Hamilton

City of Hamilton

Mayor's Task Force on Transparency, Access & Accountability

April 9, 2025

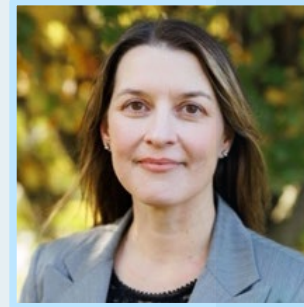# The Mayor's Task Force

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Co-Chair

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Co-Chair

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Community Member

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Community Member

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With the support of

Enterprise
Canada

SPRC
Social Planning and
Research Council of
Hamilton

Purpose & Objective

Provide a path forward for the **improvement of trust** and transparency between the City of Hamilton and Hamilton residents and diverse communities by:

1) Soliciting concerns and opportunities from citizens about public **access, transparency and accountability** at the City of Hamilton and;

2) Providing **actionable recommendations** to the General Issues Committee for improvements

Context

- Macroeconomic uncertainty

- Political change and challenges

- National issues related to housing, public safety, drugs, and more

- Cyberattack

Commitment

MISSION

- To provide high-quality, cost-conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe, and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

VISION

- To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully

Significant Opportunities for Transformational Improvement

Communications

Reporting and Strategic Management

Organizational Culture

Methodology & Approach

The Process

Engage the Community & City Officials

Engage Hamilton survey

Written submissions

Public delegations

Interviews – City Councillors & staff

Focus groups – Community groups & staff

Our Engagements

For this project, we talked to…

11 City Councillors, plus the Mayor

8 members of the City of Hamilton Senior Leadership team

4 focus groups with frontline staff

6 public delegations

3 focus groups with equity-deserving communities

1 focus group with Indigenous communities

306 responses to Engage Hamilton Survey

WHAT WE HEARD

General Themes

Trust	Transparency	Access	Accountability
Trust in the City is a worrisome level. In our Engage Hamilton survey: • 80% of respondents gave the City a negative rating in the trust department. • 71% feel the City is not transparent • City spending is a top concern, noted by 69% of respondents	Stakeholders expressed the need for: • Clearer and more proactive communication of decisions, policies, and rationale behind them. • Timely access to information. • Increased accountability for decision-making.	Barriers to participation (technological, logistical, cultural, or structural) remain a significant concern. • Aim to create more inclusive avenues for community involvement and ensure City services and communications meet diverse needs. • More than 60% of survey respondents reported difficulty accessing information on council decisions	Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and responsiveness. • Improve customer service. • 62% of survey respondents want a dashboard to track council initiatives and decisions

Indigenous Focus Group Themes
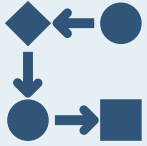
Looking for meaningful involvement in policy development and decision making

City should publicly report on its Truth and Reconciliation progress

City needs to take more leadership in its relationship with Indigenous residents... is viewed as passive vs. proactive

Recognized City staff upholding and recognizing Indigenous rights, for example by removing barriers for fire permits for sacred fires

Sir John A. MacDonald statue removal seen as pivotal

Equity Deserving Focus Group Themes

Looking for meaningful involvement in policy development and decision making

Many expressed that equity issues are not seen as a City priority

Slow responses to people experiencing hate (i.e. Pride 2019 and anti-immigrant demonstration at Jackson Square 2024)

Need for ongoing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility (IDEA) training

City has improved physical accessibility. Would like to see more accessible programming to address other disabilities, language, and technology barriers

IDEA should be a foundational priority for all city initiatives

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Digital Transformation

Launch a digital transformation initiative, including an overhaul of the City's website and a concerted effort to digitize historic records that will facilitate easy public access to public information.

Recommendation 2

Restructure Communications

Develop and execute an enterprise-level initiative with clear ownership, leadership and timelines to definitively improve communications, with the objective to:

- Establish the infrastructure for coordinated communications from Council and across the organization.

- Adopt a "plain language" policy for City reports and public-facing materials.

- Ensure translation services are in place.

Recommendation 3

Equity

Make equity a foundational principle guiding all operations in the City of Hamilton.

Recommendation 4

Professional Development

Ensure City of Hamilton leaders and staff are trained on new processes and procedures to support better customer service, stronger community connections and a more inclusive city.
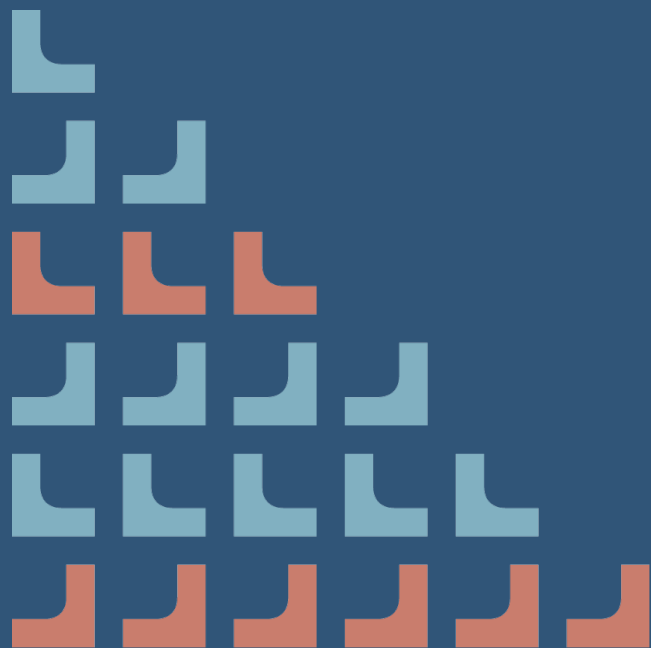
Recommendation 5

Action on Accountability

Measure overall performance and progress on transparency, access and accountability, which should include:

- Enterprise-level scorecard with clear accountability frameworks

- Strategic management excellence
  - internal culture and capabilities
  - performance and efficiency
  - customer satisfaction
  - financial performance

- Consider creating an Ombudsperson's office.

THANK YOU