Strengthening Hamilton's Community

HAMILTON AT THE CROSSROADS: ANTI-RACISM AND THE FUTURE OF THE CITY --
"LESSONS LEARNED" FROM COMMUNITY-BASED ANTI-RACISM INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE INITIATIVES
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Executive Summary

FOR
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of Ontario's largest urban centres, the City of Hamilton has undergone transformations similar to other urban centres in North America and the United Kingdom. In particular, there has been a significant increase in the number of subordinate racialized groups within Hamilton and increasing evidence of discrimination against these groups, including violent hate crimes. Responding to these matters, the City's Mayor established a Community Roundtable comprising leaders from across the Hamilton community, i.e., representatives from business, education, law enforcement, academics, community service providers and advocates.

This report reviews how other urban areas have supported community-directed anti-racist organizational change work to confront similar concerns. The report also examines the implications of these initiatives to the Hamilton community and draws upon promising practices developed in urban centres in the United Kingdom, the United States and across Canada. The purpose of this report is to provide references to policies, programs and activities that may be transferable to the Hamilton community.

For example:

- In the United Kingdom, the Commission for Racial Equality has produced a number of documents related to community-directed anti-racism initiatives, including: **Community Cohesion: Our Responsibility; Racial Equality Scheme 2002 - 2005; Racial Equality Means Quality: A Standard for Racial Equality for Local Government; Auditing for Equality; Equality in Practice.** These documents have been reviewed along with additional references from links to the website of the Commission for Racial Equality, particularly the *Racial Equality Councils* which are "organizations that work in local areas, among local communities to promote racial equality and tackle racial discrimination". The primary emphasis of the U.K experience has been to develop institutional frameworks, particularly required management systems and accountability mechanisms, aimed at ensuring anti-racist work is being implemented with commitment and community involvement.

- In the United States, there are a number of community-directed anti-racism initiatives. Particularly impressive is the work of **Project Change** which began in 1991 "…to connect diverse community leaders and assist them in developing multiracial leadership capacities that both complemented and transcended their racial and ethnic constituency interests" and whose current "…mission is to strengthen the antiracism infrastructure and networks for civic engagement and democratic renewal …". **Project Change** is currently engaged in four cities across the United States (Albuquerque, New Mexico; El Paso, Texas; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Valdosta, Georgia) and has published a number of resources, including: *Lessons Learned I and II: Assessing What Works and What Does Not; Anti-Racism Resource Guide; A Community Builder's Tool Kit;* and *State of Race Relations Reports*. The primary focus of these initiatives has been to develop strong community leadership and establish guidelines for anti-racist initiatives and partnerships amongst diverse communities and between communities and institutions.

- Information on local initiatives in Canada's urban centres have been examined in this report as well, including: the City of Saskatoon's anti-racism initiatives; the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto's access and equity strategies; the City of Toronto's current approach to equity and diversity; and community-based initiatives cited in the database of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. The primary focus of these initiatives has been a rather interesting balance between policy development, political and community involvement, and training and education.

Many of the challenges in the anti-racism work reviewed for this report address circumstances similar to what is going on within Hamilton through the efforts of such organizations as the Working Group on Racial Equality, the United Way of Burlington and Hamilton-Wentworth, the Settlement and Integration Services Ontario, and the City's Advisory Committee Against Racism.

The reports reviewed from the Hamilton community make it clear that this is a city in crisis. However, as is evident in the research, crisis has been a catalyst to action in a variety of communities, prompting them to focus their attention on racism and to remain engaged in anti-racist work long after the crisis has been addressed. As such, there is much that is transferable from the research to the present situation in Hamilton and the issues identified below are put forward to assist thinking and acting in this direction. They are based on the following assumptions:

1. A number of valuable resources are already in place in Hamilton addressing anti-racist institutional change. These resources are very committed but appear to need additional political commitment and resources.
2. There have been a number of initiatives in the past within Hamilton that would be useful to review and to assess their relevance to today's challenges.
3. Recent studies conducted in Hamilton provide a range of issues to address and concrete solutions to consider.
4. It is important to maintain the momentum created by the SHCI and the Community Roundtable.
5. It is important to ensure community safety and to eliminate racial violence as well as threats of racial violence.
6. A strong and clear definition of antiracism is required to guide anti-racist institutional change work, and all organizations involved in such work need to do so in a manner that is transparent, accessible, and inclusive.

In terms of particular issues that the SHCI should consider, they are summarized below.

Providing Leadership and Developing/Maintaining Coalitions for Action. It is very clear that, in all of the initiatives reviewed in this report, leadership is a critical element which must be respected when it emerges as a result of crisis but, also, which must be planned for and nurtured. Communities and institutions alike must realize the challenges in maintaining leadership and in having well managed transitions so that new leadership can emerge well informed, educated and confident after a transition. This is extremely critical to anti-racist community building and institutional change, which can easily die out or lose focus and change direction in a leadership transition. Further, leadership has both short- and long-term effects on the capacity to mobilize resources,

build support and confidence amongst those involved, and to lead public education and shape public opinion.

Developing Strong Communities. The research makes it clear that anti-racist initiatives require strong communities. This is critical for issue identification, community building, leadership, public education and advocacy. Without strong communities, it is doubtful if anti-racist work can develop; with strong communities, anti-racist work can be a vibrant force for change. Strong communities raise issues that require attention; they hold institutions and leaders accountable; they educate their own and build trust and bridges between their diverse constituents. They are a must for anti-racist institutional change work which is difficult, time consuming and critical to the overall development of a multicultural, multiracial, multireligious environment.

Role for the Voluntary Sector, Business and Institutions. The changing composition of the City of Hamilton is something that is critically linked to the immediate as well as long-term health of the City. The make-up of the City of Hamilton will continue to change as a result of immigration. However, while immigration will likely be the sole source of population maintenance and growth in Hamilton, the City may be becoming less and less of an attraction for those immigrants who have skills and/or businesses and are looking for an appealing place to settle. This may be because immigrants with these assets face numerous barriers to becoming successful in Hamilton, e.g., difficulties with immigration officials, having school programs that support their children, having local services that are non-discriminatory and sensitive to diverse languages, religions and cultures. Further, given the increasing racialization of poverty within the Hamilton community and the barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples and subordinate racialized communities in employment, access to services, education and so on, it is critical that all sectors of the Hamilton community take on the challenge of anti-racist work.

Role of Local Government. Local government's involvement in anti-racist institutional change work has been identified in the research done for this report, particularly those models identified in the U.K. and in Canada. Developing an appropriate role for the Mayor and Hamilton City Council to play will ensure the municipality's ongoing support and commitment to anti-racist institutional change initiatives. In the majority of the literature reviewed, particularly those from the U.K. and Canada, the local government has been seen as a major and critical ally in the development and implementation of anti-racist initiatives. This is so for many reasons: (a) it is a major political force within the local community; (b) it governs the delivery of essential services within the local community; (c) it has the capacity to set public opinion and to bring diverse interests together for the common good; and (d) it has the moral authority to compel other organizations (voluntary and private sector) and governments to address issues that have an impact on the local community. All of these matters are integral to anti-racist organizational change work.

Developing Strategic Actions and Starting Points for Institutional Change. The Community Roundtable has established a rather unique process that, if maintained in some form, can be a critical focal point for initiating; coordinating and sustaining anti-racist institutional change work in the City of Hamilton. As a high profile amalgamation of civic, community, business, education and voluntary sector leaders, the Roundtable has the potential to influence the development of strategic anti-racist institutional change by those organizations represented within it. This can come about through the declared commitment of Roundtable members to work within their own organization for this

purpose. The Roundtable can then act as a facilitator, resource and accountability board to support and ensure effective implementation of the anti-racist institutional change work by its members.

Anti-Racism Education and Training. Anti-racism is a difficult and sensitive subject and those involved in anti-racist change work at times become mired in the struggle around language, definitions, meanings and the relationship between anti-racism and other equality issues, e.g., disabilities or gender equality. It is for these reasons that anti-racist education and training is important for building alliances, fostering leadership and developing and implementing institutional change work or public education and community building activities. It is also critical to acknowledge the importance of ongoing anti-racist education and training to the changing of institutional policies, practices and individual behavioural change. This type of education and training needs to be provided over time and linked with other strategic education and training initiatives.

Public Education. It is clear from almost all of the research gathered that anti-racist institutional change work does not take place in a vacuum but, rather, as part of the fabric of society. Also, given the sensitive nature of racism, it is important to assess, understand, respond to and influence public attitudes and opinions regarding the importance of anti-racism work to the building of an inclusive and energetic community. Public education is a vital component of anti-racist institutional change work as it contributes to the creation of a supportive environment for taking on work that is always challenging and, at times, highly charged and emotional. It is incumbent on those engaged in anti-racist work to ensure the public is educated about the issues involved, their importance, why the work is necessary, how it is being done, when and where it is being done, who is involved in doing it, and how they can become involved.

Community Safety and Elimination of Racial Violence. It is evident that much of the work on anti-racism within the U.K., U.S. and Canada is in response to racist violence. Such is the case now in Hamilton which has seen an extraordinary increase in hate crimes following September 11, 2001. This challenge must be addressed directly as it has the capacity of tearing communities apart, silencing some elements of the community and dismantling relations between communities, and between communities and institutions.

Developing Clear Roles, Responsibilities and Sustaining the Work. Given the interest of a wide range of institutions and community-based organizations to develop and implement anti-racist work within the City of Hamilton, it is important to identify the resource and organizational capacities of these entities and to develop a protocol for working relations between these groups. This will develop and maintain good working relations while, at the same time, identify resource commitments and responsibilities for those involved. It will also help establish common goals, objectives and timeframes for action to be undertaken which will lead to achievement of results and the ability to undertake effective evaluations over time. In particular, identifying the resources each can dedicate to anti-racist institutional change work will help in addressing strengths and gaps. This is particularly important in assessing the resource capacity to undertake the work and to putting into place a viable financial plan through organizational commitments in annual budgets and through seeking external funding when needed.

Accountability: Making it Work and Keeping Faith. The proof of anti-racist institutional change is in the work being done, the results achieved and lessons learned. Like other major initiatives, this requires good research, planning, design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It also requires regular processes to establish a contract both within the institution involved in the work, e.g., its departments and employees that could lead to performance goals, objectives and measurements of departments and their staff. Equally, such a process establishes a contract with the community and the public. Accountability not only assures that the work is being done. It also demonstrates the successes achieved and how the organization is changing as a result. It demonstrates inclusiveness both within the organization and the community and builds strong links within organizations, between organizations involved in sharing and partnership activities, and between organizations and communities.

The City of Hamilton is at a critical crossroad. Like other large urban centres, its population has become increasingly diverse and the events following September 11, 2001 have prompted the City's leadership to review how best to address this changing community. While the City of Hamilton has a number of resources currently in place to address anti-racism issues, there is now an opportunity for the City and its institutions to work together on a comprehensive strategy aimed at ensuring anti-racist institutional change is implemented in a comprehensive framework across the City. This will undoubtedly involve developing new working relations between communities and institutions as well as between different institutions. It will require leadership, commitment, trust, education of those integrally involved and ongoing communication to the public. It will require clarity and clear goals with objectives and timeframes and accountability mechanisms that serve as opportunities for information exchange as well as for monitoring results and ensuring compliance.

Finally, it will require new ways of working together to build a common future for one of Canada's largest urban centres. This is the challenge that the Community Roundtable and the SHCI face.