Council Direction:

At the Emergency and Community Services Committee meeting of December 10, 2012, Council provided the following direction:

“Whereas, the City of Hamilton had adopted a report that identifies a wage of $14.95 as a living wage in Hamilton, and;
Whereas, all full-time City of Hamilton staff are paid a living wage, and;
Whereas, it is important that the City of Hamilton continues to be seen as a leader in advancing the living wage project;
Therefore, be it resolved that, staff report back during the 2013 budget process with a plan to implement a living wage rate for City of Hamilton part time employees.”

Information:

In December 2011, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction’s (HRPR) Living Wage Working Group launched the local living wage rate for Hamilton - $14.95 per hour.

As part of the City of Hamilton’s on-going work on living wage, staff completed a preliminary analysis (Report CS10092(a)) which indicated that 83% of the City’s total workforce earned more than the Living Wage rate of $14.95. This included 100% of full-time union and non-union employees, 65% of the part-time and casual employees, and
15% of the student positions. Therefore, 35% of the City’s part-time and casual positions and 85% of the student positions earn less than the Living Wage rate.

As part of an incremental approach to implementing a Living Wage Policy, Council directed staff to develop and cost out living wage policy options for the City’s part-time and casual positions.

In the City of Hamilton there are currently approximately 533 part-time and casual City of Hamilton employees in 17 positions earning less than the Living Wage rate. Student positions, vendors and 3rd party service providers are not being reviewed at this time with respect to a Living Wage rate at this time. Although some part-time and casual positions impacted by the proposed change have secondary and post-secondary students in them, they are not student positions. Student positions have a fixed term and are exclusively held by secondary and post-secondary students.

The Hamilton Public Library (HPL) is governed by its own Board and administers its own employee compensation; however the HPL utilizes the City’s male comparator positions to meet Pay Equity legislative compliance. Adjustments to wage rates for City positions would likely impose a direct financial impact on HPL. There are approximately 200 HPL part-time casual employees including student pages that would be impacted if the City of Hamilton implemented a living wage for all part-time staff. The City of Hamilton is the primary funder of the Library.

City staff from the Human Resources Division, the Community Services Department and the HPL continue to work on policy options and costing details for both the City and the Library, however additional work needs to be completed to fully determine any impact on budget and service delivery. Unfortunately this work will not be finalized prior to the City’s 2013 budget being approved.

Living Wage: On-going Work in the Community

Staff from the Community Services Department are working closely with the HRPR’s Living Wage Working Group, which includes the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, Workforce Planning Hamilton and McMaster Poverty Initiative and other community stakeholders. The Living Wage Working Group continues to engage the community including the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), the Hamilton Wentworth District Catholic School Board (HWDCSB), McMaster University and Mohawk College in conversations about living wage in Hamilton. They are also meeting with small, medium and large businesses, as well as several of Hamilton’s key public institutions to introduce the concept of a living wage and the positive impact of such a wage on the individual employee, the employer and the community at large. To assist in these conversations and encourage community support, the Living Wage Working Group (LWWG) has developed a Living Wage Declaration which they plan to “launch” sometime in April or May 2013.
The LWWG has also partnered with the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University to produce a Human Resources toolkit for employers. This toolkit will be particularly useful to small and medium size employers who may not have access to human resources expertise around progressive employment practices like living wages, benefits, etc. It is anticipated that this toolkit will be available by the summer.

Next Steps

Staff will return to Council in the spring with a more detailed report which will highlight progress to date at both the City and the community overall, and will introduce the Living Wage Declaration. Staff will also continue to work with the HRPR’s Living Wage Working Group as they move forward with living wage in the community.