



February 18, 2004

For Immediate Release

### **Hamilton Community Foundation Targets Poverty Reduction with \$3-Million Commitment**

Hamilton ON - Hamilton Community Foundation is taking aim at poverty in Hamilton with a \$3-million funding commitment focused on preventing and reducing poverty. The initiative is called *Tackling Poverty Together*.

In doing so, Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) is the first community foundation in Canada to direct its entire Community Fund to a single cause. The Community Fund is one of 75 endowment funds administered by HCF.

Since HCF's inception in 1954, the Community Fund has been built with gifts from donors who look to the Foundation to determine how their donations will be used. Grants made from the Community Fund represent approximately one-fifth of the money dispensed in grants by HCF annually, and have historically been directed to a variety of worthy causes in Hamilton.

From 2004 to 2007, HCF will make annual grants, through the Community Fund, of at least \$750,000 to charitable organizations in Hamilton in the fields of education, health and human services, arts and culture, recreation and the environment - specifically for projects focusing on poverty prevention and reduction.

"Directing 100 per cent of our Community Fund towards poverty is a significant step, and one that we're taking because of the city's particular needs," says **Carolyn Milne**, President and CEO of Hamilton Community Foundation. "Hamilton's poverty rate, at 22 per cent, is above both the provincial and national average, and there are a host of complex conditions playing into that, including the number of minimum wage jobs, cuts in welfare payments, housing problems and more."

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Ms. Milne noted that months of work and consultation went into the Foundation's decision to focus its Community Fund on poverty, and an advisory committee will be formed to plan, implement and evaluate the initiative. "Tackling poverty must be a team effort and we will work with our grantees, community experts and others interested in helping to fund real and lasting solutions."

Charitable organizations historically supported by the Community Fund have been invited to an information session in early March to hear about new guidelines for applicants. It's expected that grants will be approved and announced in October 2004.

"Poverty is at the heart of many of Hamilton's issues," says HCF Board Chair **Leila Ryan**. "We can't eradicate poverty but by focusing our grant making strategically, we will be taking a very important first step, as a community, to create pathways out of poverty."

Dr. Ryan said the relevance of the *Tackling Poverty Together* announcement is underscored by the recent news of Stelco's application for creditor protection, Camco's forthcoming closure and the departure of Levi Strauss from Hamilton. "These and other challenges exacerbate an already critical situation in terms of people's ability to meet their basic living expenses. One in five Hamiltonians is living in poverty, and the rate is even higher for children, seniors, single parent families and immigrants. At no other time in our 50-year history as a community foundation have we had as powerful a mandate."

Hamilton Community Foundation was founded in 1954. It builds and manages a perpetual endowment fund for the community by pooling and investing gifts received, and making grants from the income earned on those investments. In 2002/2003, HCF awarded \$5 million in grants to local organizations.

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**CONTACT: Carolyn Milne, President and CEO,  
Hamilton Community Foundation (905) 523-5600**

**BACKGROUND ATTACHED**

## **BACKGROUNDER: TACKLING POVERTY TOGETHER**

### **THE COMMUNITY FUND**

- The Community Fund, one of 75 grant-making funds of the Hamilton Community Foundation, has been built over the years with 'unrestricted' gifts from donors who want to support the community's greatest charitable needs. From 2004 to 2007, 100% of grants made will be for poverty-related projects.
- New guidelines are being prepared for organizations that may apply to HCF for grants from the Community Fund. The Fund will continue to support all sectors - education, health and human services, arts and culture, recreation and the environment - but for projects that take into consideration issues such as low income, social exclusion, lack of opportunity, job training, etc. Grant applicants will be asked to describe how their projects will help to prevent or reduce poverty for Hamilton's citizens.
- Most of the 130 community foundations in Canada have Community Funds for unrestricted gifts; HCF is the first in Canada to designate a single focus for grants made from a Community Fund.

### **POVERTY STATISTICS**

- In 1995, 22% of Hamiltonians were living below the poverty line (as measured by Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off Level) compared with 18% in Ontario and 20% nationally. This was a significant increase from the city's poverty rate of 17% in 1990.
- Hamilton's poverty rate is the second highest urban poverty rate in Ontario (after Toronto) and the eighth worst among urban centres in Canada.
- Poverty in Hamilton in 1995 was more prevalent among certain groups: seniors (25%), children (27%), aboriginal people (48%), recent immigrants (48%), visible minorities (41%) and single parent families (64%). In each case, the poverty rates are higher than the same groups in Ontario and Canada.
- In the former City of Hamilton, 23.5% of families were poor in 1996, a rate that far exceeded the comparable rates of 15% in Ontario and 16% in Canada.
- The number of people using food banks has increased steadily over the past five years; in the year 2002/2003, there was a 15% increase in people using food banks and meal programs. Of the estimated 14,600 Hamiltonians (6,000 households) who use food banks each month, 43% are families with children.
- There is an acute and growing need for affordable housing in Hamilton: the waiting list for social housing is currently at 4,900 households. It increased from 3,300 households in 2001 to more than 4,200 households in 2002. On average there are 450 new applications for social housing per month, and 36% of applicants are homeless families with children.

- Homelessness is increasing in Hamilton. On any given night in November 2002, approximately 396 people used overnight emergency shelter; this is an increase of 15% from November 2001, and a 125% increase since 1998.
- Hamilton's Literacy Council reports that 60% of Hamiltonians have difficulty reading and writing even simple material. This is significantly higher than the national average of 47%.
- For more information on poverty in Hamilton, please contact Don Jaffray, Social Planning and Research Council, (905) 522-1148.

**For more information please contact Carolyn Milne, President and CEO, Hamilton  
Community Foundation, (905) 523-5600.**