Committee of the Whole
REPORT 06-004

9:30 a.m.
February 10, 2006
Council Chambers
Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West, Hamilton

Present: Mayor L. Dilanni
         Councillors D. Braden, B. Bratina, P. Bruckler, C.
         Collins, T. Jackson, B. Kelly, B. McHattie, S. Merulla,
         D. Mitchell, M. Pearson, A. Samson, T. Whitehead

Absent with regrets: Councillors M. Ferguson, B. Morelli - Illness
                    Councillor M. McCarthy – City Business

Also Present: G. Peace, City Manager
              J. Rinaldo, General Manager, Finance and Corporate
              Services
              S. Stewart, General Manager, Public Works
              C. Graham, General Manager, Human Resources
              J. Priel, General Manager, Community Services and
              Public Health
              L. A. Coveyduck, General Manager, Planning and
              Development
              N. Everson, Director, Economic Development
              B. Mullan, Police Chief
              P. Barkwell, Legal Services
              I. Sturgeon, Legislative Assistant, City Clerks
              M. Gallagher, Co-ordinator, City Clerks

Mayor Dilanni called the meeting to order
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PRESENTS REPORT 06-004 AND RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS:

1. The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living in Hamilton Report
   
   
   (b) That this recommendation and report be forwarded to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in Geneva, The Prime Minister, The Premier, and the area MPP’s.

2. Change to the Tenant Protection Act 1997
   
   That the City of Hamilton support immediate reform of the Tenant Protection Act 1997 to eliminate the 5 day written dispute requirement for tenants responding to landlord applications to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

3. Clawback of the National Child Tax Benefit Supplement
   
   That the Mayor correspond with the Province of Ontario requesting that the Social Assistance rates be increased and that consideration be given to phasing out the National Child Tax Benefit Supplement Clawback.

4. Social Services Downloading Steering Committee Report 05-001, November 7, 2005
   
   That Social Services Downloading Steering Committee Report 05-001 be approved as presented.

5. Social Services Downloading Steering Committee Report 05-002, December 21, 2005
   
   That Social Services Downloading Steering Committee Report 05-002 be received.

6. Social Services Downloading Steering Committee Report 06-001, January 20, 2006
   
   That Social Services Downloading Steering Committee Report 06-001 be received.
FOR THE INFORMATION OF COUNCIL:

(a) DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Added In-Camera Item - Municipal Elections Compliance Audit

Mayor DiIanni declared an interest in the legal matter respecting the Municipal Elections Compliance Audit and vacated the Council Chambers.

(b) CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

The following changes to the agenda were approved:

a) Three additional speakers to be added to the list. Brenda Johnson, Vanessa Brcic and Noor Nizam

(b) Denise Brooks (Item 5.13) and Denise Arkell (Item 5.28) withdrew their requests to speak today.

(c) Two In-Camera Items have been added; a labour matter and a legal matter.

(c) PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Mark Chamberlain, Chair, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Carolyn Milne, President & CEO Hamilton Community Foundation, and Joe-Anne Priel, General Manager Community Services Department, City of Hamilton

Councillor Brian McHattie introduced the members of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and provided an overview of the work of the Roundtable to date.

Mr. Chamberlain, Ms. Milne and Ms. Priel made a presentation to members of Committee which highlighted the following:

- A brief overview on why the Task Force was established
- Poverty reduction in Hamilton has to become a priority
- The focus will be to prevent poverty in children and youth
- One in four children (25,000) in our community live below the poverty level
- 42% of single parents and 38% of families in our community live below the poverty level
The Poverty Round Table is developing a community plan that will be released in the spring and that will focus on solutions to decrease infant mortality rates, incidents of low birth weight, teenage pregnancies, school drop out rates, school mobility rates and fewer children having to use our food banks. The Plan also focuses on increasing education levels, participation in athletic and cultural activities and providing added affordable housing to families.

A new Poverty Round Table website is being launched today on the myhamilton.ca site.

(d) PUBLIC HEARINGS/DELEGATIONS

5.1 Chris Spence, Director of Education, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board – representatives attending on his behalf

Mr. Mike Rehill and Mr. Scott Sincerbox, Co-Chairs of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board’s Anti-Poverty Task Force addressed Committee on behalf of Mr. Spence and provided the following comments:

- Many students in Hamilton receive social assistance
- School Board implemented a nutrition program, issues monthly bursaries and administers programs that are supported by community service clubs (ie. the walk-in closet)
- Students living in poverty face many barriers
- Catchments areas face higher levels of poverty
- Schools can make a difference to students living in poverty
- Key to success is total involvement with all stakeholders
- Need the help of the entire community
- Focusing on 7 key issues: Nutrition, Essential Clothing & Toiletries, Ensure students get to school, After school programming, Equity Issues, Staffing – Providing extra assistance, Community Policing & Safety

5.2 John Dolbec, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Dolbec made a presentation to members of Committee and noted the importance of eliminating poverty and providing a reasonable opportunity for those in need to simply to better their financial situation. A hard copy of Mr. Dolbec's presentation was distributed to the Committee.
5.3 Gary Warne

Mr. Wayne addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Poverty Round table is on the right track
- Poverty in Hamilton is a very significant issue
- Inability to maintain one’s cultural identity, feeling of identity, lack of resources need to be addressed
- Emphasizing prevention is an important approach
- Vision 2020 is being addressed
- 20% poverty level in the community is un-healthy
- Hamilton statistical information shows that there are 3 visible poverty groups in our community; minorities, aboriginal people and recent immigrants

5.4 Steve Varey

Mr. Varey addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to,

- A healthy community is good for business and reduces poverty
- Poverty reduction gives our youth a chance
- Scotia Bank employs many people and a healthy community can employ more people

5.5 Lindsey George

Ms. George addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Poverty strategy for Hamilton is very important
- It takes both a village and a community to raise a child
- Key ingredients for children to prosper is resilience and sense of self
- Children need to contribute to the community
- We need to revitalize our neighbourhoods
- Strengthening our core will benefit everyone

5.6 Rick Beauchamp, Ministry of Community and Social Services

Mr. Beachamp addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to,

- The issue of poverty is too complex for one organization to tackle, collaboration is important.
Our mandate supporting vulnerable individuals and families and focus on services, programs for kids and youth experiencing problems. i.e. child welfare $68 million dollars, 16 million in children mental health services,

Encouraged to see shift to early intervention initiatives by the Ministry

5.7 Darryl Skidmore, C.E.O., United Way

Mr. Skidmore provided the following comments to members of Committee;

- Member of the Poverty Round Table and applaud the round table for their involvement.
- United way strongly endorses the collaboration of this enterprise. The merging work plan reflects sound research analysis and commitment among all participants
- Prevention - 40% goes to children, youth and families by the united way.
- Work of the round table and community must be about true poverty reduction. Focus, attention and commitment must be prevention and around children and youth.
- When we are talking reducing poverty = matters of quality of life, children participating in social activities, camping and visit to fast food restaurant. Parents living beyond assistance.
- Ask Council to not only embrace work of the Round Table but lead what we need to do. Count on the work and support of the United Way.

5.8 Dr. Leila Ryan, Hamilton Community Foundation

Dr. Ryan provided the following comments to Committee which included, but were not limited to,

- Hamilton Community Foundation is committed of the effort to reduce poverty.
- Tremendously encouraged by the depth of interest of the community in wanting to share ideas and commit to tackling the issue of poverty.
- Poverty has many interrelated process
- Research and experience shows that many partners are required to develop solutions to reduce poverty
- Foundation is convinced that with all sectors working together we can make great gains to address this problem in our city.
Foundation has made a commitment to reduce poverty in our community. – 3 million over the next four years
- The foundation has made 39 grants to support projects to address poverty.
- Engaged an external evaluator to examine results of the grants process

5.9 Craig Foye, Chair, Human Rights Committee of the Income Security Working Group

Mr. Foye spoke briefly regarding a report of the Income Security Working Group to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights regarding the Government of Canada’s non-compliance with Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. A copy of this report was included in the agenda as Item 5.9

5.10 Deirdre Pike, Income Security Working Group

Ms. Pike addressed Committee on two key issues – how the municipal budget relates to poverty and why it is critical for all citizens to have a significant role in the development and delivery of municipal services through that budget process. A hard copy of Ms. Pike’s presentation was circulated to members of Committee.

5.11 Social Planning and Research Council

Carolann Fernandes, Don Jaffray and Jeff Wingard presented and made the following statements:

- SPRC applauds the round table for this initiative to bring hope to the City and to City Council for listening.
- SPRC supports the work of the round table and will continue to support the work into the future phases.
- Recognize that there is no simple solution to poverty
- Support efforts to address racism in our community and the role that gender plays in poverty
- Focus on children and youth – the City must accelerate the national child benefit claw back.
- Budget enhancement which will move 1/3 of program money to general levy.
- We can’t wait for the additional 2/3 of that money because as we do wait the poorest children foot the bill for programs
- Encourage Council to make some of the long term changes to make poverty history
5.12 Jane Aronson, Community-Professional Advisory Committee of the School of Social Work, McMaster University

Ms. Aronson addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Social Workers work with many children who are poverty stricken
- There is a lot of false perception about poverty; laziness, people not being worthy etc.
- We are all participants on how the marketplace works ie. wages being reduced, make decisions as consumers etc.
- Community – there should be a collective responsibility

5.13 Denise Brooks, Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre

Ms. Brooks withdrew her delegation request.

5.14 Madhavi Reddy, Hamilton Tenant Education Project

Ms. Reddy addressed Committee and provided an overview regarding the Hamilton Tenant Help line which was launched in the City a few months ago.

5.15 Hugh Tye, Hamilton Community Legal Clinics

Mr. Tye addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Their mandate is to serve low income residents in Hamilton
- Tenant Protection Act – Would like City to assist with endorsing a change to eliminate the 5 day written dispute requirement
- Social Assistance Rate in the Province – Would like the City’s support in advocating with the Province to increase Social Assistance rates and to consider phasing out the claw back of the NCB
- Education – Prevention of Homelessness – Tenant Helpline
No funding source as been identified to continue this program and SCCIPI money is running out.

The Committee approved a motion endorsing a change to the requirement on how written disputes are made to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.
The Committee also approved a second motion requesting the City to advocate with the Province to increase Social Assistance rates and to consider phasing out the National Child Tax Benefit Supplement Clawback.

5.16 Neil Turner, Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits

Neil Turner on behalf of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits spoke to Committee about their response to the Matthews Report on Social Assistance, which was issued in November 2004. A copy of Mr. Turner’s presentation was circulated to members of Committee.

On a motion (McHattie/Kelly), the Committee approved a recommendation referring the Matthews Report to staff for a report back to the Social Services Committee.

5.17 Paula Holmes-Rodman, Hamilton Status of Women Committee

Ms. Holmes-Rodman addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- She is a volunteer at a Hamilton Shelter – Mary’s Place - and the 9 beds and always filled
- Mandate of Status of Women is to serve as a liaise with the City and the citizens of Hamilton on matters affecting women of Hamilton - social and municipal concerns of women
- Round table issues and status of women committee share the same issues
- Would ask the Round Table to look to a gender perspective in the development of all policies and programs
- Poverty of women is different than the poverty of men and children
- Research must be broken by gender as a policy and planning tool
- Wage gap – 50 – 52% of wage for the same work as men
- Basically if one does not understand the experiences of women in poverty there is no change to pose viable solutions
- Consider inviting rep from status of women committee or like group to sit at the table as you move forward to plan
5.18 Marg Opie, Social Action Committee of the Ontario Association of Social Works, Hamilton & District Branch

Ms. Opie addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- The Committee strongly endorses the Matthews report and its recommendations.
- Career in nursing and have been a reading volunteer for children who come from low income, single parent families.
- Income is a predictor of health - without adequate income, shelter food and clothing are inadequate, housing is often substandard, good nutrition is unaffordable and clothing sparse
- Returning all the National Child Benefit Supplement will help meet these needs.
- Must ensure the Matthews report becomes a reality

5.19 David Cohen

Mr. Cohen was not present

5.20 Valerie Sturrock

Ms. Sturrock made a presentation to members of Committee regarding her experience in applying for the Special Diet Allowance, Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. A hard copy of Ms. Sturrock’s presentation was distributed to the Committee.

5.21 Sue Grafe, Health Providers Against Poverty

Ms. Gloria Wade addressed Committee on behalf of Sue Grafe and provided comments about her concerns regarding the health of our low-income citizens. A hard copy of Ms. Wade’s presentation was provided to members of Committee.

5.22 Janet Chafe

Ms. Chafe addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Her first job in Hamilton was in Child protection and was overcome by the amount of poverty in our community,
- Feels people who live in poverty experience criticism and abuse

Council – February 15, 2006
Community agencies need to receive better assistance
Feels the majority of our citizens have never experienced the issues that people living in poverty do

5.23 Colleen Cavanaugh, Stoney Creek United Church

Ms. Cavanaugh made a presentation to members of Committee regarding the Wrap Around Program which tries to mitigate the effects of poverty on children and provided the following comments:

- Goal centred and case management approach
- Address gaps in service by families which keep them living in poverty.
- No government funding received and do all their own fundraising.
- 100,000 for community foundation has been received
- Working with aboriginals, new immigrants and single moms
- Wrap around is a successful grass roots movement - 7 years it has been growing in Hamilton
- Community based and grown to include the West end, Ancaster, being formed in Central Mountain, and soon to be in Dundas
- Providing a process for all to take our responsibilities seriously and be part of the solution.

5.24 Tom Oommen, Transit Users Group

Mr. Oommen addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Poverty and public transit – argue against proposed fare rises
- Low income Hamiltonians take public transit - don’t have a choice in how they get around. When fares are increased they have to now make difficult decisions on housing and food allocations.
- On a fixed income they will have less for other essentials.

5.25 Hans Jenssen

Mr. Jenssen appeared before Committee and suggested that in order to reduce poverty in the City, Council needs to consider reducing taxes, create the opportunity of high income jobs by rezoning the downtown core and petition the Federal Government to raise minimum wage. A copy of Mr. Jenssen’s presentation circulated to the Committee.
5.26 Dorothy Spence, Co-ordinator

Ms. Spence appeared before Committee on behalf of the Hamilton-Wentworth District Catholic School Board. She provided an overview of the Task Force that was created by the School Board to address Poverty Issues. Ms. Spence circulated a pamphlet outlining some of the projects that the School Board has undertaken to address this issue.

5.27 Jenny Vengris, Social Planning and Research Council

Ms. Loretta Hill-Finamore addressed Committee on behalf of Jenny Vengris and provided comments about her concerns regarding the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton. A hard copy of the presentation was provided to members of Committee.

5.28 Denise Arkell, Neighbour to Neighbour

Ms. Arkell withdrew her delegation request.

5.29 Brenda Wells

Ms. Wells was not present

5.30 Vanessa Brcic

Ms. Brcic noted the importance of addressing people’s health problems and suggested that preventative health care is important. She recommended that the City needs to invest its power to create an infrastructure for preventative health.

5.31 Noor Nizam

Mr. Nizam addressed Committee and provided the following comments which included, but were not limited to:

- Prior to coming to Canada has lived in poverty himself
- Concerned about the visible minorities who live in our community
- Thinks everyone should provide assistance to those who live in poverty
- Feels we need to work on preventing poverty and change policies that impede citizens on social assistance
- Suggested that the City consider providing bursaries to children
Mayor Dilanni thanked all those present for attending the meeting and for their continued support and commitment to addressing issues of poverty within our community.

The Mayor recessed the meeting at 1:30 p.m. for a 20 minute break.

Committee of the Whole reconvened at 1:50 p.m.

(e) PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

On a motion (Bratina/Bradin), Committee of the Whole moved In-Camera in order to address a labour and legal matter.

On a motion (Bratina/Bradin), Committee of the Whole reconvened in Open Session. Staff were provided direction to seek outside Legal Counsel with respect to the Compliance Audit Matter.

(f) Hamilton Spectator Article

Clarification was provided by the City Solicitor on the process for addressing the Auditors report with respect to the compliance audit.

The City Manager will prepare a media release to clarify the audit process further to what was published in the Hamilton Spectator.

(g) ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor L. Dilanni

M. Gallagher, Co-ordinator
February 10, 2006