

Hamilton Community Legal Clinic  
Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton

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**HAND-DELIVERED**

January 26, 2006

C/o Councillor Matthew Green, Committee Chair  
Emergency & Community Services Committee  
City of Hamilton  
71 Main Street West  
Hamilton, ON  
L8P 4Y5

Dear Sirs and Madams,

**RE: The Right to An Adequate Standard of Living in Hamilton  
Follow-Up to the 2006 Report**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about this crucial report concerning the status of the implementation of the internationally guaranteed Right to an Adequate Standard of Living in our own community.

I appear in front of you today on behalf of the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic / Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton. The report entitled "The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living in Hamilton: An Update to the 2006 Report" is a report of the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, along with our collaborating co-author, Sara Mayo, of the Social Planning and Research Council.

***Who we are***

The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic / Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton is a community based not-for-profit agency whose diverse team of caring professionals and volunteers provides legal services to low income individuals and communities to promote access to justice and to improve quality of life. The clinic offers legal services including summary advice and referral, representation, community development, law reform and public legal education. The Clinic serves the community in both official languages (English and French) and also has the capacity to serve our clients in almost any language through the use of interpretation services.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was formed in 2005 to tackle the City's unacceptable levels of poverty. Roundtable members come from across Hamilton and include

leaders from the business and non-profit sectors, from government, education and faith communities as well as individuals who experience poverty daily. The roundtable works locally, provincially and nationally on policy and systems-level change to achieve long-term solutions to poverty.

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton has collaborated to provide significant research data to inform the writing of the report. The Social Planning and Research Council works to improve the quality of life for everyone in Hamilton through research, community development, community engagement, and system and service planning.

### ***The Report***

I propose to speak briefly regarding the follow-up report to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights regarding the Government of Canada's non-compliance with Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights*. Article 11 of the *Covenant* guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living. Paragraph 1 of Article 11 reads:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

Unfortunately, as both reports show, the right to an adequate standard of living is not being acknowledged or protected by either the Provincial or Federal Governments. We continue to have social assistance rates that fall far below subsistence levels of income, and those rates remain arbitrary numbers with no relation to the actual cost of basic necessities; although efforts have been made in this area by the Provincial government, the situation continues to get worse as rates fail to keep pace with the increase in the costs of basic necessities such as rent and food. While efforts have been made to respond locally to the homelessness crisis, we are nowhere close to providing the numbers of housing subsidies required, and the Landlord and Tenant Board of Ontario (like the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal before it) continues to evict many thousands of tenants for arrears of rent. The number of unemployed workers who qualify for employment insurance benefits locally remains at alarming levels, particularly for women. The minimum wage remains below poverty levels, meaning that even those workers working full-time or more may not be able to pull their family out of poverty. Not surprisingly, we continue to see local individuals and families who cannot afford to feed themselves turning to food-banks and meal programs in unprecedented numbers.

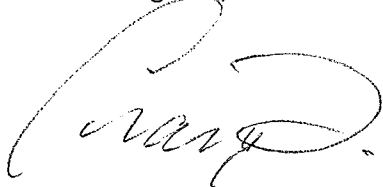
Unfortunately, this poverty is being experienced disproportionately by many already vulnerable groups, including, but not limited to: women, seniors, newcomers, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities.

## Our Requests

1. We respectfully request that this Committee recommend that Hamilton City Council endorse the report "The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living: An Update to the 2006 Report", and write to the United Nations Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights to confirm that endorsement to the UN Committee.<sup>1</sup>
2. We also respectfully request that this Committee recommend that Council direct staff to research the possibility of Hamilton becoming a Human Rights City (a discussion that is currently underway in our sister cities of Edmonton, AB, and Winnipeg, MB).

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (905) 527-4572.

Regards,



Craig Foye  
Staff Lawyer

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee can be contacted through:

**Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**

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