

What has Hamilton asked for in the 2008 Provincial Budget?

1. Social Services

Ontario is one of the few jurisdictions in North America that places social services funding on the local property tax base. Such an arrangement unduly burdens larger, older cities that act as hubs for social service delivery for surrounding regions. Much like Toronto and Windsor, Hamilton falls into this category. There is no question that Hamilton and other municipalities continue to shoulder excessive financial burdens relating to Social Services and Social Housing.

While the Province of Ontario, municipalities, and AMO are in the midst of the Provincial Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, the City of Hamilton urges the province continue its practice of providing special financial assistance this year, similar to the commitment the current government has made to municipalities within the GTA in reducing the financial burden caused by social services costs. That burden has become even heavier most recently as an increasing number of social assistance recipients are choosing to relocate to Hamilton from GTA communities due to relatively lower rental housing costs.

Also, it is a well-known fact that Hamilton has one of the highest poverty rates in the Province of Ontario and a comparatively low median household income level compared to our neighbouring municipalities or municipalities of a similar size. With all of these factors taken into consideration, the City of Hamilton has made a formal request that the Province of Ontario maintain its special assistance funding at \$12M for 2008. It is the position of the City that the uploading of all social services costs by the province would be the most equitable solution to resolve these inequities. In the meantime, the City maintains that a multi-year funding arrangement must be applied to address Hamilton's special needs.

2. Emergency Services

As per the province's directive, the City of Hamilton has responded to the requirement of achieving the provincial standard emergency response time of 10.02 minutes, 90% of the time. To meet provincial requirements, Council approved an additional \$7.2 M for Land Ambulance Service in 2007, reducing provincial funding for this program to 39 per cent, while increasing the City's share to 61%. The City of Hamilton has also requested that the province move toward a 50 per cent funding formula for Hamilton EMS in 2008 by providing an additional \$2.5M subsidy to bring the provincial contribution to its proper level.

3. Hamilton Brownfield Redevelopment Fund

The City of Hamilton gratefully received a capital grant of \$3M from the Province of Ontario in April 2007. Since that time the City has created a Brownfield Redevelopment Fund. A process is underway to assess and rank potential brownfield redevelopment opportunities in Hamilton based on municipal best practices and the brownfield redevelopment objectives of the City. To that end, a minimum of 30 strategic sites will be identified to create a comprehensive property information inventory and potential redevelopment options for each of the 30 sites. The Brownfield Redevelopment Fund will then be used to expedite their redevelopment.

The purpose of this strategy is to build on existing policy and programs, Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement (ERASE) Community Improvement Plan (CIP) utilizing the Historic Land Use Study (HLUS) and Land Banking Study recommendations. This strategy will further assist the City of Hamilton in the redevelopment of strategic brownfield properties and outline the necessary steps for further program implementation.

To further enhance the strategy, the City of Hamilton has requested that the Province of Ontario provide \$25M for the Brownfield Redevelopment Fund. This fund would help transform Hamilton's north end neighbourhoods, assist in downtown renewal and waterfront development efforts, and rehabilitate industrial sites for new economic activity and assessment growth while providing funds for future investment initiatives.

Hamilton has among the largest inventory of non-functioning brownfield sites in the province. One of the biggest obstacles to redeveloping our brownfields stems from provincial legislation relating to liability. To resolve this issue, the City of Hamilton formally requests that the Province of Ontario amend existing provincial legislation to limit liability for brownfield contamination so that new owners are not assuming liability for contamination that may have occurred decades before.