



# 2017 ANNUAL **SUMMIT**

# **SUMMARY REPORT**

SHAPING DEMOCRACY  
THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



**TUESDAY**  
NOVEMBER 14, 2017  
8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

**LIUNA STATION**  
360 JAMES STREET NORTH, HAMILTON



Hamilton



#OFHSummit2017  
**TRENDED**

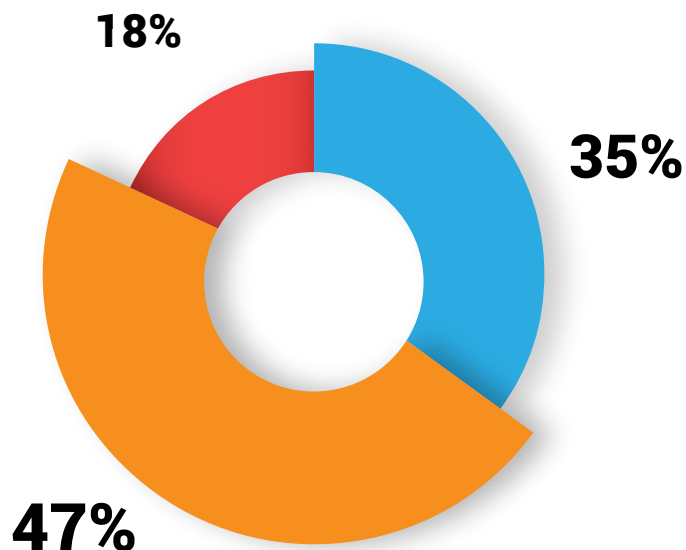
No. **1** IN  
HAMILTON

No. **2** IN  
CANADA




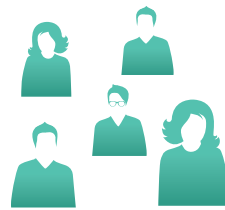
# PARTICIPATION DASHBOARD

## ATTENDEE PROFILE



 Residents  Community Partners

 Other (e.g. out of town, volunteers, and municipal staff)



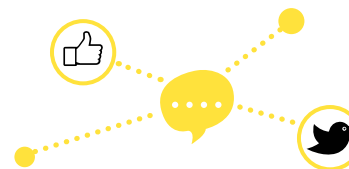
**430+**  
Attendees



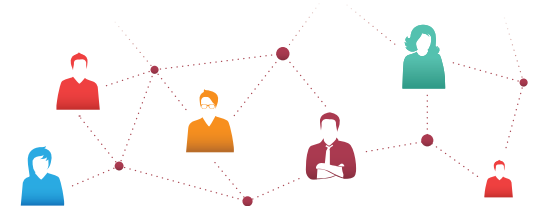
**13**  
Speakers



**55**  
Roundtable  
Discussions



**1463**  
Social Media Interactions



**85102**  
Social Media Impressions



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Future Hamilton is the city's new 25-year community vision. It builds on the legacy of Vision 2020, Hamilton's first community vision. Over the span of one-year, Our Future Hamilton engaged nearly 55,000 residents and community partners to create a shared community vision, including 6 community priorities, 88 key directions, and 57 signs of success.

The City of Hamilton, along with over 100 community organizations, has committed to implementing Our Future Hamilton community priorities. Based on resident and community feedback, the City hosted the first annual Our Future Hamilton Summit on November 14th, 2017 at Liuna Station with over 400 in attendance.

Each year, the Summit will examine current issues that our community prioritized through the visioning process and share our collective progress in moving the vision forward. In addition to highlighting key partnerships and local initiatives, the annual Summit provides an opportunity for continued public visioning, community partnership, and collective action-taking involving government, community partners, and residents.

The theme for the annual Summit was *Shaping Democracy through Civic Engagement* and featured engaging keynotes from Greg

Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer for Elections Ontario, Dr. Chelsea Gabel, Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies at McMaster University, and Dr. Nicole Goodman, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Brock University.

Through facilitated table discussions, attendees identified 12 key barriers to democratic engagement and 62 ideas for improvements. The top barriers identified by Summit participants included education, accessibility, apathy, trust, and community representation. The most commonly suggested actions for improving democratic engagement called for increased youth education and public engagement, improved community representation and accessibility, as well as further examination of the role of technology and e-voting.

As a result of the 2017 Summit, a number of strategic alliances and community partnerships have already formed to improve democratic and civic engagement in Hamilton. We look forward to continued engagement with residents and community partners as we collectively implement our shared community vision and report on our progress at the 2018 Our Future Hamilton Summit.

# OUR FUTURE HAMILTON COMMUNITY VISION

Our Future Hamilton is the culmination of a broad and inclusive community visioning process that engaged nearly 55,000 residents and community partners.

Informed by the voices of our community, six community priorities emerged for Hamilton's new 25-year community vision:



Community Engagement and Participation



Economic Prosperity and Growth



Healthy and Safe Communities



Clean and Green



Built Environment and Infrastructure



Culture and Diversity

City Council approved Hamilton's new community vision in February 2016. The City of Hamilton also adopted the community vision priorities to inform its new 10-year strategic plan.

## Shaping Our Future through Democratic Engagement

Hamiltonians and community partners identified increased democratic engagement and voter turnout as a key priority and sign of success for achieving our shared community vision. With Ontario's next provincial election scheduled for June 7, 2018 and Hamilton's municipal election on October 22, 2018, the theme for the 2017 Our Future Hamilton Summit was relevant, timely, and responsive to the voices of our community.

A healthy democracy is driven by citizens who feel their votes count, are informed, participate, debate and advocate. Voter turnout is often used as an indicator to measure how democratically engaged a population is. It has also been found to be closely related to civic engagement. Based on municipal, provincial and federal voter turnout trends, Hamilton experiences low voter turnout.

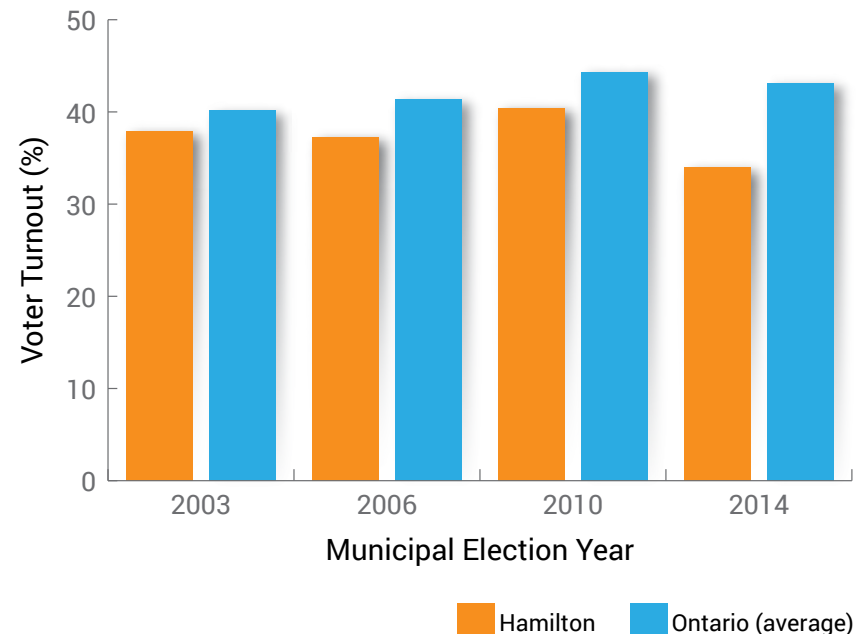
## Voter Turnout Trends in Hamilton

During the last 2014 municipal election, 34% of eligible Hamiltonians voted. Voter turnout was slightly higher for the 2014 provincial election with 53% of Hamiltonians voting and 66% voting in the 2015 federal election.

### MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

In the province of Ontario, municipal elections take place every four years. Voter turnout in Hamilton was lower than comparable mid-sized cities for the 2014 municipal elections, and has been consistently lower than other municipalities in Ontario over the past four elections.

**Figure 1: Municipal Election Voter Turnout in Hamilton vs. Ontario Average between 2003 and 2014.**



Sources:

City of Hamilton, [Elections \(CL17009\) Information Report to General Issues Committee](#), November 1, 2017

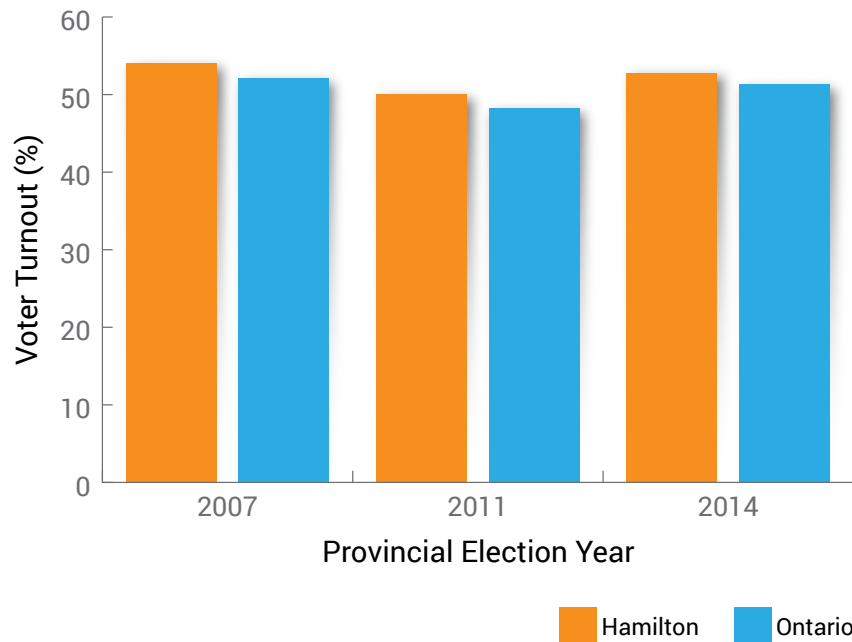
Association of Municipalities Ontario, [2010 Municipal Election Results Fact Sheet](#)

Association of Municipalities Ontario, [2015 Municipal Election Stats](#)

## PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Voter turnout in Hamilton for provincial elections is consistently higher than the provincial average. Approximately 53% of Hamiltonians voted in the 2014 election, as opposed to 51% of Ontarians as a whole (Figure 2). While voter turnout for provincial elections has been higher in comparison to the turnout for municipal elections, it is still low given that nearly half of eligible voters choose not to participate.

**Figure 2: Provincial Election Voter Turnout in Hamilton vs Ontario as a Whole between 2007 and 2014.**

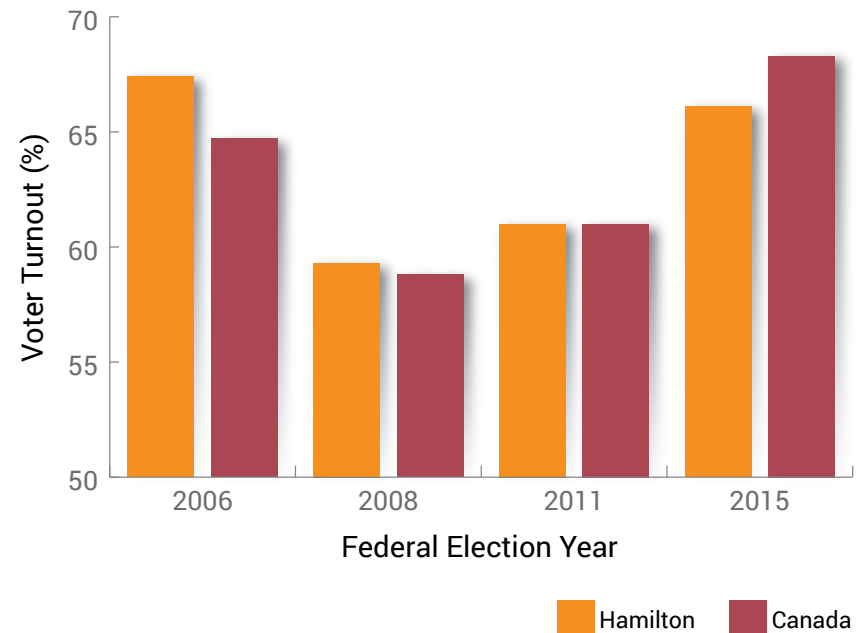


Sources:  
Elections Ontario, [Official Election Results](#)

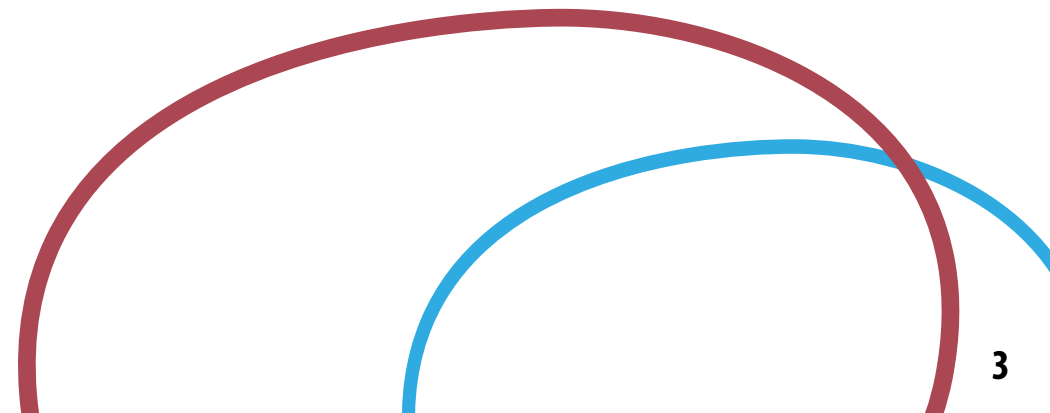
## FEDERAL ELECTIONS

The estimated voter turnout in Hamilton for the 2015 federal election was slightly lower than voter turnout for the nation as a whole. Approximately 66% of Hamiltonians voted in the 2015 election, as opposed to 68% of Canadians as a whole.

**Figure 3: Federal Election Voter Turnout in Hamilton vs. Canada as a Whole between 2006 and 2015.**



Sources:  
Elections Canada, [Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums](#)  
Elections Canada, [Past Elections](#)



# 2017 SUMMIT PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS AT A GLANCE

## Summit Presentations

All 2017 Summit speakers and presentations were selected to highlight key partnership initiatives and current issues related civic and democratic engagement. We wish to extend special thanks to all of our speakers and to Cable14NOW for filming the 2017 Our Future Hamilton Summit. You can view our keynote speakers' presentations online courtesy of Cable14NOW.



[CLICK HERE  
TO WATCH THE VIDEOS](#)

### **Summit Emcee**

Terry Cooke, President and CEO, Hamilton Community Foundation

### **Welcoming Remarks**

Mayor Fred Eisenberger, City of Hamilton

### **Our Future Hamilton – Progress Update**

John Ariyo, Manager, Community Initiatives, City of Hamilton

### **Chase the Future 2041**

Laura White, Elementary Program Consultant,  
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board

### **Civic Incubation in Hamilton**

Jay Carter, Hamilton Program Manager, Evergreen

### **Building Relationships and Understanding Reconciliation**

Shylo Elmayan, Senior Project Manager, City of Hamilton

### **Community Priorities in Action – Hamilton's Strategic Plan**

Chris Murray, City Manager, City of Hamilton

### **Civic Engagement and Democracy – Present and Future**

Dr. Chelsea Gabel, Assistant Professor,  
Indigenous Studies Program, McMaster University

Dr. Nicole Goodman, Assistant Professor,  
Department of Political Science, Brock University

### **Shaping Democracy by Putting Electors First**

Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Ontario

### **Summary of Table Discussion Findings**

Hugh Tye, Executive Director, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic

### **Our Future Hamilton – Next Steps**

Cindy Mutch, Senior Project Manager, City of Hamilton

### **Closing Remarks**

Vicki Woodcox, Acting General Manager,  
Community and Emergency Services, City of Hamilton



# COMMUNITIES IN CONVERSATION: TABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS

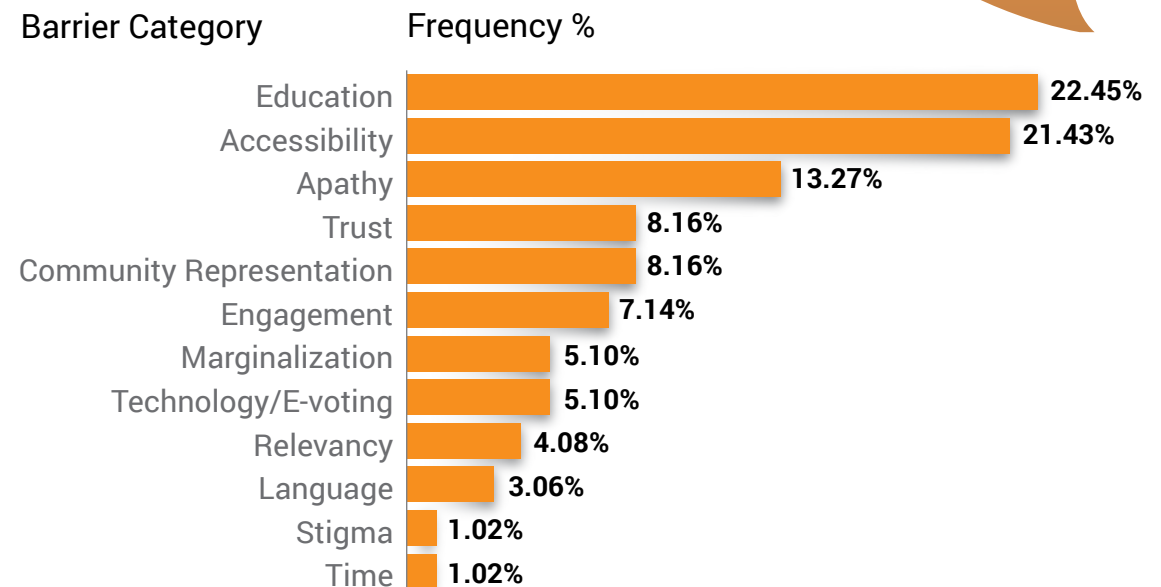
## Barriers to Democratic Engagement

Following the keynote presentations, attendees explored barriers to democratic engagement and identified ideas for improvement through facilitated table discussions. Over 55 round table discussions took place during the Summit. Guided by volunteer facilitators, Summit attendees provided their insight into the state of civic engagement in Hamilton.

The first topic of discussion focused on identifying barriers to democratic engagement. Following brainstorming exercises, participants summarized their discussion findings by identifying the top three most important barriers they discussed as a group. A total of 98 unique barriers to civic engagement were identified and recorded.

The identified barriers were grouped into 12 main categories and ranked by their reporting frequency (Figure 4). The 12 barrier categories and sample recorded statements are listed in Table 1.

**Figure 4: Top Barriers to Democratic Engagement as Identified by 2017 Summit Participants.**



**Table 1: Barrier Categories and Sample Recorded Statements**

BARRIER CATEGORY	SAMPLE RECORDED STATEMENTS
Education	Lack of education on the electoral system
Accessibility	Accessibility (i.e., space, location, voting process)
Apathy	Disconnect between citizens and government (i.e., feelings of apathy and helplessness)
Trust	Lack of faith in the process
Community Representation	People don't see themselves in the process
Engagement	Governments don't engage enough with citizens outside of election time
Marginalization	Marginalized communities being excluded from consultations and the democratic process
Technology/ E-voting	Lack of technology integration and access
Relevancy	Civic engagement is not a priority for newcomers (at this stage in life)
Language	Language and literacy barriers
Stigma	Stigma to engaging (i.e., ex-offenders, mental health, LGBTQ+, lack of information from official parties to these communities)
Time	No time to be informed, pressure of daily living, and/or settlement process

## A Closer Look – Top Barriers to Democratic Engagement

The top barriers to democratic engagement identified through Summit table discussions included education, accessibility, apathy, trust, and community representation.

### EDUCATION



Educational barriers to democratic engagement were typically described as a general lack of knowledge among residents regarding the democratic process and government structure. Participants stated that Hamiltonians often lack knowledge on political party platforms and their candidates. A specific focus on youth emerged from many of these discussions as participants felt that young people are often uninformed on civic issues and democratic processes.

### ACCESSIBILITY



Accessibility barriers address the various ways in which a person's ability to be fully engaged in their community is limited or restricted. For example, many participants identified an inability to get to polling stations and/or other venues as a significant barrier to civic engagement. Other participants discussed the issues of language-related barriers, time constraints, the effects of the weather/season, and physical/mental health constraints.

### APATHY



According to most of the discussions, apathy can be understood as a general lack of interest or concern for the democratic process. Most discussions on this barrier relayed the idea that many Hamilton residents are often disenfranchised, uninterested and/or cynical about becoming engaged in their society.

### TRUST



Summit participants identified diminishing public trust as an impediment to civic and democratic engagement. Under this category, participants noted feelings of frustration and discouragement due to abandoned campaign promises as well as a general lack of confidence in the democratic process.

### COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION



Lack of diversity among elected officials was a commonly identified barrier. Comments shared during table discussions described feelings of disempowerment and an inability to see oneself reflected in the process or in platform issues. Participants called for increased demographic representation to encourage voter turnout and cited challenges for new voices to be heard.

## Turning Ideas into Action

After identifying their top three barriers to civic engagement, attendees collectively proposed actions that could be taken to alleviate these barriers. Following group discussions, each table selected and further explored one key action idea that they felt could help ameliorate one of their previously identified barriers to democratic engagement.

A total of 62 unique action ideas emerged from the table discussions. These actions were grouped into 12 different categories and ranked by their reporting frequency (Figure 5). The 12 categories identified for action and sample recorded ideas for improving democratic engagement are listed in Table 2.

**Figure 5: Action Ideas to Improve Democratic Engagement as Identified by 2017 Summit Participants**

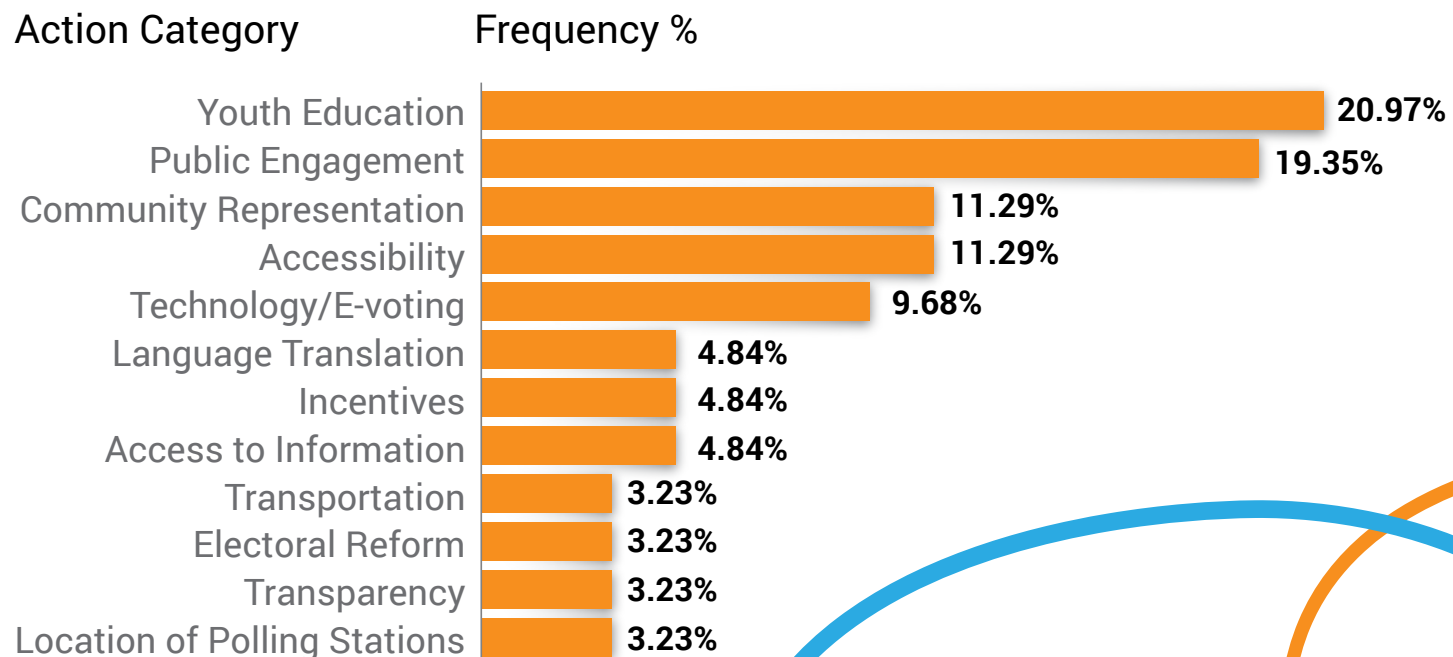
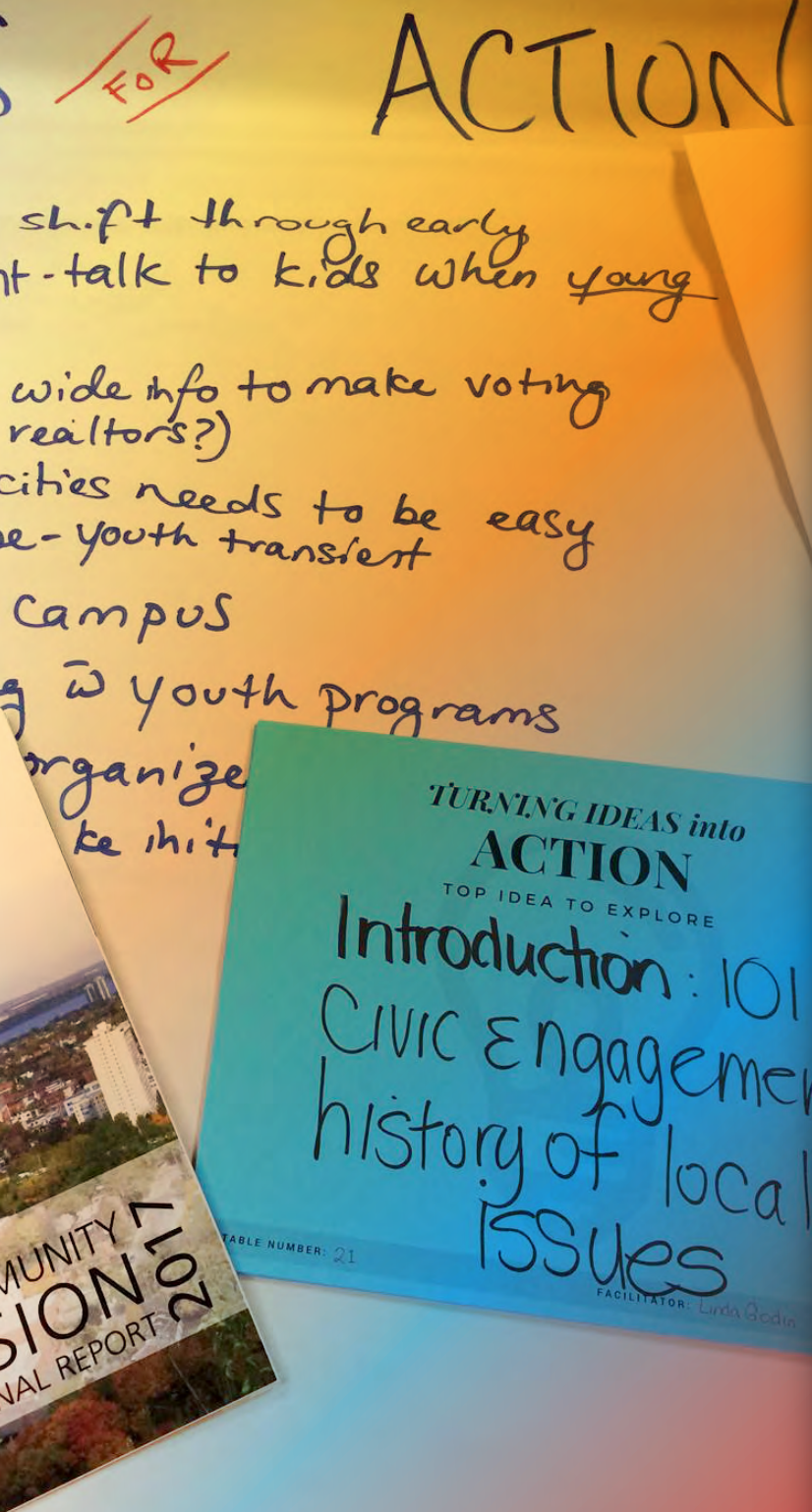


Table 2: Action Categories and Sample Ideas for Improving Democratic Engagement

ACTION CATEGORY	SAMPLE IDEAS
Youth Education	Coordinate relevant and appealing instructional activities for high-school students to engage in political conversation, such as understanding how democracy works and how your voice can be heard
Public Engagement	Hire youth ambassadors representing diverse backgrounds to facilitate voter engagement leading up to election time
Community Representation	Increase diversity of elected officials
Accessibility	Provide resources that are inclusive to all (i.e., print and digital formats, multilingual)
Technology/ E-voting	Offer online voting or e-voting
Language Translation	Add translation services as an option during voter registration
Incentives	Encourage corporations and local community businesses to provide incentives to employees who vote
Access to Information	Simplify and condense information regarding party platforms and make this information accessible to everyone
Transportation	Provide free HSR transportation on election day and/or coordinate community buses
Electoral Reform	Modernize the electoral system
Transparency	Develop score cards that measure the political candidates' performance based on their platform
Location of Polling Stations	Bring the polls to where the voters are (i.e., retirement homes and University campuses) and ensure all polling stations are near transit routes



## A Closer Look – Turning Ideas into Action

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Most of the recommended actions concentrated on identifying ways to support and encourage youth in playing an active role in our democratic processes. Examples of proposed actions included:

- Incorporate more civic engagement in the school curriculum
- Introduce children to the concepts of civic engagement at a younger age
- Host debates on political topics and/or mock elections in local schools and educational settings
- Hold workshops at high schools that help students understand the importance of voting
- Create intergenerational mentorship opportunities to inspire students to become involved citizens
- Coordinate an intergenerational program that partners seniors with students on election day to encourage voter turnout

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Action ideas that fall under the category of Public Engagement focused on increasing, bettering or innovating the ways in which residents engage with their community and government. Some examples of action ideas included:

- Make civic engagement more culturally sensitive
- Create spaces for people to learn about candidates
- Ensure that citizens are engaged between elections
- Encourage community engagement within the workplace, school, and neighbourhood
- Create an internet forum where residents can ask questions about voting and municipal government processes
- Hold debates and campaign meetings in areas with low voter turnout in Hamilton
- Host open discussions in Indigenous communities and encourage candidates to participate

## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

Actions under the category of Community Representation sought to address the lack of diversity among political leaders and to improve representation of racialized individuals and marginalized groups in society. Examples of action items included:

- Reform institutions to increase Indigenous representation and recognition
- Nominate community champions from specific ethnic groups to help with outreach and engagement efforts

## ACCESSIBILITY

Action ideas under the category of Accessibility centred on developing targeted outreach strategies that could address accessibility barriers to civic engagement. Some examples of action items included:

- Make all election and civic engagement materials inclusive (i.e. compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and offering materials in multiple languages)
- Encourage workplaces to accommodate voting on election day (i.e., providing time off to vote)

## TECHNOLOGY/E-VOTING

Exploring ways to incorporate technology and use e-voting were identified as actions that could assist in increasing voter turnout by reducing a number of accessibility barriers. Suggested actions included:

- Use e-voting or online voting as a new way to engage and inform residents as well as increase voter accuracy
- Leverage digital technology and enhance residents digital literacy

“Engage youth through curriculum workshops and volunteer opportunities”

“E-Voting”

“Encourage shared, safe, public spaces to openly share knowledge”

# NEXT STEPS

The City of Hamilton, along with key stakeholders and community partners, will continue to explore feedback provided at the 2017 Our Future Hamilton Summit. By sharing this report electronically with Summit participants, community partners, and City Council, we hope that the momentum for shaping democracy through civic engagement in Hamilton will continue.

A number of key partnerships have already emerged to implement local initiatives aimed at addressing barriers examined at the 2017 Summit. With over 400 residents, community partners, and key stakeholders in attendance, the first annual Our Future Hamilton Summit was a big success. Plans are currently underway for hosting the 2018 Summit this fall.

Each year, the Summit will examine current issues prioritized by our community and highlight our collective progress in implementing Our Future Hamilton. The 2018 Summit will also feature new evaluation tools including an Our Future Hamilton Score Card and the first annual Our Future Hamilton Progress Report.

To stay informed on our collaborative efforts in moving the vision forward, visit our website and [join our mailing list](#). Members of our mailing list receive quarterly newsletters as well as advanced registration notice for the 2018 Summit. Residents can also participate in the Community Champion Program. Tell us what you are doing to make Our Future Hamilton a reality and win great prizes. Visit [Our Residents](#) webpage for more details.

Community partners can join our growing membership of over 100 local organizations, associations, and networks that have committed to making Hamilton's 25-year vision a reality. Benefits of becoming a community partner include recognition in newsletters, reports, and at the annual Summit. Visit [our community partner webpage](#) to learn more about the benefits of becoming a community partner.

*Together, we can make Our Future Hamilton a reality.*





[hamilton.ca/ourfuturehamilton](http://hamilton.ca/ourfuturehamilton)

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