

Hamilton

HAMILTON'S FEDERAL PRIORITIES





INVESTING IN HAMILTON'S BRIGHTER, HEALTHIER AND MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE

Hamilton is one of Canada's largest cities. With a population of over 575,000, it is home to a traditional manufacturing base, a nerve center of healthcare research and training, and is a destination for an emerging knowledge-based economy.

Hamilton is a premier destination for investment and arts and culture, as well as a growing destination for families, whether you are a new Canadian or a Canadian looking for something new.

Hamilton is a city with limitless potential. As the ninth-largest regional economy in Canada and the third in Ontario, Hamilton is uniquely positioned as a truly multi-modal city offering all modes of transportation, moving goods and our workforce. We are the only city in

Southern Ontario that offers all four modes of transportation – rail, road, air and port. Over the next ten years, the population is projected to grow dramatically.

The City of Hamilton identified five key priority areas impacting the City, where collaboration with the Federal Government is vital. Building more resilient, vibrant and inclusive communities post-COVID-19 will be essential to a strong recovery. These priority areas demonstrate how investing in Hamilton can lead to a much brighter, healthier and more equitable future.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND TACKLING POVERTY

addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations through providing supports for homelessness as well as an affordable housing strategy.

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

disaster mitigation and adaption support for all areas impacted or at risk of being impacted by the effects of climate change.

STRONG ECONOMIC RECOVERY

investment in critical infrastructure to support economic development and continued support for workers and businesses recovering from the effects of COVID-19.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

support for marginalized communities that have been impacted by hate-related incidents, namely, the Black, Muslim, Jewish, Asian, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous communities.

CHAMPIONING RURAL COMMUNITIES

committing to universal internet access and applying a rural lens to policy and funding decisions.

Our municipal government is the level of government that is closest to and best understands the daily challenges of Hamilton residents. Service delivery and value for taxpayer money is our business. We are responsible fiscal managers maintaining a AA+ credit rating and have consistently kept property tax increases at or below the rate of inflation. We have complete knowledge of local challenges and opportunities in the short, medium and long-term.



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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND TACKLING POVERTY

While recent enhancements to *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* have assisted greatly in responding to the immediate health, safety, housing and support needs of those experiencing homelessness during COVID-19, Hamilton requires additional ongoing supports to enhance permanent housing and support solutions to meet both short- and long-term community outcomes related to ending chronic homelessness.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hamilton's growing community continues to have significant challenges with affordable housing, and the latest research on development trends highlights the rapidly increasing levels of complexity faced by the development industry. A recent housing needs assessment determined Hamilton would need an additional 77,800 total housing units to accommodate local population growth and housing needs through to 2041. This means, on average, Hamilton will need to add 3,125 housing units per year.

To accomplish this, Hamilton will continue to need a strong mix of ownership and rental housing with a particular need to prioritize affordable rental housing targeted to low and moderate-income households. Previous projections had forecasted a need of 300 affordable units per year; this had increased to 341 new affordable rental units for low-income households (pre-COVID) as Hamilton's development of affordable rental housing has not kept pace with demand over the past five years. Even if affordable housing construction is scaled up through enhanced partnerships between federal and municipal partners, expanded post-COVID measures will be required to ensure there is no net loss of affordable housing over time.

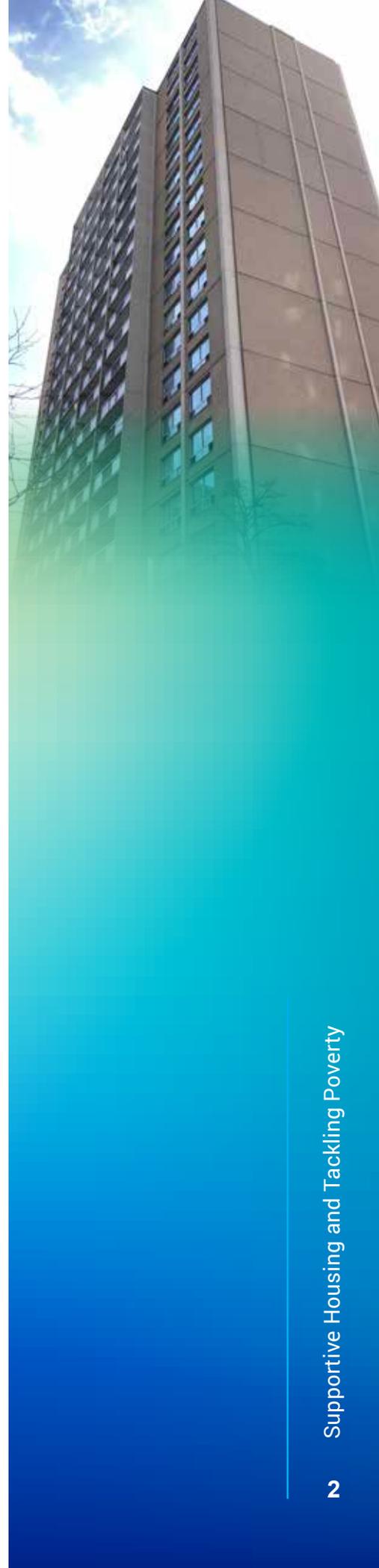
To meet Hamilton's needs, the following will be required:

- increased rental assistance for low-income households to prevent homelessness as a result of COVID-19
- additional funding for portable housing allowances/benefits, which have become an increasingly important tool to help individuals and families secure housing
- increased government funding for new affordable purpose-built and secondary rental units, including increased levels of funding to meet the need for unique housing structures such as large or mobility device accessible units
- supports to increase the capacity of agencies and community groups to implement innovative and non-traditional housing models
- rental market shifts that increase the financial viability of rental housing developments.

Currently, a shortage of social housing units remains for those in need, making the wait time for social housing in Hamilton significant. The average wait time for all households in a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) unit from the social housing waitlist in 2020 was 2.5 years. For survivors of domestic violence who have Special Priority status, the wait time in 2020 was two years. The wait time was longer for chronological applicant households who typically waited between three to five years. The City of Hamilton is concerned with waitlists and the limited supply of housing, as affordability challenges have resulted in increased demand for private market rental units, RGI housing and emergency shelter spaces.

As a result of the lack of investment over time, Hamilton's social housing capital repair backlog is approximately \$222 million and projected to grow to \$632 million over the next 10 years. This investment backlog is beyond the financial capacity of the City or social housing providers and as such, providers are dependent on other partners, particularly higher levels of government, to shoulder a substantial proportion of the cost.

While capital investment funding from all levels of government has assisted in recent years to improve the condition of social housing stock, more funding will be required to support the following types of initiatives: climate change/greenhouse gas emission reduction, accessibility modifications, unit restoration at turnover, health and safety repairs and maintenance, and preventative maintenance. Capital funding as well as funding for social housing subsidies and housing allowances is critical.





IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Municipalities are on the front lines of climate change adaptation, as the level of government that has the most direct contact with residents of Canada. Municipalities play a role in setting policy for approvals, but are limited in scope and authority, and need the support of higher levels of government to set policy direction and funding to ensure the climate change adaptation actions are undertaken. Hamilton is a willing partner in this adaptation, investing in climate projects to become more resilient in the face of a changing climate and new weather realities.

We envision a multi-pronged approach looking at stormwater management, erosion control, low-carbon construction methods, resiliency in natural and urban areas, alternative transportation, and encouraging live/work developments.

More extreme and less predictable weather has become the norm. Protecting Canadians from extreme weather damage is a local challenge. Cities are on the front lines as new weather extremes wreak havoc on homes and businesses. We are making the most of the limited tools available to respond to more frequent floods, wildfires and more. In March of 2019, Hamilton City Council declared a “Climate Emergency.”

The City applauds the Federal Government’s recently launched Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, allocating \$150 million towards projects in Ontario and hopes to see sustainable funding in the future. Local and federal representatives must work closely together to plan and allocate the funds for prevention and rehabilitation priority projects.

With the right tools, cities are ready to do more. Protecting Canadians from climate change takes ongoing investment on the front lines—where new weather extremes are unfolding. Long-term, predictable funding to scale up local climate mitigation and adaptation projects would build more climate-resilient communities, for current and future generations.

STRONG ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Municipalities are responsible for more than 60 percent of the community infrastructure that supports our economy and quality of life. These are the roads, bridges, recreation centres, wastewater facilities—and more—that people and businesses rely on every single day.

Of the more than 1,500 businesses across the city that participated in the City of Hamilton’s 2021 COVID-19 impact survey, 60 percent had experienced revenue decreases of 25 percent or more, with more than 30 percent experiencing a 50 percent or greater decrease in revenue. Many of these businesses also indicated concern about the availability of skilled and experienced labour as they return to normal levels of business activity. Continued funding of small business support programs such as Digital Main Street, which helps businesses go digital alongside continued investments in work placements for post-secondary secondary students, will be crucial in enabling strong local business recovery.

As we look to a post-COVID recovery plan, we have identified the need for enhanced support over a minimum of one to two years, to transition from COVID-19 emergency supports to a more responsive, resilient, sustainable and housing-focused homeless serving system. This includes a specific focus on homelessness prevention, through actions that address the increase in rental arrears due to the impacts of COVID-19. Direct eviction-prevention supports for low-income households are needed to alleviate the financial pressures exacerbated as a result of COVID-19.





EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Building an equitable, diverse and inclusive City is both an obligation and an opportunity. All levels of government must advance this objective together, acting both individually and collectively. Recognizing our progress will rely on meaningful ongoing support for marginalized communities that have been impacted by hate and racism and playing an active role in helping to amplify the voices of those in our community to lead the way.

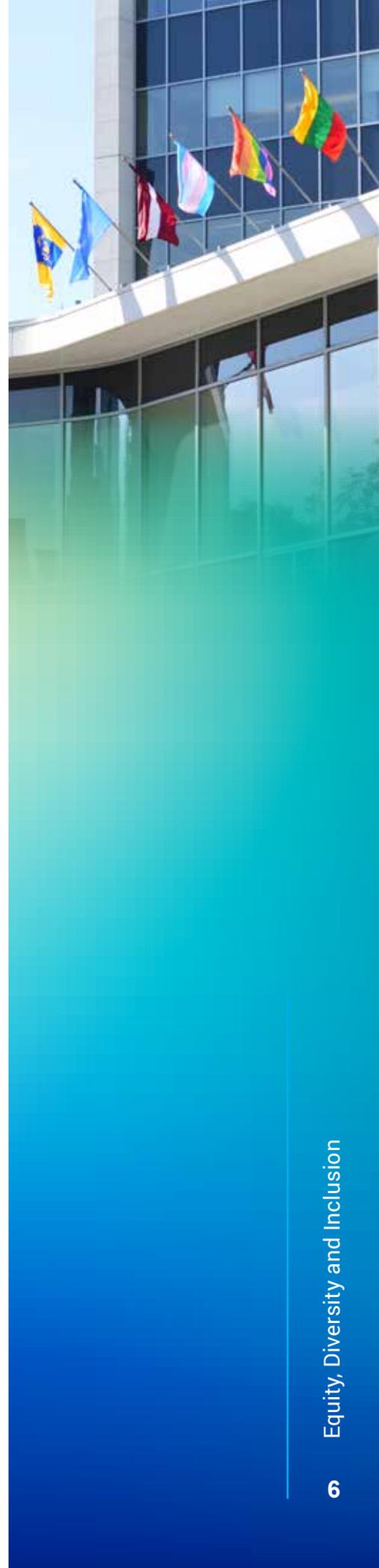
Prioritizing meaningful engagement and effective participation with those who have lived experience in processes that will inform the development and adaptation of systems-level responses remains critical in our local and national context. For example, within this work, there is a distinct recognition of the systemic overrepresentation of Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness and the need to prioritize consistent approaches, rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation, that acknowledge autonomy and self-determination as key pillars of engagement alongside Indigenous Peoples.

In spring 2015, Hamilton City Council committed to developing an Urban Indigenous Strategy that would identify actions and strengthen the City's relationship with the Indigenous community. City staff began by reaching out to community partners to co-develop this strategy. Staff worked with Indigenous community partners and agreed to learn and follow principles that honour traditional knowledge, teachings and reciprocity.

Over the past several years, there has been an increased level of awareness that Municipalities need to take a greater role to ensure communities are safe, respectful, and inclusive for all its citizens. Local government has a tremendous direct impact on policy, services and civic engagement. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion has been identified as a key priority to the City of Hamilton, through the term of Council priorities. The City is committed to creating and nurturing a city that is welcoming and inclusive. The goal is that equity-seeking communities will feel safe, supported and have an enhanced sense of belonging through strengthening community capacity and inclusive engagement opportunities. The City of Hamilton faces unique challenges and opportunities and, as such, the framework designed to meet our City's specific needs.

The City of Hamilton has taken the steps to ban hate symbols of expression, such as the Confederate flag and Nazi swastika, from public municipal property under the Sign by-law; however, there is no inherent ability on the part of the municipality to limit an individual's freedom of expression on private property unless such expression falls under the provisions of the federal Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46) and Section 319, inciting hatred against an identifiable group which is likely to result in a breach of the peace. The City of Hamilton urges the Canadian Government to build on Parliament's 2019 report Taking Action to End Online Hate and engage in the development of legislation that would clarify and strengthen the definition of hate speech, including explicit recognition of the psychological harm that can be caused by hateful symbols, and work with all levels of government in addressing the root causes of hate speech.

While senior leaders are accountable, EDI work demands our collective responsibility – at all levels – and recognition that work underway must continue to build an equitable, diverse and inclusive community for all.



CHAMPIONING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Ensuring funding for rural broadband connectivity to allow residents, farmers and agri-based businesses access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet is crucial. Nearly two-thirds of Hamilton's land use is agricultural which in turn generates \$1.26 billion annually for the economy and ensuring those residents and businesses can participate in the digital economy is critical. One of the highest costs for agri-businesses and farmers is monthly internet, it is important to note software, automation and high technology are an integral part of these operations.

Hamilton's High-Speed Internet Survey data indicate a clear gap in connectivity speeds between urban and rural areas out of 2,257 results:

All Hamilton Average (n=1,115): 30/8 Mbps (megabits per second)
Urban Hamilton Average (n=769): 49/19 Mbps
Rural Hamilton Average (n=373): 7/1 Mbps

Results indicate that only 9 percent of rural residential areas meet the minimum basic service objective identified by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, of having access to broadband internet speeds of at least 50 Mbps for downloads and 10 Mbps for uploads.

Prioritizing affordable, universal internet access across rural, suburban and urban areas will ensure digital equity and reduce the digital divide. Affordable internet options will be crucial for supporting marginalized communities, such as those living in social/affordable housing and populations where internet costs (wired or wireless) are a disproportionately higher component of annual income.

Supporting funding for technology education programs for all ages will bolster digital literacy, training, promote digital equity and ensure municipal digital infrastructure projects are eligible for infrastructure funding.

Providing a rural lens to major policy and funding decisions is imperative at all levels of government. When we prioritize investment in our rural areas, we are investing in our people. Nearly two million people in Ontario call rural and northern communities their home – this is an opportunity to invest in their livelihood. Whether it's the communities they live within, their jobs, their built and natural environment, the services they receive and the quality of their lives. It provides us with an invitation. An invitation to all levels of government to do better with what they have and to ensure that the needs and requirements of rural and northern residents are met so that they may thrive and succeed.



www.hamilton.ca/federalpriorities