October 23, 2008

Stephanie Paparella  
Legislative Assistant  
Office of the City Clerk  
City of Hamilton  
Hamilton, ON

Dear Ms. Paparella:

I am writing to request an opportunity for representatives of the Hamilton Council on Aging to make a presentation to the City Council.

The Hamilton Council on Aging is a comparatively new, senior-driven organization, having been incorporated in 2007. We held our first Annual General Meeting on October 22, 2008 and were very pleased that Mayor Fred Eisenberger brought greetings from the City of Hamilton. Our mission is to educate and advocate for improved aging experiences for older adults through a collaborative network of individuals and organizations. We envision a community that respects and values its older adults, and provides them with the opportunity to participate fully in society. While other organizations in Hamilton include seniors in their clientele and seniors’ issues as part of their mandate, the Hamilton Council on Aging is the only organization in our community that focuses explicitly on seniors and on the whole spectrum of issues that affect them.

The following individuals serve on our Board of Directors: Carolyn Rosenthal, President; David Jewell, Vice-President; Catherine Pead, Secretary; Mary Buzzell; Nancy DiGregorio; Ismail Ibrahim; Margaret Denton; Anju Joshi; Leila Ryan; Bob Sutton; Bea McDonough; Judit Zsoldos.

We are committed to working collaboratively with existing agencies and organizations. To date, we have partnered with close to 40 such groups. We have three projects underway. The first is funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation and is aimed at reducing poverty among Hamilton seniors. Using a neighbourhood by neighbourhood approach and working with community organizations and volunteers, we locate older adults who are eligible for but not currently accessing benefits such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement and help them apply for the benefits in question. A second project is funded by the United Way and seeks to help older adults in diverse communities to access health and community services and to become more socially integrated. We have worked to date in the Somali, Chinese, Punjabi and African Caribbean communities and are adding others as we proceed. Again, our method is to work with community agencies and a team of trained volunteers.
Our third project is “Age Friendly Hamilton.” This initiative will begin to implement the World Health Organization’s Age Friendly Cities model in our city. We have received a 2-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to begin this initiative. This is the project which we wish to present to City Council and for which we hope to enlist their enthusiasm and support. Implementing the Age Friendly model will take a number of years and will draw on all levels of government and community. It holds the promise of making Hamilton not only a better place for older adults but for citizens of all ages. The Age Friendly Cities model has been implemented in 33 cities world-wide. There is increasing interest at the federal and provincial levels in Canada in implementing the model, but to date there have been only a few pilot projects. Hamilton will be the first city in Ontario and only the second major city (Halifax is the other) to engage in implementing the Age Friendly model.

We are very excited about this project and the potential it holds for Hamilton. We would greatly value the opportunity to make a brief presentation to Hamilton City Council.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carolyn J. Rosenthal
President, Hamilton Council on Aging