

# Community Update

from the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction



October 10, 2007

## Ontario-Wide Strategy Called For

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR) is calling for a provincial strategy to address unacceptable levels of poverty across Ontario.

“Candidates running in the provincial election are in a unique and influential position to champion this proposal,” says chair Mark Chamberlain. “We’re getting it on the table with local candidates, and we are also pursuing it with party leadership.”

The HRPR is urging the Government of Ontario to:

- Establish an inter-ministerial secretariat on poverty reduction
- Establish a multi-sector provincial panel on poverty reduction
- Develop measurable targets and timelines to reduce poverty
- Invest the resources and create the necessary policies to reduce and prevent poverty, using the five key areas of investment identified by the HRPR:
  - Quality early learning and parenting
  - Skills through education, activity and recreation
  - Targeted skills development (post secondary)
  - Employment
  - Asset building and wealth creation

Roundtable members and community partners have met with Hamilton-area candidates on the issues of poverty, housing and income security. “We urge everyone to learn about each party’s platform on poverty reduction,” Mark says.

The full Policy Brief is available on the web site ([www.hamiltonpoverty.ca](http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca)).

## NEW – A Focus on Neighbourhoods

In March the HRPR announced its “Starting Point Strategies” to prevent and reduce poverty in Hamilton. In addition to those strategies underway, an action plan aimed at specific low-income neighbourhoods is also being developed.

“A neighbourhood approach to poverty reduction will see initiatives based in schools, libraries and community/recreation centres, because these organizations are already community hubs,” says Liz Weaver, HRPR director. “Our Starting Point Strategies are designed to work at the system level, while the neighbourhood approach will be more grass-roots. Residents’ participation will be a key part of the success.”

An action plan will be announced in November.

### **Starting Point Update**

Work continues with the “Starting Point Partners” identified in the prevention and reduction strategy, e.g. Best Start Network, Hamilton Housing Flagship, etc. HRPR staff members meet regularly with the partners.

Progress includes:

- **Quality Early Learning and Parenting** – 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** – A mentoring resource has been created and is being used by community groups. A steering committee of community partners, including HRPR and Hamilton Community Foundation, are looking at developing new after-school programs in low-income neighbourhoods.
- **Targeted Skills Development** – The Skills Development Flagship has completed an RFP process for the development of a program connecting at-risk youth to employment. The successful bidder was Goodwill, the Amity Group.
- **Employment** – A “Diversity Works” conference was held in March and an online database of diversity-friendly workplaces in Hamilton is being developed.
- **Asset Building and Wealth Creation** – The Affordable Housing Flagship hosted a conference in June promoting collaborative approaches to housing. It has also been conducting advocacy work with the provincial government for an increase in affordable housing units in Hamilton.

### **HRPR in the Spotlight**

Interest is growing in the community problem-solving approach used by the HRPR:

- Co-convenor Joe-Anne Priel made a presentation to senior federal civil servants in September.
- Co-convenor Carolyn Milne presented to the International Council on Foundations conference in September.
- Community leaders from New Zealand will meet members of the Roundtable and Starting Point Partners in October.

- The Caledon Institute, a social policy think tank, is profiling a series of “community stories” about Hamilton’s anti-poverty initiatives on its web site: [www.caledoninst.org](http://www.caledoninst.org). First up is a look at Hamilton’s “One Book, One City: Tackling Poverty through the Arts” project.

### **Roundtable Changes**

*Welcoming new members:*

Judith Bishop, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Madina Wasuge, Hamilton’s Centre for Civic Inclusion

Lino Cugini, Service Canada

Kathleen Kevaney, Vibrant Communities

*Thank you to those members who have concluded their involvement:*

Renate Davidson, Stelco Inc. (retired)

Marg Garey, Service Canada (retired)

### **Staff Changes**

We welcome Marg Kowalski, Manager, Community Engagement and Mitzi McDonald, Administrative Support (Acting).

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

