

FINAL REPORT

MAY 10, 2025



HAMILTON YOUTH TOWN HALL

EVENT & DISCUSSION SUMMARY

SPECIAL THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Model City Hall team responsible for developing this event, and authoring the following report include Directors of Operations: Lillian Guy and Tina Liu, with assistance from Program Coordinators: Gladys Kozyra, Len Lu, Sumayyah Satia, Reign Lastiwka, and Anushka Mishra.

Additional gratitude is owed to Model City Hall's day-of, youth volunteers including: Louise Concepcion, Stephanie Henry, Angelo Marmolejo, Pravash Pandey, Salsa Sarhan, Amber Siddiqui, Alhena Virani, Emily Wang, and Katie Wang.

This event was possible due to the vision, enthusiasm, and commitment to youth demonstrated by leaders across Hamilton, including but by no means limited to:

Mayor Andrea Horwath

Ward 1 Councillor Maureen Wilson

Ward 4 Councillor Tammy Hwang

Ward 2 Councillor Cameron Kroetsch

Ward 12 Councillor Craig Cassar

Ward 3 Councillor Nrinder Nann

Ward 13 Councillor Alex Wilson

Rachelle Ihekowaba - Manager, Community Strategies

Daniel Ridsdale - Senior Project Manager, Community Strategies

Jesse Williamson - Project Manager, Strategic Youth Initiatives

Jocelyn Strutt - Senior Project Manager, Public Engagement

Blaze Forgie - Project Coordinator, Public Engagement

Amy Majani - Community Engagement Advisor, Office of the Mayor

Phoenix Friesen - Constituency Coordinator, Ward 2

Joey McCullough - Constituency Coordinator, Ward 2

Jay Carter - Project Manager, CityLAB

Zahra Selman - Events and Communications Coordinator, CityLAB

Although unable to attend, the support shown by Ward 7 Councillor Esther Pauls, Ward 10 Councillor Jeff Beattie, and Ward 14 Councillor Mike Spadafora in promoting the event on social media was deeply appreciated.

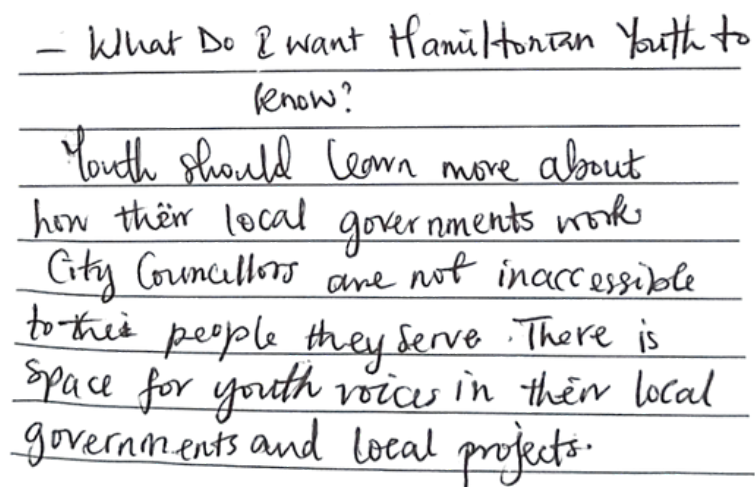
EVENT OVERVIEW

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Designed for youth, by youth, the second Hamilton Youth Town Hall occurred on **Saturday, May 10th, 2025** from **10:00 AM - 3:30 PM** at **Hamilton City Hall** with programming also happening in **CityLAB** next door. The day invited youth to explore what it means to be active residents and influential voices in their communities.

The intent of this event was two-fold: 1) to offer youth an opportunity to engage directly with and ask questions of their elected officials; and 2) to provide a safe space where youth could develop skills and knowledge that would enable their participation in future civic engagement opportunities, including at future Youth Town Halls and the annual HamOntYouth Summit.

As such, the event was comprised of two programming pieces: **Politics with Politicians** and **Civic Education Workshops**. Youth spent 90 minutes in discussion with small groups of Councillors and their peers, and following lunch, attended 1 of 3 workshops developed and facilitated by Model City Hall volunteers. Summaries of this programming and the ideas discussed are included in the sections which follow.



— What Do I want Hamiltonian Youth to know?

Youth should learn more about how their local governments work. City Councillors are not inaccessible to the people they serve. There is space for youth voices in their local governments and local projects.

Pictured: Youth participant's thoughtful reflection about the importance of local government and youth voice.

POLITICS WITH POLITICIANS

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This programming element consisted of panel-style discussions which invited youth to learn from and engage with Councillors. Councillors similarly benefited from this engagement, learning about issues through the youth perspective.

Mental Health, Education, Employment & Training: Discussion Summary

During this discussion, Councillors Kroetsch and Hwang of Wards 2 and 4 engaged with young people who shared anecdotes about how they have successfully, and unsuccessfully, accessed community-based well-being supports, and sought these resources through schools. Youth spoke to the significant challenges they face in accessing supportive resources, including stigma and long wait times. Youth shared the importance of feeling safe and comfortable when seeking help, and the need for more accessible and inclusive mental health support within the community, ensuring a strong emphasis on school-based supports. Councillors were able to provide insight into how youth mental health funding decisions are made (and influenced by other levels of government), illustrating the role and constraints that Council navigates in tackling this issue and others.

Speaking to the value of dialogue across generations and between community members, youth spoke in support of events like the Hamilton Youth Town Hall as they provide an opportunity to connect with those who have shared lived experiences, as well as learn from others with different backgrounds and insights. Youth expressed the sense of belonging and empowerment which comes from seeing themselves in those who serve in mentorship or leadership positions - whether as a school counselor or city councillor.

Councillors Hwang and Kroetsch, by pointing to examples, also emphasized the importance of city-led efforts to connect all young people from across the community, including those with disabilities, newcomer youth, and those from

POLITICS WITH POLITICIANS

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low-income communities, with employment and training opportunities that meet people where they are.

Councillors shared organizations within their networks that support youth career development such as [MITACS](#) and [OC Innovation](#). In response to concerns raised around affordability for young entrepreneurs, youth and Councillors engaged in productive dialogue about the value of mentorship and networking, informed by the Councillors' experience both within and beyond government. The Councillors shared their views on how the City can better support youth entering the workforce and starting businesses.



Pictured: Councillors Kroetsch and Hwang in discussion with youth in Council Chambers

Climate Change, the Environment, Housing & Affordability: Discussion Summary

Councillors Nann, Cassar, and Wilson of Wards 3, 12 and 13 engaged with youth who passionately shared the belief that housing should foster safety, connection, and dignity - and not just provide shelter. Many voiced experiences of isolation, poor housing conditions, and affordability barriers, especially in areas like the downtown core. Some reflected on their lived experiences in other countries, where transit was more accessible, communities were closer-knit, and

POLITICS WITH POLITICIANS

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public spaces were safer and more vibrant. They expressed frustration with car-dependent communities, a lack of public transit, and the difficulty of building community in environments focused on large, private properties.

Councillors echoed these concerns, calling for a shift from housing as an investment commodity to an approach which treats it as a human right. They discussed the importance of complete communities with mixed-income housing, amenities, and social infrastructure. Councillors and youth in attendance reflected on how land use policies can impact both housing availability and environmental sustainability.

Councillor Wilson emphasized community land trusts and the importance of collective ownership, and Councillor Nann highlighted the need for dignity-driven, purposefully designed housing. Councillor Cassar pointed out that housing is deeply linked to land use and environmental sustainability, and it is important to advocate for denser, greener communities. Youth and Councillors agreed: solving housing challenges requires system-level change and stronger municipal funding, along with public buy-in and compassion.

Youth at the session raised concerns about climate change and the City's response to it. Many expressed that misinformation and disinformation make it difficult to discuss climate issues, and they often do not know which level of government to contact for support. They emphasized the need for safer, more accessible public transportation and environmentally-friendly city planning, recommending better bike lanes, e-bike safety measures, and more reliable public transit — especially in underserved areas like Waterdown. Councillors responded with a shared recognition that while the City has declared a climate emergency, action has been slow due to limited municipal authority and inconsistent provincial and federal funding. Councillor Wilson stressed the value

POLITICS WITH POLITICIANS

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of inclusive conversations, trusted information sources, and respectful dialogue to counter misinformation. Councillor Cassar pointed to Toronto's success with green building standards and emphasized collaboration with youth. Councillor Nann underscored the value of Indigenous knowledge and the need to approach solutions with humility, empathy, and openness. Both youth and Councillors identified shared goals: building resilient communities, designing for future generations, and acting boldly—and together—to meet the climate challenge.

Youth and Councillors alike emphasized that tackling both housing affordability and climate action in Hamilton requires a shift from profit-driven systems to community-centered solutions that prioritize equity, sustainability, and long-term well-being—grounded in collaboration across government levels, empowered by lived experience, and driven by youth advocacy for a more connected and resilient future.



Pictured: Councillors Nann, Cassar, and A. Wilson stand with youth following their discussion in the CityLAB Classroom

CIVIC EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

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This programming element offered youth a chance to develop knowledge and build skills to support them in future leadership, advocacy, and civic endeavours.

In **Developing Your Why**, youth 'storymapped' the issues, their personal stories, and the creative solutions, which drive their why. Through reflection and foresight, youth developed a motivation statement, formed connections over shared interests, and left with a better understanding of themselves.

ISSUES	STORIES	SOLUTIONS	Share your Motivation Statement!
Lack of employment opportunities	I'm struggling to find jobs that respond, any employment opportunities in general to be able to afford life.	creating opportunities for those w/o paid experience but have volunteer experience.	I believe youth engagement in climate is important because I had positive environmental role models growing up. I've volunteered for many environmental groups and hope to create a global climate initiative led by youth.
Staff in schools are culturally insensitive & students find it hard to speak up against them	My teachers would be very biased and used leadership positions to influence students.	Creating more events to connect people to jobs. Connecting/creating better employment coaching & social services.	I believe safe & accessible urban green space is important because there is a lot of spaces like that here in the downtown core, and we need biodiversity and to fight the urban heat island effect. I've researched this in campus green spaces and hope to bring this from campus → municipal level.
Lack of opportunities to meet diff cultures	Just moved to Canada, and started to attend HPE events.	developing student body that are aware & can speak up about issues w/ diversity at school	
Lack of safe/accessible green spaces in Hamilton. → biodiversity → urban heat island	worked on campus green spaces.	More events to culturally engage w/ others animals added/community education Campus green spaces → carry out wider in city	

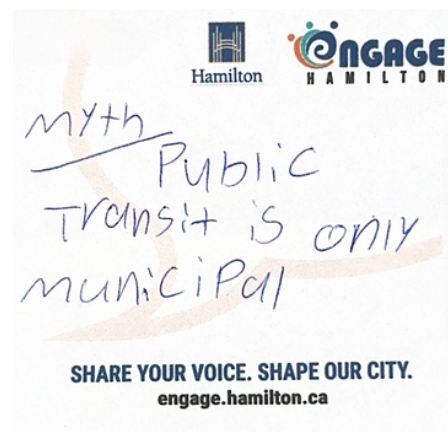
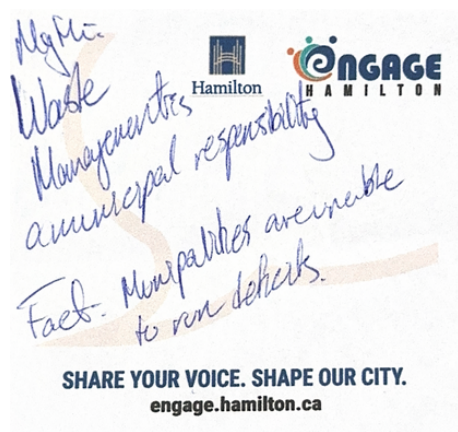
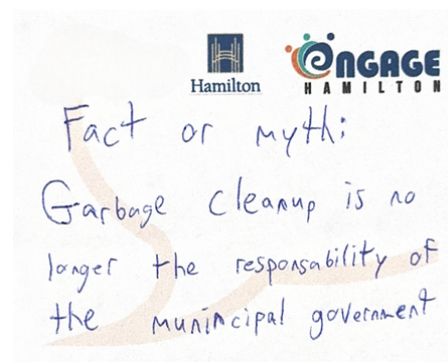
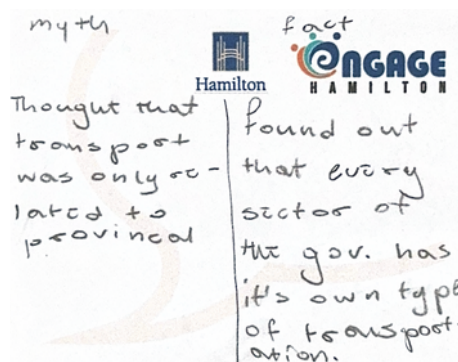
Pictured: Sample 'storymap' and motivation statements developed by participants in **Developing Your Why**

In **Advocacy Skills**, youth learned from their peers about how effective advocacy can drive change in community. Taskin Ahmed Eera shared the impacts of the [@macstudentsforbikeshare](#) campaign, while Tomi Olagunju spoke to the experience of students involved with [@bringbackbreakfast_hwdsb](#). After identifying shared interests and issues, youth worked together to understand their audience and develop messaging for advocacy strategy to raise awareness and promote action around issues as diverse as teen vaping; access to women's hygiene products; climate change; and accessible and affordable housing.

CIVIC EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

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In **Municipal Politics 101**, youth developed an understanding of the issues which fall under municipal, provincial, and federal jurisdiction - and how to affect change through advocacy to and engagement with government. Through an examination of the **Building Safer Communities grant**, youth learned about the importance of cross-governmental collaboration. Opportunities like the **Ward 10 Youth Council** and **HamOntYouth Steering Committee** were highlighted to show youth examples of where to get involved, and how their voice can be part of creating positive change in their communities.



Pictured: Sample 'myths' youth debunked while gaining a better understanding about jurisdictional issues

CONCLUSION

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Pictured: Model City Hall volunteers and Town Hall participants in Council Chambers.

If the ideas and programming in this report are of further interest
to you, please visit our website at

modelcityhall.org

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