Monday, October 6, 2008

Hamilton Working Group on Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy
Deirdre Pike, Chair
c/o Social Planning And Research Council of Hamilton
162 King William St., Suite 103
Hamilton, ON
L8R 3N9

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger and City Councillors of Hamilton:

As I am sure you are all aware, the Ontario government promised to introduce a Poverty Reduction Strategy for the province after the last election and, to that end, put Minister Deb Matthews in place to chair an inter cabinet committee to bring this about. Since that time many consultations have taken place across the province to inform this process and Hamilton’s voice has certainly been heard.

However, recently there was some reluctance expressed by Premier McGuinty about implementing a Poverty Reduction Strategy right now with the current economic downturn, thereby proposing to leave already struggling Ontarians even further behind economically and in other related ways, such as level of health.

The 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction is a multi-sectoral network comprised of more than 100 provincial and Toronto-based organizations and individuals working on eliminating poverty. They are calling for a Poverty Reduction Plan with a goal to reduce poverty in Ontario by 25% in 5 years and 50% in 10 years.

They know that reducing poverty by 25% in five years is both necessary and achievable. Our local working group has formed to support this plan. A 25 in 5 plan would lift more than 400,000 Ontarians out of poverty in just five years.

I am writing to ask you to endorse, through a motion, the 25 in 5 Declaration to reduce poverty in Ontario by 25% in 5 years through:
• Sustainable employment
• Livable Incomes
• Strong and Supportive Communities (more information at 25in5.ca)
I would also ask that a copy of the endorsement would be sent to the Premier, Minister Deb Matthews and all local MPPs.

In doing so, you will join other municipalities such as London, Cambridge, Cornwall and Toronto who have already passed motions to sign onto the 25 in 5 Declaration.
Can we afford to do this? We can’t afford NOT to do it – the costs of poverty are too high.

I would also like to invite the mayor and any councillors to come out to an event we are having on October 21st where we will launch our local postcard campaign supporting 25 in 5, off to Queen’s Park. We would be pleased to have a member of council address the media that morning. Please call me to confirm your attendance.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Pike
Chair, Hamilton Working Group on Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy
City of Toronto

Council Highlights May 26 and 27, 2008

Council approves principles for poverty reduction Council put its support behind the principles to reduce poverty recommended in the 25 in 5 Declaration. The declaration and its strategy were developed by a broad range of community organizations and faith groups who are calling on the Provincial government to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce poverty levels by 25 per cent in five years and 50 per cent before 2018.

Principles of the poverty reduction strategy include creating sustainable, year-round employment for working adults, ensuring liveable incomes and building strong communities with supports including affordable housing and community programs.

City Council Decision

City Council on May 26 and 27, 2008, adopted the following motions:

1. City Council endorse the principles for a poverty reduction strategy contained in the 25-in-5 Declaration, specifically:

   a. sustaining employment means assuring a living standard above poverty for any adult who works full time throughout the year; it means fair pay, increasing the minimum wage and stable working conditions for all Ontarians;

   b. liveable incomes mean dignity for all Ontarians * including those unable to work; and

   c. strong and supportive communities mean affordable housing, early learning and child care, public education and community programs that help people connect.

2. The General Manager of Toronto Social Services, as part of her report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Social Assistance in the City of Toronto to Community Development and Recreation Committee, identify ways in which the City of Toronto can advance the poverty reduction initiatives outlined in the 25-in-5 Declaration.

3. The City of Toronto enable community engagement in the development of a poverty reduction strategy by facilitating public opportunities for Toronto residents to express their views on ways poverty can be reduced.

4. The City of Toronto share this report with its partners in other municipalities and the Province.