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\$5 Million Investment Will Deepen Poverty-Reduction Efforts in Hamilton

Hamilton, ON – Hamilton Community Foundation will invest \$5 million in its ongoing work to reduce poverty in Hamilton. Known as “Tackling Poverty Together II: Building Strong Communities,” the investment will focus on improving the quality of life in key Hamilton neighbourhoods as well as funding broader initiatives that focus on specific populations such as seniors. The strategy also includes a \$500,000 investment to be made toward revitalization in the downtown core.

The \$5 million, to be granted over the next five years, builds on an initial \$3 million commitment made by HCF in 2004 to alleviate, reduce and prevent poverty, by working across multiple sectors – health, social services, arts, education, environment and recreation. The new investment is intended to deepen the focus of the Foundation’s support to build even greater impact and sustainability.

“Although much is being accomplished, poverty remains one of Hamilton’s most pressing issues,” says Carolyn Milne, President and CEO of Hamilton Community Foundation. “Over 16,000 people access food banks every month, and almost half of these are children. Nearly 400 people stay in emergency shelters on any given night. Twenty percent of families who rent their accommodation spend more than half of their income on shelter and teeter on the brink of homelessness. We believe this is unacceptable in a city with Hamilton’s resources and tradition of caring.”

“The statistics reinforce the need for the Foundation to continue a fundamental and long-term commitment to this work,” says HCF Board Chair Rev. Dr. Alan McPherson. “The board is committed to bringing the Foundation’s full resources – financial, knowledge, relationships – as a catalyst to move this work ahead.”

Neighbourhoods are a prime focus for the Foundation’s investment through TPT II: Building Strong Communities. Poverty in Hamilton is more concentrated in certain neighbourhoods,” says Ms. Milne. “Based on our research and experience in working to reduce poverty, bringing people together to solve problems at the neighbourhood level is an effective way to address this issue.”

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Neighbourhood investment will focus on supporting the development of “hubs”, which are local collaboratives that centralize community work to reduce poverty, and which have a strong resident voice. Funding will go to hub participants to support a wide range of programs and services, crossing all sectors. Beyond programs and services the grants will also fund supportive work like developing leadership skills among local neighbourhood leaders and increasing the availability of special expertise – for instance, strategic planning for local teams.

One of HCF’s strategies within *TPT II: Building Strong Communities* is a proactive investment downtown. “We recognize the importance of the core to making Hamilton a prosperous city and are committing half a million dollars to initiatives that support downtown revitalization,” says Ms. Milne. A board advisory committee comprising representatives from the City of Hamilton, business, the voluntary sector and residents in the core will identify opportunities for the Foundation’s investment based on the downtown’s opportunities and strengths. The committee will be chaired by Brian Mullen, HCF board member and Vice President of Human Resources at Arcelor Mittal Dofasco. Their work will take approximately seven to eight months, and we would expect a recommendation to the Board next September.

A second focus for *TPT II: Building Strong Communities* is “foundational grants” which address poverty reduction at a broader level, for example through policy development, public education or larger economic development programs.

HCF began its focused commitment to poverty in 2004, when its board took the unprecedented step of directing the majority of its unrestricted funds to this issue. Since then \$3.4 million in grants has been awarded. Evaluation showed that for the first three years of the program over 9,000 Hamiltonians have been affected in areas such as access to early literacy programs, affordable home ownership and policy change resulting in better incomes for vulnerable populations.

Hamilton Community Foundation was founded in 1954. It receives donated funds from generous citizens, invests those funds to generate income, and makes grants from the income earned. HCF also brings people together to convene solutions to Hamilton's most pressing challenges. HCF has total assets of approximately \$126 million and since 1954 has made grants to our community totalling more than \$45 million. Annually, Hamilton Community Foundation makes grants of approximately \$6 million to Hamilton organizations across sectors: health, social services, arts, environment, education and recreation.

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(Backgrounder Attached)

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