

Dear Mayor Eisenberger and Members of Council,

Re: Leveraging Strategic Opportunities for Hamilton's Economic Recovery

We thank you and City staff for your tireless work and swift action to slow the spread of COVID-19, and protect the health and safety of all residents.

While essential work continues to address this public health crisis, we know that the Mayor's Economic Recovery Task Force will be instrumental in laying the groundwork for long-term health and prosperity for our city.

We also know that lives and activities post-pandemic will not return to "business-as-usual." Indeed, these are *unusual* times that require new, creative, integrated, and bold approaches for a city-wide recovery.

We are seeing unprecedented unemployment rates¹ and struggling small businesses.² Early information shows that this pandemic impacts people differently based on where they work³, their income, race⁴, and gender⁵. The bottom line is that the pandemic is anything but an equalizer.⁶

That is why we are writing to share our support for three strategic opportunities for this task force.

We anticipate that the City will employ the same level of resourcefulness and leadership, as already seen in the response to COVID-19, to move us forward.

As engaged residents working in different sectors, we want to contribute to this process of re-imagining economic recovery for Hamilton. We recommend the following three opportunities for your consideration.

Strategic opportunity #1: Align task force recommendations with Term of Council Priorities

We are aware that Council adopted the following eight strategic priorities for the 2018-2022 term - a commitment that was made well before the threat of COVID-19.

- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Integrated Growth & Development

¹ Williams, J. [Coronavirus Update: Canada unemployment rate jumps to 13%, but numbers even worse across the border](#). The Globe and Mail. May 2020.

² Wells, J. ['I would rather sell a kidney before I closed': Hamilton small business owners suffer massive losses but are still kicking](#). The Hamilton Spectator. May 2020.

³ Wherry, A. [The wages of fear: The pandemic and the future of low-paid 'essential' work](#). CBC News. May 2020.

⁴ Staff. [Viral inequality: Coronavirus might be an equalizer but society is not](#). The Star. April 2020.

⁵ Alini, E. [Welcome to the 'she-session.' Why this recession is different](#). Global News. May 2020.

⁶ Jones, B., & Jones J. [Gov. Cuomo is wrong, covid-19 is anything but an equalizer](#). The Washington Post. April 2020.

- Multi-Modal Transportation
- Climate Change
- Homelessness & Affordable Housing
- Trust & Confidence in City Government
- Fiscal Health & Financial Management
- A Healthy, Respectful & Supportive Workplace

We fully support Council's ongoing work on these areas. Specifically, we encourage the strategy to align task force recommendations with the eight priorities.

While priorities may not seem business-related on the surface, we trust that Council understands how they are integral and intricately connected to long-term economic recovery.

Strategic opportunity #2: Ensure the task force convenes a multigenerational, cross-sectoral group of individuals with wide-ranging backgrounds, in addition to subject matter and industry experts.

We know the pandemic impacts people differently. A diversity of voices, ages, and experiences on the task force will ensure that the decisions made are representative of the communities that live in our city. Research has shown that diverse teams make better decisions.^{7,8} Right now, we need to make the best decisions possible for the long-term health and prosperity of our future.

Holistic economic recovery ensures no one is left behind, especially those who are already bearing the burden of this public health crisis: people experiencing poverty, seniors, women, racialized individuals, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

Strategic opportunity #3: Exercise leadership by coordinating and working with other city-wide recovery efforts to drive meaningful and high-impact change

We are aware of many groups that are organizing and mobilizing around common concerns and shared visions of how to respond and recover from this pandemic. This is an opportunity for the City to lead *with* others to drive positive change, have an exponential impact, avoid duplication of efforts, and leverage the strengths and skills of Hamiltonians.

COVID-19 has shown us how prosperity and growth isn't only about our economy. Prosperity means breathing clean air, having access to safe and affordable transportation and housing, and feeling a sense of belonging and inclusion - these are also priority areas committed to by Council.

⁷ McKinsey & Company. [Is there a payoff from top-team diversity?](#) 2012.

⁸ MSCI. [Women on Boards. Global trends in gender diversity on corporate boards.](#) 2015.

Progress in these areas does not have to be at odds with economic prosperity. In fact, if done well, they *accelerate* economic growth.⁹

Our lives will not return to normal, but we know a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous city is within our reach. To realize this, we must maintain focus on the term priorities, leverage the strengths of our diverse communities, and harness the power of collective action. This is our opportunity to develop an innovative “made-in-Hamilton” solution for all.

We hope your continued focus on the term priorities will help guide the task force in their decisions and recommendations. We can do more than recover; we can *prosper* and *thrive*.

We look forward to continuing the conversation and supporting you and the task force to integrate Council’s priorities into the process, work, and recommendations ahead.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Lai, *Insurance and Financial Services*

Christine Yachouh, *Consulting*

Dave Heidebrecht, *Higher Education and Not-for-Profit*

Kate Whalen, *Higher Education and Research*

Layla Abdulrahim-Moore, *Higher Education and Healthcare*

Lisa Alfano, *Higher Education and Not-for-Profit*

Sarah Wardrope, *Healthcare*

Sashaina Singh, *Higher Education*

Yulena Wan, *Not-for-Profit and Philanthropy*

⁹ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). [Inclusive Growth](#).