



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

CITY WIDE
IMPLICATIONS

To:	Mayor and Members Board of Health		
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Date:	June 8, 2009		
Re:	Select Determinants of Health in Hamilton: A Comparison of Aging and Poverty with Peer Ontario Health Units BOH09020 - (City Wide)		

Council Direction:

This report is provided in keeping with the Board of Health policy on communication between the Medical Officer of Health and the Board of Health, as outlined in Report PH06038.

Information:

An aging population and high levels of poverty are two socio-demographic features of a community that have implications for population health. A recent analysis by Public Health Services in the City of Hamilton revealed that the community is getting older, with individuals 65 years of age and older representing the fastest growing age group in the City of Hamilton¹. The analysis also found that the City of Hamilton has a higher percentage of residents living in poverty compared to Ontario overall². This information was shared with the Board of Health (BoH) at the May 26, 2009 meeting.

At the request of the BoH, further work was completed to explore how the City of Hamilton compares to other socio-economically similar Ontario health units in regards to aging and poverty levels. The analysis revealed that:

- The City of Hamilton has an average percentage of individuals 65 years of age and older compared to its peer Ontario health units.
- The City of Hamilton has the highest percentage of individuals living in poverty compared to its peer Ontario health units.

¹ Source: Population projections (2008-2031), Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Provincial Health Planning Database, Extracted October 2008

² Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

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Context

The *Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), 2008* place a renewed focus on the social determinants of health. To better understand the characteristics of City of Hamilton residents, Public Health Services used information from the 2006 Census to profile select population features that may influence the health of the community.

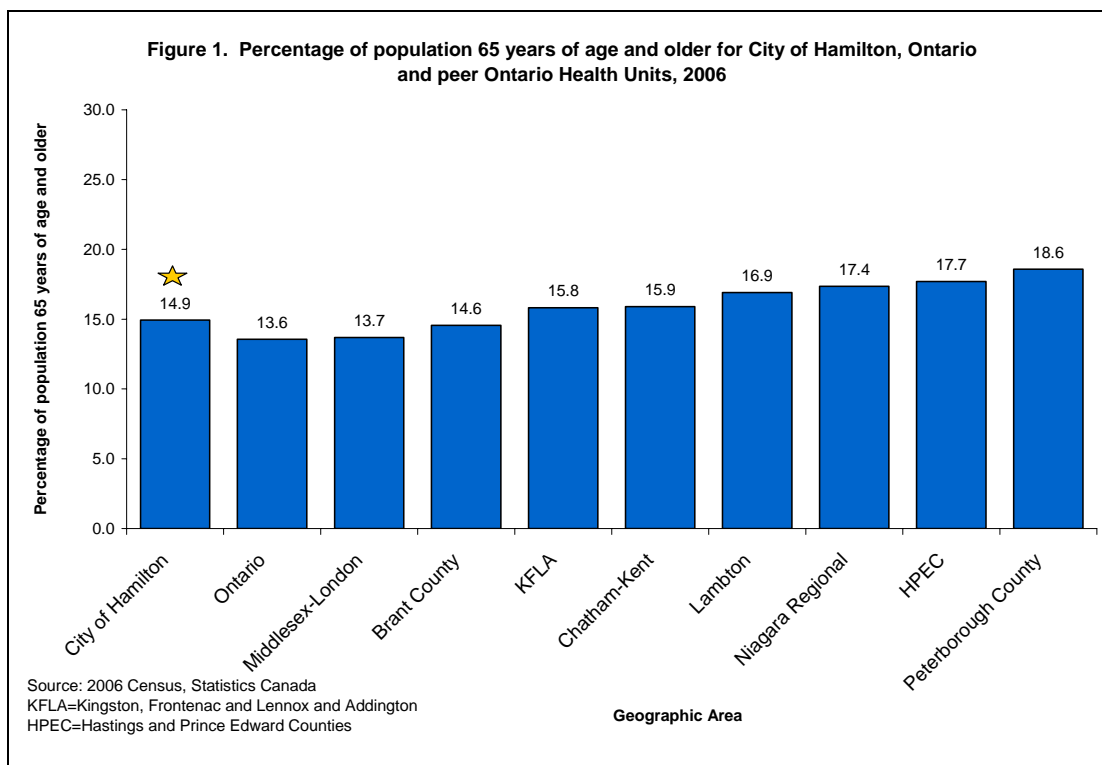
The profile revealed that the City of Hamilton is getting older, with individuals 65 years of age and older representing the fastest growing age group¹. The analysis also found that the City of Hamilton has a higher percentage of residents living in poverty compared to Ontario overall². This information was shared with the BoH at the May 26, 2009 meeting.

At the request of the BoH, further work was completed to examine how the City of Hamilton compares to other socio-economically similar Ontario health units in regards to aging and poverty levels.

Findings

Aging and poverty levels in the City of Hamilton were compared to other peer Ontario health units³. A peer group is a cluster of health units with similar social and economic characteristics. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be using this grouping of peer health units³ in their reporting and comparisons under the new performance management framework of the OPHS.

Aging

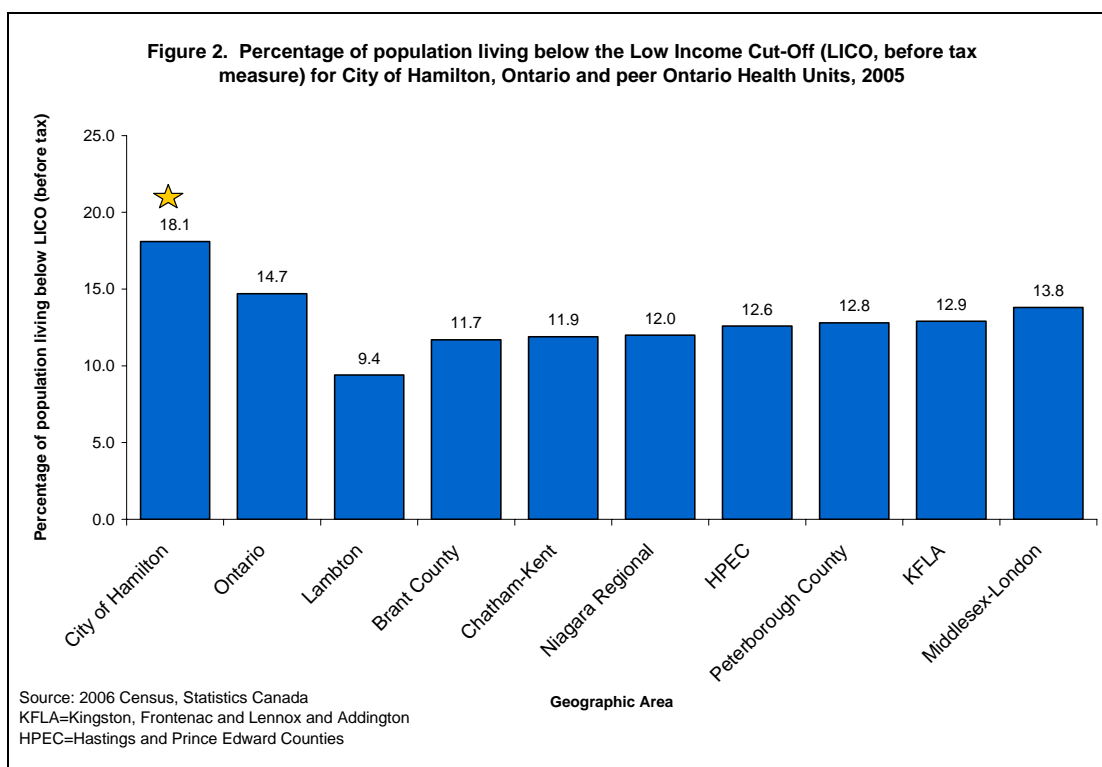


³ Based on Statistics Canada Health Region Peer Groups (2007) clusters

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The percentage of individuals 65 years of age and older in the peer group ranges from 13.7% in Middlesex-London to 18.6% in Peterborough County. The City of Hamilton has an average percentage (14.9%) of individuals 65 years of age and older compared to other peer health units. All health units in the peer group have a higher percentage of individuals 65 years of age and older than Ontario overall (Figure 1).

Poverty



The percentage of individuals living in poverty (as measured by the before-tax LICO measure) in the peer group ranges from 9.4% in the Lambton Health Unit to 18.1% in the City of Hamilton. The City of Hamilton has a higher percentage (18.1%) of individuals living in poverty compared to all other peer health units and Ontario, overall (Figure 2).

Discussion

Relative age profile and poverty level are two indicators that can inform program planning and focus public health action around the type, profile and expected demand for public health services that best fits the needs of the community.

While individuals 65 years of age and older represent the fastest growing age group in the City of Hamilton and the percentage of individuals 65 years of age and older is higher in the City of Hamilton than Ontario overall, the City of Hamilton is somewhat similar to its other peer health units with regards to this population feature.

In contrast, the City of Hamilton experiences a higher level of poverty in comparison to its peer health units and Ontario, overall. The impact of poverty on health is widely

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acknowledged and has implications for the health, quality of life and life expectancy of Hamilton residents.

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