

February 4, 2021

Hamilton Chamber of Commerce Endorses a “Just Recovery” for All Hamiltonians

Dear Members of Hamilton City Council,

As Council deliberates on the City of Hamilton 2021 Budget, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce would like to take this opportunity to add its voice to a chorus of community organizations and partners advocating for a “Just Recovery” for our community. This comes at a time where municipal councils and all levels of government financially plan for the future to ensure that when the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us Canada is poised for a strong, rapid and inclusive economic and social recovery process.

Alongside contributors and participating organizations, the Chamber believes that it is the collective responsibility of the City of Hamilton, local business, community service providers and residents to work together to continue to advocate for the necessary changes and additional funding from other levels of government to not only recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, but to build a better and more equitable community.

From the Chamber’s perspective, the foundation of any good economic policy relies robust social policy that helps to enable the conditions for an inclusive and productive workforce. COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated challenges experienced by many in our community, preventing them from fulsome participation in our local economy and beyond. It is imperative that government recognize barriers to economic participation and implement proactive policy to maximize inclusion for all residents in Hamilton’s recovery process.

In concert with our partners, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce would like to endorse the recommendations contained within the Just Recovery budget submission for consideration by Hamilton City Council. Particularly, the Chamber would like to highlight a few areas of particular importance to our membership to ensure a rapid and inclusive economic recovery:

♦ **Investing in Women**

The pandemic has had significant impacts on the division of gendered labour within the home and with society. It remains imperative that government make efforts to increase women's, and those who identify as women, engagement with the labour force. This includes ensuring safe and affordable childcare options in addition to targeted training and retraining efforts to expand economic opportunities for women and those who identify as women in our community.

◆ **Focus on Inclusive City Building**

As decisions are made regarding important City building projects and overall vision, it remains imperative that the City of Hamilton engages in productive consultation with the community to ensure that decisions are made inclusively of feedback from our diverse population. This includes continuing to provide active and important roles for disability, mobility, 2SLGBTQIA+, and anti-racism actors within our community who bring significant expertise about their lived experiences. Broad-based community participation in community decision-making creates the best outcomes for our entire community, from both an economic and social perspective.

◆ **Investing in Decent Jobs, Decent Wages & Our Local Economy**

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted different sectors of our economy to varying degrees, with particularly significant impacts felt in the accommodation, hospitality, restaurant, tourism and arts industries. Government must do what it can to support these employers and their employees through creative policymaking to help keep their operations as "business-as-usual" as possible. Moreover, there is a unique opportunity presented to take a leadership role in advancing burgeoning sectors of the economy, particularly in those combatting climate change. While it is imperative to continue to support our current employment, we must also look to what the future of employment may look like in Hamilton.

◆ **Investing in Green Infrastructure, Policy & Public Access**

As the City of Hamilton continues on its path towards net-zero by 2050, there are a number of issues that will have to be kept top of mind such as carbon absorption, flood mitigation and air filtration. Through strategic investments in green infrastructure in urban parks, natural areas, commercial, industrial and residential areas, the City can help

combat the effects of climate change and also take a leadership role in demonstrating best green infrastructure practices. Moreover, through our unique industrial sector and excellent local post-secondary research facilities, Hamilton has the potential to become a regional leader in green technology. Hamilton ought to consider green infrastructure foremost moving forward.

♦ **Housing as a Human Right**

In alignment with the findings of the Ontario Human Rights Commission that “adequate housing is essential to one’s sense of dignity, safety, inclusion and ability to contribute to the fabric of our neighbourhoods and societies,” it is important that every effort is made to increase the stock of affordable and supportive housing in the City of Hamilton.

Without appropriate housing, it is often not possible to secure and maintain employment, to recovery from mental illness or other disabilities, or to integrate into the community. It is important that the City continue to utilize creative municipal bylaws to encourage the development of affordable and supportive housing.

With these priorities in mind, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce would like to join our community partner organizations in calling for Council’s consideration of a “Just Recovery” for all Hamiltonians. Now is the time for ambitious, innovative and progressive decision-making to help build back a more inclusive Hamilton as we begin our economic recovery from the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



Keanin Loomis
President & CEO