SUBJECT: Hamilton Council on Aging - “Age Friendly Hamilton” (CS09024) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Age Friendly Hamilton initiative be endorsed.

Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager,
Community Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the Emergency and Community Services Committee meeting on December 3, 2008, members from the Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) requested that the City of Hamilton participate in the HCoA’s “Age Friendly Hamilton” initiative, as well as appoint a staff member from the Planning and Economic Development Department to the Age Friendly Hamilton’s Stakeholder Roundtable. Staff was directed to report back on the implications of this request.

The Age Friendly Cities model is a policy framework document that was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). Its purpose is to enhance the quality of life for older adults and to assist them to age actively. Not only will this model ensure a better place for older adults to live, but it will also have a positive impact on citizens of all ages.
The Age Friendly Cities model has been implemented in 33 cities worldwide and based on the assessment of best practices, early indications are that this model can make a significant difference in the lives of older adults.

Staff are recommending that Council endorse the “Age Friendly Hamilton” initiative as well as have staff representation on the Age Friendly Hamilton’s Stakeholder Roundtable.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA)**
In 2005, a group of retired professionals, academics and community leaders identified the need for an independent group that would advocate for the needs of older adults in Hamilton. After a series of community consultations, focus groups, visioning and planning retreats during 2005 and 2006, the HCoA was incorporated in 2007. The mission of the HCoA is to educate and advocate for improved aging experiences for older adults through a collaborative network of individuals and organizations. This coalition envisions a community that respects and values its older adults, and provides them with the opportunity to participate fully in society.

The HCoA is committed to working collaboratively with existing agencies and organizations and is partnering with 40 such groups. The HCoA is currently working on three projects, as follows:

1. The first project is funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation and is aimed at reducing poverty among Hamilton seniors.
2. The second project is funded by the United Way and seeks to help older adults in diverse communities to access health and community services as well as assist older adults to become more socially integrated.
3. The third project is “Age Friendly Hamilton” which is funded through the Ontario Trillium Foundation for the next two years.

At the Emergency and Community Services Committee meeting on December 3, 2008, the HCoA requested that the City of Hamilton endorse their “Age Friendly Hamilton” initiative.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

**Age Friendly Cities**
“Age Friendly Hamilton” is an HCoA initiative that is based on the WHO’s Age Friendly Cities model. A city that is “age friendly” recognizes the many aspects of urban settings and services that can contribute to the participation, health, independence and security of older adults. Age Friendly Cities are communities in which the policies, services, and
structures related to both the physical and social environment, support and enable older adults to “age actively” – that is, to live in a secure environment, to maintain good health and continue to participate fully in society.

The first phase of the WHO’s Age Friendly Cities Program was initiated in 33 cities in 22 nations around the world, and resulted in the preparation of an extensive evaluation as well as a Global Age Friendly Cities Guide (2007). In Canada, four cities participated in this first pilot phase of the WHO program: Saanich, British Columbia; Portage la Prairie, Manitoba; Sherbrooke, Quebec; and Halifax, Nova Scotia. The experiences and outcomes of the multi-year pilots in each of these communities are very positive.

The Age Friendly Cities approach is about engaging older adults, together with policymakers, planners and providers of services representing all sectors in a process of community assessment, action, measurement and change. Based on extensive research and evaluation of the pilots, the WHO developed concrete indicators and criteria in the eight broad areas of city living:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings;
2. Transportation;
3. Housing;
4. Social Participation;
5. Respect and Social Inclusion;
6. Civic Participation and Employment;
7. Communication and Information; and,
8. Community and Health Services.

Developed, as well, are practical tools to guide the community assessments, to stimulate discussion, develop consensus and support actions concerning the policies, planning and programmatic decisions required to ensure age friendly features in each of the eight core areas.

Many changes that may occur as a result of this initiative will be beneficial not only to older adults, but to all citizens. For example, under the “Outdoor Spaces and Buildings” core area, if older adults are requesting increased street lighting to improve safety/security concerns; this would also result in a safer environment for all members of that community. Another example under the “Civic Participation and Employment” area would be if older adults are requesting to be more involved in volunteering, mentoring for school children and/or participating in an “Adopt a Grandparent” program, this will be a significant benefit to all Hamiltonians.

“Age Friendly Hamilton”
Given the projected demographic trends and distribution of Hamilton’s aging population, together with the special challenges of increasing diversity and a high level of poverty among older adults in Hamilton, the HCoA has concluded that the time is right for Hamilton to embark on the journey to become an Age Friendly City.
In Hamilton, 2001 census data indicates that seniors (65 years and older) comprise 14.3% of the total population (75,393 seniors). It is expected that this number will increase to 82,775 seniors in 2009. Comparative data also highlights that Hamilton’s seniors’ population is proportionately larger and growing at a faster rate than that of the province or the country. A recent (2006) population forecast by the Honourable Deb Matthews suggests that between 2001 and 2051, while the total population of Hamilton is anticipated to grow by 34.5%, the population age 65+ will grow by 104%. The growth in the number of those aged 85 and over will be even more significant at 160%.

This demographic shift brings healthy aging to the forefront of policy and planning agendas. Older Canadians are living longer and with fewer disabilities than generations before them. The Age Friendly Model focuses on assisting older adults to maintain their independence, improve their quality of life through their involvement in policy decisions that impact their lives.

The HCoA has developed a three-year strategy to implement “Age Friendly Hamilton”, as follows:

- Year-One will focus on community assessment, opportunities and engagement;
- Year-Two will focus on priority setting and implementation; and,
- Year-Three will be comprised of continued implementation and evaluation.

The HCoA plans to communicate back to the community on an annual basis through Age Friendly Report Cards and Community Forums.

The HCoA is also proposing the establishment of an Age Friendly Hamilton Stakeholders Roundtable. The Stakeholders Roundtable will meet on a quarterly basis, will be comprised of multiple community partners, and will provide leadership, advocacy, advice, guidance and support to the HCoA for the implementation of the Age Friendly Hamilton program. The Senior Administrator of the Homes for the Aged will participate in the Stakeholders Roundtable, as a representative of the Community Services Department and an invitation has also been extended to Public Health Services for a representative. During their presentation in December 2008 to the Emergency and Community Services Committee, the HCoA also requested that a planner from the City of Hamilton participate on this committee. Since some of the issues raised will have implications for urban planning, other cities participating in this initiative have indicated that a staff person with a planning background is very beneficial. The General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department has agreed to assign a staff person to the Stakeholders Roundtable.

Staff concur that the “Age Friendly Hamilton” model has the potential to maximize the involvement and support to older adults through healthy public policy changes; and are therefore recommending Council approve the HCoA’s requests.
ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

City Council could elect to not endorse this approach, but this would not be consistent with the City of Hamilton’s Vision 20/20 and City of Hamilton’s Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial:
There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation of Report CS09024.

Staffing:
Staff will participate on the Age Friendly Hamilton’s Stakeholders Roundtable on a quarterly basis and at other meetings, where required.

Legal:
There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation of Report CS09024.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

“Age Friendly Hamilton” is consistent with several of the City of Hamilton’s Vision 20/20 themes such as; Personal Health and Well Being, Safety and Security and Education. It also reflects several of the City of Hamilton’s Strategic Goals such as Financial Sustainability, Social Development and Inter-Governmental Relations.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

• The HCoA
• Public Health Services Department
• Planning and Economic Development Department

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Community well-being and the reputation of the City of Hamilton are enhanced by involving older adults in policy decisions made by the City of Hamilton.
Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Environmental changes may be made to transportation systems, public spaces that enhance the safety for all Hamilton citizens.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Economic well-being is enhanced by involving older adults in increased employment and/or volunteer activities that will benefit Hamilton.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes ☐ No

The recommendation continues to make Hamilton a City of choice for high performing public servants. Staff will be providing services and programs that older adults have specifically requested through this initiative.