

November 8, 2021

Re: 2022 City of Hamilton Municipal Budgeting Process

Dear Members of the General Issues Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide pre-budgetary comments as you begin deliberations on the 2022 City of Hamilton Municipal Budgeting Process.

As President and CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton's oldest institution at 176 years old, I have the privilege of speaking for our 1,000+ members that employ over 75,000 people in our community.

Throughout the past 20 months, the Chamber has been a lifeline for local businesses hosting over 40 webinars on pandemic response related subjects, conducting advocacy to all three levels of government based on the feedback of our members, and partnering with the City to launch the Hamilton COVID Concierge for Business support service, which has provided direct, one-on-one support to hundreds of Hamilton-area businesses.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Just Recovery Coalition colleagues for their steadfast leadership and inclusive vision for the future prosperity of our community. This initiative has brought together a diverse group of our community's brightest leaders and their organizational expertise to help inform a post-pandemic recovery for the City of Hamilton. The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is proud to have participated in this initiative and help to advance its recommendations.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated previously existing challenges in our community related to supporting local economic development and workforce participation. The Chamber would like to highlight some of the key recommendations from the Just Recovery Community Coalition that will serve to improve local workforce development conditions and enable our economy to recover.

Looking to understand and address the gender disparities that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our local labour market, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce conducted the Women Out of Work study over the course of 2020-2021 that heard from nearly 1,600 self-identified Hamilton women. We know that full economic recovery is not possible if

women are not included. Nor is it possible if women are not provided with fair and equitable opportunities for workforce participation. Since the immediate impact of the first wave, Hamilton women have disproportionately had their careers impacted, their finances strained, and their expectations for unpaid work increase. COVID-19 has unduly affected female-dominated sectors in Canada and women are facing excessive barriers to re-entering the workforce.

We urge all levels of government to continue making strides towards universal, accessible and affordable childcare, which will significantly improve workforce participation and reduce the financial burden of childcare on all Hamilton families. Moreover, the City must do more to offer women's and family specific services and ensure that those initiatives are informed by organizations with particular expertise in the delivery of those services.

Another crucial component of economic recovery pertains to local transportation and the availability of diverse transit options for all Hamiltonians. We must strive for continual improvement of our existing networks to further facilitate local employment participation. We have heard loud and clear from our members that they are in desperate need for talent and that sub-standard transit mobility presents a recruiting impediment. Ensuring that Hamiltonians have affordable options to get to and from work will be crucial to our economic rebound and we must continue to advance the priorities of the BLAST network. The recent commitments to the Hamilton B-Line LRT and the implementation of two-way, near all day GO service are to be celebrated, and will unlock significant employment potential for our community.

Related to the LRT commitment comes the opportunity to permit diverse housing solutions along the transit corridor. There will be significant investments made along the B-Line LRT route, and we must ensure that we are facilitating and enabling a mix of housing types for all income levels. The City must prioritize approvals of housing applications to significantly intensify development along the LRT corridor and further study the benefits of passing inclusionary zoning bylaws to increase the supply of deeply affordable housing.

To ensure that the LRT investment meets the long-term needs of Hamiltonians, robust and inclusive conversations must occur now. The City should pass the terms of reference for the Community Benefits Protocol Advisory Committee, permitting the committee to meet with City staff to discuss how Community Benefits agreements might

be used in COVID-19 recovery. Implementing a Community Benefits Framework based on the experiences of other cities in North America will deliver on a number of items, including, the integration of green building standards, affordable housing requirements, facilitating local employment and social procurement practices, and increasing resident engagement and participation.

Finally, the Chamber would also like to iterate its support for the completion of the City of Hamilton Community Energy and Emissions Plan and to ensure that the plan is supported with specific financial commitments that will facilitate deep energy retrofits of existing residential and non-residential building stock in the City. Our members are facing increasing energy costs and the Chamber encourages all levels of government to champion and enable businesses to pursue retrofits to help reduce their operating costs and also inhibit negative impacts on our local ecosystem. Climate resiliency is paramount to the long-term viability of many of our industries, and the City must work with these organizations to ensure a just energy transition and to preserve local employment opportunities for generations to come.

Once again, thank you to the General Issues Committee for the opportunity to provide comments today. Hamilton Chamber of Commerce looks forward to the conversations in the months ahead as the municipality plans financially for 2022. In light of the pandemic, these budgetary decisions are more important than ever as we balance fiscal responsibility with progressive and ambitious policy making to improve our community for all Hamilton residents.

Sincerely,



Keanin Loomis,
President & CEO
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce