Civic Coalition and sees great potential synergies between community efforts focused on poverty reduction and job creation.
- **Asset Building and Wealth Creation –**
- With a focus on two neighbourhoods, Beasley and Oriole Crescent, as the points of intervention to address poverty, the Affordable Housing Flagship is consulting the neighbourhoods to identify service delivery gaps and supports which meet the needs of the community
- In September 2007 a cross-sector community collaboration was established to work on neighbourhood renewal in Oriole Crescent

HRPR in the Spotlight

- Roundtable members have provided leadership resources to support poverty reduction tables in Brantford, Kingston, Peterborough, Ottawa, Halton Region and York Region.
- Mark Chamberlain was selected as Hamilton's **2007 Distinguished Citizen of the Year** on January 28, 2008. The award recognized Mark's tremendous contributions to community causes including the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the Hamilton Civic Coalition, the Hamilton Community Foundation and the Golden Horseshoe Innovation Alliance.
- Megan Meredith, co-chair of the HRPR's **Youth Voice Against Poverty** group was recognized as 2007's Youth Volunteer of the Year. Megan has made a significant contribution to our community and gives hours of her time to a number of community causes.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is co-convened by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation.

