



## City of Hamilton Report for Information

**To:** Chair  
Community Benefits Protocol Sub-Committee

**Date:** April 20, 2026

**Report No:** HSC26028

**Subject/Title:** Community Benefits Framework Update

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

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### Recommendations

- a) That Report No. HSC26028 respecting the Community Benefits Framework Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

### Key Facts

- This report provides an update on the progress made in the development of a Community Benefits Framework for the City of Hamilton.
- Since the Community Benefits Protocol Subcommittee meeting on November 6, 2025, the Community Benefits Framework team has launched an internal staff survey, continued engagement with Leadership Teams and divisions across the organization and begun developing an external engagement strategy to connect with community partners and organizations.
- An updated Work Plan is included as Appendix “A.”
- Appendix “B” contains a data-driven analysis of Hamilton residents who face the greatest barriers to economic opportunity, highlighting demographic trends, labour-market challenges and social indicators that will guide where a Community Benefits Framework can have the most impact.

## **Financial Considerations**

There are no financial considerations respecting this information report.

## **Background**

On November 6, 2025, staff presented a summary report on Phases 1 and 2 of the Community Benefits Framework. Since that time, the project has nearly completed Phase 3: Internal Engagement and progressed into the initial stages of Phases 4 and 5. These phases include developing a comprehensive external engagement process with community partners, labour groups, businesses, and industry stakeholders, as well as summarizing key insights from the internal staff survey to inform the draft Community Benefits Framework (Phase 4).

These inputs, along with toolkit resources and findings from earlier phases, will be integrated into the final Framework and implementation roadmap under Phase 5. An updated workplan is detailed in Appendix “A” to this report.

## **Analysis**

### **Understanding the Need Report**

As staff continue developing the first draft of the Community Benefits Framework, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton was engaged to provide a data-driven analysis that clarifies priority communities in Hamilton, the barriers they face, and the opportunities that can be advanced through development projects, workforce strategies, and community wealth-building initiatives. The resulting report, “Community Benefits Framework – Understanding the Need”, provides the evidence base for this work, using 2021 census data and other validated sources to identify population groups that stand to benefit most from a community benefits approach. It also highlights those disproportionately impacted by labour-market conditions such as unemployment, underemployment, and job precarity.

Key findings from the report include:

### **Demographic Trends**

- Hamilton's population reached 569,353 in 2021, growing 6% since 2016.
- Racialized residents make up 25% of the population, with the number tripling over two decades. This is driven by rapidly growing South Asian, Black, and Arab communities.
- Youth (12%) and seniors (18%) represent significant segments with differing labour-market needs.

### **Labour Market Overview**

- Hamilton's participation rate (61.9%) and employment rate (54.3%) trail provincial and national rates, while its unemployment rate (12.3%) is higher than Canada's 10.3%.
- Youth unemployment is particularly high at 24.1%, and seniors also experienced elevated rates during the pandemic.
- Precarious work is widespread:
  - 22% of workers are part-time.
  - 37% of youth hold temporary positions.

### **Social & Economic Indicators**

- One-parent families represent 19.2% of all families, with 80% led by women - higher than provincial and national averages.
- Nearly 205,000 residents aged 15+ report activity limitations (44%), a rate higher than both Ontario and Canada. Mental health related limitations are the most common.
- Income assistance use remains substantial: almost 14,000 Ontario Works and 22,000 Ontario Disability Support Program cases in the Hamilton census metropolitan area, with Ontario Works cases rising above pre-pandemic levels.

### **Groups Facing the Greatest Barriers:**

The report identifies several communities that disproportionately experience unemployment, underemployment, and job precarity:

- Racialized residents
- Recent immigrants
- Women-led single-parent families
- Residents with disabilities
- Youth (15–24)

These groups are therefore key priority populations for workforce, training, and hiring commitments within a Community Benefits Framework.

## Internal Survey

In December 2025, staff released an internal survey to gather input on current departmental priorities, potential pilot opportunities, support needs, and recommended community stakeholders for upcoming engagement activities. To date, 37 responses from different teams City-wide have been received. Common themes include:

a) Integrating community benefits principles:

Respondents expressed general interest in incorporating community benefit principles, such as equity, local employment, and social procurement, into existing or upcoming initiatives. Many identified opportunities to include local hiring and procurement targets as well as community-led public realm improvements. With the understanding that certain teams are limited in what they're able to contribute since spending depends on provincial and/or federal funds with stipulations. Overall, respondents were supportive of piloting the Community Benefits Framework, with examples including public art and placemaking initiatives, future construction projects, Indigenous procurement, and new housing developments.

b) Barriers to implementation

Commonly cited challenges included limited staff capacity, lack of knowledge or training, budget constraints, competing priorities, and absence of standard processes for evaluating outcomes as some of the leading reasons why this work might pose a challenge in the future.

c) Competing priorities

Those who identified competing priorities noted day to day workloads, Council-directed workloads, and pre-determined workplans may limit capacity to take on new requirements. Respondents emphasized the importance of clear guidance on when and how the Community Benefits Framework should be applied, along with practical tools that enable straightforward integration.

d) Definitions

One respondent noted that some of the current definitions are primarily focused on built infrastructure and recommended expanding them to include community-led activities or gatherings related to public space, as these can help shape long term goals for how those spaces are used. Others requested clearer distinctions between Community Benefit Agreements, standardized social procurement processes, and broader community initiatives. Additional feedback included integrating stronger references to climate resilience within the Framework and considering how investments for vulnerable populations are defined.

e) Clarity and alignment

Respondents highlighted the need for a clear implementation roadmap that demonstrates how the Community Benefit Framework relates to their work. For example, its application to affordable housing, accountability mechanisms, alignment with “Buy Local” policies, and educational resources for teams. Some emphasized that success would depend on clarity, practicality, measurable outcomes, and strong leadership alignment. With these elements in place, respondents noted that the Community Benefits Framework has potential to enhance both community well-being and organizational performance.

## External Engagement

Staff are collaborating with community partners to develop an engagement strategy that will gather input on how external stakeholders may interact with the CBF once it's implemented. External stakeholders include, but are not limited to, representatives from labour, community networks, businesses, social enterprises, organization's serving

equity deserving groups, and industry partners. Engagement activities are anticipated for late April 2026 and will consist of one virtual session, three in-person sessions, and a survey distributed to external partners. The draft stakeholder list has been developed in partnership with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network and refined through input from staff across multiple departments.

## **Alternatives**

None.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

The project will align with the 2022-2026 Council Priorities in the following ways:

1.2 Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development: Facilitate growth of the key sectors:

- With the uncertainty surrounding Canada–U.S. trade relations and the imposition of ongoing tariffs, the Framework offers a strategic pathway to bolster Hamilton’s economic resilience. By reinforcing the principles of the City’s updated Made-in-Canada procurement policies, the Framework will help safeguard local jobs, support domestic industries, and strengthen the regional economy.

2.1 Safe and Thriving Neighbourhoods: Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness:

- One of the key benefit streams enabled through Community Benefit Agreements is the inclusion of affordable housing targets in both new and existing development projects. This approach supports equitable growth and helps address housing insecurity at the neighbourhood level.

3.2 Responsiveness and Transparency: Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving:

- Community Benefit Agreements have historically empowered communities to influence development projects through democratic engagement. Hamilton’s CBF will continue this approach by involving a wide range of stakeholders, including labour, local businesses, organization’s serving equity-deserving groups, social

enterprises, and industry partners. This process is intended to help the framework reflect diverse community needs, broaden civic participation, and work towards identifying and reducing barriers to engagement.

## **Previous Reports Submitted**

[HSC25050](#) - Community Benefits Framework: Phases 1 and 2 Summary Report

## **Consultation**

- Karl Andrus - Hamilton Community Benefits Network and Vice-Chair of the Community Benefits Protocol Subcommittee
- Tina Iacoe – Director - Procurement, Corporate Services
- Ashley Evans – Senior Project Manager - Special Procurement Projects, Procurement, Corporate Services

## **Appendices and Schedules Attached**

Appendix A: Community Benefits Framework: Updated Work Plan Activities

Appendix B: Community Benefits Framework – Understanding the Need Report, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

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