



## City of Hamilton Report for Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

**To:** Chair and Members  
Emergency and Community Services Committee

**Date:** March 20, 2025

**Report No:** HSC25009

**Subject/Title:** Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

**Ward(s) Affected:** City Wide

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### Recommendations

1. That Report HSC25009 respecting Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction **BE RECEIVED** for information.

### Key Facts

- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was co-convened by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation in 2005 to address poverty in the community and is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.
- The 20th anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate its many achievements as well as reimagine and re-energize the important role the Roundtable can play in supporting the community to address poverty related issues.
- Since 2017, the City of Hamilton has provided \$137,700 in annual net levy funding to the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction through the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic that serves as host agency for this initiative.
- In 2024, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction delivered work products focused on income security reform, living wage advocacy, tenant support, and community safety.
- This report outlines the strategic impact of the City of Hamilton funding to the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. Moving forward, there will be an annual report that comes forward to Committee and Council, highlighting the previous year's accomplishments and the goals for the upcoming year.
- The Ontario Works division is the lead City partner working with the Roundtable and administers the City's funding agreement. The Roundtable also aligns its

work and contributes to the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan in the Children's and Community Services Division.

## Financial Considerations

**Financial:** In its role as co-convenor and funder, the City of Hamilton has provided \$137,700 in annual funding to the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction since 2017. The funding agreement for the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is executed by the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, which serves as the host agency for the Roundtable, providing organizational oversight and support. While the Clinic offers support, it does not direct the work or priorities of the Roundtable. The Roundtable is a community-based collaborative initiative with mechanisms in place to set priorities and is accountable for its work through its funding agreement with the City.

**Staffing:** There are no staffing implications associated with Report HSC25009.

## Background

In the early 2000s, poverty rates in the City of Hamilton were among the highest in Ontario. In response, the City of Hamilton partnered with the Hamilton Community Foundation to establish the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. The goal was to tackle the urgent issue of poverty and its devastating impact on individuals, families, and children. In 2006, the Roundtable set forth an ambitious aspiration to "Make Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child," a vision that remains integral to the City of Hamilton's vision today.

The Roundtable prioritizes ongoing community engagement with a lens on equity and inclusion of individuals with lived experience of poverty. This approach ensures that many voices inform advocacy efforts, local solutions, and system change. For the past 20 years, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction has worked, and continues to work towards:

- Shifting public attitudes about poverty
- Encourage local employers to adopt living wages
- Providing provincial and national leadership in profiling and promotion of living wage
- Working with the provincial government on comprehensive social assistance reform
- Encouraging the federal government to implement a national poverty strategy
- Advocating for affordable housing
- Sharing research

While the Roundtable has contributed to many local solutions to address poverty and has performed important public policy advocacy; there remains a continued and urgent need for this work in our community to continue. Inadequate provincial and federal

investments in income supports, affordable housing and health services, coupled with rising costs of living are pushing more families in our community into poverty.

Members of the Roundtable represent a diverse cross-section of the community, including leaders from the business and non-profit sectors, government, education, and faith communities, as well as individuals who experience poverty first-hand. This inclusive structure ensures that various perspectives are considered in addressing the challenges of poverty.

Strategic direction is provided by a steering committee, guiding the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction in its mission to create meaningful change. Through collective action and community engagement, the Roundtable aims to develop and implement effective strategies to reduce poverty in Hamilton.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is collaborating with Ontario Works on shared priorities to support low-income individuals and families. The Roundtable engages in important advocacy for increased social assistance rates and income security. Additionally, the Roundtable will support opportunities for Ontario Works and other City divisions to engage with individuals with lived experience who are recipients of social assistance, gathering feedback to help improve local services.

The Roundtable is now represented on the System Leadership Table of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and a closer alignment between these two initiatives has been achieved because of this closer partnership established in 2024. The Roundtable participated in recent Community Safety and Well Being Plan revisions and is looking to align additional deliverables in 2025 and beyond with the revised Plan.

## **Information**

As Hamilton continues to face challenges related to income inequality and social exclusion, the Roundtable provides a critical voice in shaping both policy and community-based initiatives that directly impact the lives of those most affected. The 20th anniversary milestone, along with the deliverables for 2025, presents an opportunity to renew and re-energize Hamilton's commitment to poverty reduction.

The Roundtable is currently reviewing its governance structure and membership, with a focus on improving engagement with community partners and individuals with lived experience. This process aims to strengthen the approach to addressing the needs of the city's vulnerable populations and ensure that poverty reduction continues to be a local priority. As part of this review, the Roundtable will assess resourcing and funding needs and provide recommendations for future actions to ensure sustainable and effective support for advancing community identified needs and priorities. Any potential future changes to the governance, funding, structure and operations of the Roundtable moving forward would be presented to the Emergency and Community Services Committee for information, input, and approval, as required.

The Roundtable will be hosting an event, ‘Hamilton Poverty & Unity Summit: Addressing Polarization & Advancing Community Solutions,’ in alignment with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. The goal of the event is to bring the community together to develop shared, community-driven solutions to issues of income inadequacy, housing instability, and systemic inequities., The event is proposed for the fall of 2025 and more information will be shared once available.

In 2024, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction delivered the following deliverables and will build on much of this work in 2025:

Key Focus Area	Deliverable	2024 Outcome	Ongoing in 2025	New for 2025
20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations and Renewal Actions	Launch a communications refresh, including a new anniversary logo, website updates, monthly e-newsletters, and expanded social media.			Yes
	Publish a comprehensive 20th anniversary report, highlighting two decades of impact and outlining future poverty reduction strategies.			Yes
	Organize a high-profile Community Summit on Poverty & Policy, featuring experts and policymakers to discuss Hamilton’s poverty reduction efforts and next steps.			Yes
	Host a Volunteer Celebration Event to recognize and honour the contributions of Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reductions lived experience volunteers.			Yes
	Partner with national research organizations to develop long-term policy recommendations on income security and poverty reduction through a legacy project.			Yes
	Leading a renewal of Roundtable membership and restructuring of the table to ensure continued effectiveness.			Yes

Key Focus Area	Deliverable	2024 Outcome	Ongoing in 2025	New for 2025
Advocacy for Income Security and Basic Income	Organized 21 community screenings of the documentary "A Human Picture" that shared the experience of Hamiltonians who participated in the Basic Income pilot.	Achieved	Yes	
	Facilitated the National Basic Income Forum.	Achieved		
	Conducted research on the Ontario Basic Income Pilot's impact, pushing for higher social assistance rates.	Achieved		
	Engaged in provincial, federal, and international advocacy to ensure Canada meets its commitments to an adequate standard of living.	Achieved	Yes	
	Collaborate with healthcare networks to integrate social prescribing into income security advocacy, ensuring individuals facing economic hardship have access to essential supports.	Ongoing	Yes	
	Collaborating with McMaster University, Toronto Metropolitan University, Carleton University, and Mohawk College to share findings from ongoing research on income security.			Yes
	Presenting at provincial and federal pre-budget hearings to advocate for increased social assistance rates, ensuring they reflect the cost of living.			Yes
Making Hamilton a Living Wage Community	Supported the adoption of living wage policies within the City of Hamilton and public sector institutions.	Ongoing	Yes	
	Partnering with the City's Economic Development Department to educate local employers on the benefits of paying a living wage.	Ongoing	Yes	

Key Focus Area	Deliverable	2024 Outcome	Ongoing in 2025	New for 2025
	Collaborate with the Ontario Living Wage Network to advocate for policies that support sustainable wages.			Yes
	Conducting a comprehensive reassessment of Hamilton's living wage to reflect the latest economic shifts, with findings to be shared with key stakeholders in late 2025.	Achieved	Yes	
Addressing rental challenges, housing stability, and tenant advocacy	In collaboration with the Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton, developed evidence-based recommendations for policy changes and increased affordable housing.	Achieved		
	Worked to improve conditions in Residential Care Facilities by collaborating with local authorities and healthcare providers to enhance quality of life and access to necessary supports for residents.	Achieved		
	Collaborated with the Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton to update the 2019 report on rental challenges, focusing on affordability, eviction risks, and tenant experiences.	Ongoing	Yes	
	Partnered with the City's Extreme Heat Working Group to ensure vulnerable tenants have access to cooling solutions and shelter during extreme weather events.	Ongoing	Yes	
	Advocated for policy changes to improve living conditions in Residential Care Facilities and ensure tenants can access new financial supports, such as the Canada Disability Benefit.			Yes

Key Focus Area	Deliverable	2024 Outcome	Ongoing in 2025	New for 2025
Community Safety and Well-Being Plan	Participated in community engagement sessions to gather input on safety, housing, and accessibility issues.	Achieved		
	Advocated for policy changes based on 2024 engagement findings, including recommendations for increased social assistance rates, improved transit access, and expanded affordable housing.	Achieved		
	Lead a “Shifting Attitudes” initiative with community partners to address polarization and improve understanding of poverty-related issues.			Yes

### Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The work deliverables for the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction outlined above aligns to Council’s Priorities including:

**Priority 1: Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development**

**Outcome 1: Reduce the burden on residential taxpayers.**

By advocating for sustainable wage policies and addressing income disparities, these deliverables help create a more equitable and resilient community. This would also reduce the financial burden on taxpayers by fostering a more balanced economy and the need for emergency financial supports.

**Priority 2: Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods**

**Outcome 1: Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness.**

Collaborating on initiatives like the update to rental challenges and integrating social prescribing, these deliverables ensure vulnerable populations are supported with access to necessary housing and services.

**Priority 3: Responsiveness and Transparency**

**Outcome 2: Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving.**

The work of the Roundtable promotes transparency and responsiveness, directly involving residents, community organizations, and employers in addressing the complex issue of poverty.

## **Previous Reports Submitted**

CES16046 Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction Funding Increase: <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=122739>

## **Consultation**

None

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