



April 9, 2025  
**Delivered via email**

**Her Worship Andrea Horwath**  
**Mayor, City of Hamilton**  
**71 Main Street West**  
**Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5**

## **Open Letter to the Mayor and Members of Hamilton Council: Action on Housing to Save Jobs - NOW**

**Dear Mayor Horwath and Members of Council,**

On behalf of the West End Home Builders' Association (WE HBA), the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce (HCC), the Cornerstone Association of REALTORS®, and the Hamilton Halton Construction Association (HHCA), we express our grave concern regarding Hamilton's worsening housing crisis and its growing threat to our local economy. The time for action is now. Hamilton cannot afford further stagnation in housing development, or additional job losses in the construction sector due to bureaucratic red tape and rising costs.

Hamilton ranks last among major Canadian cities in housing approval timelines, per the latest Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) Municipal Benchmarking Study. This decline is alarming —15th in 2020, 18th in 2022, and now last. Excessive red tape, high municipal charges, and an uncompetitive investment climate have made housing development inefficient and financially unsustainable in Hamilton. Investors are choosing elsewhere, while Hamilton struggles with housing supply shortages and affordability issues.

In the current economic environment, these delays have serious long-term consequences. New housing starts are almost non-existent and sales have evaporated, leading to fewer long-term jobs for tradespeople and construction workers. Coupled with broader economic challenges, such as trade uncertainty with the United States, the continued slowdown in housing construction will add further strain to our affordability crisis as well as our already fragile local economy. This presents opportunity to prioritize local growth and change.

To do so, Hamilton must urgently reform its planning and development framework. Cities like Mississauga, Vaughan, and Burlington have taken proactive steps to streamline approvals and reduce taxation on new housing. Without action, Hamilton will continue to lag, and recovery could take years.

We urge City Hall to demonstrate leadership by cutting costs and removing barriers to housing construction. Our industry is ready to collaborate on real solutions. We ask that you do the same.

### **Fast Facts: The Economic and Job Impact of New Home Construction in Hamilton and Ontario**

1. Across Ontario, residential construction supported 329,000 on and off site jobs in 2024, representing \$23.7 billion in wages and \$75.4 billion in investment value
2. These economic impacts are in decline as provincial housing starts have dropped each year since peaking in 2021. CMHC is forecasting a further decline in 2025
3. Every 1000 multi-family units creates 1,600 jobs (783 direct, 507 in-direct and 316 induced)
4. Every 1000 single-family homes creates 4,600 jobs (2,287 direct, 1,441 in-direct and 898 induced)

METRIC	HAMILTON CMA
Employment in Residential Construction Sector	17,000 Jobs
Economic Activity	\$3.8 Billion
Labour Earnings	\$1.2 Billion

Source: Estimates based on data from Stats Canada and CHMC





### Key Recommendations that Require Action NOW:

- Given the current dire economic situation, immediately implement a **deferral in the payment of Development Charges from building permit stage to occupancy.**
- Follow Mississauga's lead and **immediately cut development charges (DCs) by 50% for all residential projects** and eliminate them for three-bedroom purpose-built rental units **for two years** to stimulate construction and save jobs.
- Properties in the Downtown Community Improvement Project Area are eligible for a reduction in Development Charges. Downtown is clearly in crisis and in a vulnerable position from a business investment perspective. Residential condominium units are not selling and risk cancellation. Phasing out of the CIPA DC incentives puts downtown at further risk. **Development Charges should be waived in their entirety for Downtown for two years.** Failure to act now could be catastrophic for our downtown.
- The Community Benefits Charge (CBC) By-law passed in 2022 collects taxes on new apartment units for capital projects that do not meet any kind of "*growth paying for growth*" definition. In fact, calling them "community benefits" is a stretch. The top eligible cost contribution from the CBC apartment tax is a "provision for additional lands needed for runway expansion and a cargo road" for the Airport. The second highest capital cost contribution is for a "downtown parking structure". **The City of Hamilton should immediately cancel the Community Benefits Charges program**, which is an apartment tax that has nothing to do with community benefits or growth paying for growth.
- **Reduce the number of studies, plans, and reports required as part of a planning submission.** In the [CHBA Municipal Benchmarking](#) study, Hamilton had double the average number of municipal submission requirements of peer cities. These add considerable costs and time to an application. Hamilton should also commit to not adding *ANY* additional new reports, requirements or regulatory burdens.
- Provide clear direction on the timing of the **assessment of parkland dedication fees** as the issuance of a building permit for the actual development proposal. The City must stop attempting to backdate parkland dedication charges to years, even decades, prior to new housing construction as a method to circumvent provincial policy and maximize a cash extraction from future residents during a housing and economic crisis.
- We urge the City of Hamilton to take a proactive approach by establishing a **Housing and Development Task Force**, similar to initiatives undertaken by neighboring municipalities. For example, the *Burlington's Pipeline to Permit Committee* is successfully identifying and eliminating bottlenecks. Likewise, the *Mayor's Housing Task Force in Mississauga* brought key stakeholders together to drive solutions to boost housing supply.

We need a pro-housing and pro-jobs approach to get all applications in the planning pipeline through the process to obtain political approvals. It is essential that council act with a sense of urgency and stop delaying, or getting in the way of housing. Abdicating responsibility to approve new housing projects to waste time and resources waiting for decisions from the Ontario Lands Tribunal is not meeting the urgency of the moment.

Hamilton cannot afford half-measures. Without decisive action, more jobs will be lost, more families will struggle to find housing, and our economic competitiveness will continue to erode. We need bold leadership, and we need it now.

Sincerely,

Mike Collins-Williams  
Chief Executive Officer  
West End Home Builders' Association

Greg Dunnett  
President & CEO  
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Crystal Henderson  
Advocacy & Stakeholder  
Engagement Manager  
Cornerstone Association of REALTORS®

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