

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Hamilton envisions a safe, healthy, sustainable community and a great place in which to work, live, and play that offers residents and businesses growth and opportunity. Implicit in this vision is the community's commitment to maintaining a Healthy, Safe and Green City (Strategic Plan, City of Hamilton 2004).

The 2005 Social and Health Issues Report (SHIR) supports this vision by helping users to monitor the health status of City residents. This report, however, goes one step further by describing determinants of health in the City of Hamilton. Determinants of health are the range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that determine the health status of individuals and populations (Canadian Public Health Association 1997). By also describing important determinants of health in the City of Hamilton, this report helps readers to understand the health of City of Hamilton residents in the context of their daily surroundings.

Each indicator in the 2005 SHIR provides a snapshot of how the City of Hamilton is doing in key public health areas. These areas are identified as priority areas for reporting by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in the Mandatory Health and Programs and Services Guidelines (1997). They include mortality rates, morbidity rates, reproductive outcomes, prevalence of risk factors for preventable diseases, and indices of dental health. This report also contains a Highlights section that summarizes important findings from each chapter. Readers are encouraged to seek further details about these findings in the full report.

With each indicator in the full report, a description and key message about the information is presented. To allow readers to evaluate progress, where applicable, comparisons are made between the City of Hamilton and Middlesex-London, the City of Ottawa, and Windsor-Essex health regions. Work by Statistics Canada, based on 24 social and economic characteristics known to influence health status, such as gender distribution and employment rate, showed that Middlesex-London, the City of Ottawa, and Windsor-Essex are more socio-economically comparable to the City of Hamilton than other health regions in the province (Appendix A).

By comparing health regions of similar social and economic characteristics, we can assess the relative effectiveness of health promotion, prevention, and health status monitoring activities across regions. This way, the identified differences in health status are less likely due to socio-economic determinants of health. This approach was used to evaluate indicators in the sections entitled General Health; Chronic Conditions, Healthy Lifestyles and Injury Prevention; and Family Health.

Whether comparing the City of Hamilton to selected health regions, to the provincial average, or over time, this report uses the most up-to-date information available to describe the health of City of Hamilton residents. Data used in this report come from provincial and nation-wide data sources, such as the 2003 Canadian Community Health Survey, the 2001 Census, and the Provincial Health Planning Database and local data sources, such as the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System and the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Other information has been previously reported in important corporate-wide documents, such as the 2004 Annual Sustainability Indicators Report and the Nutritious Food Basket Report 2004.

We look forward to having the 2005 SHIR read by city staff, elected officials, community partners, and city residents and hope that it supports us in making the City of Hamilton a sustainable community.

