

WOMEN OUT OF WORK STUDY

Assessing Hamilton's
Employment Disparities
During COVID-19

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a condensed set of recommendations that have been developed through feedback from Hamilton women, consultation with project partners, and conversations with key local informants. They are designed to advocate for women occupying all sectors, at all stages of their employment journeys. For full recommendations, view the Women out of Work report at womenoutofwork.ca

1 EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Support Women-Specific Support Services/Programming by ensuring that all levels of government apply intersectional, anti-racism, gender-based and diversity lenses to inform policy decisions and that government invests in organizations with experience in advancing gender equity.

Develop a Centralized Women Community Resources Network that is multilingual, accessible, and collaborative with service providers, equity-seeking organizations and community groups.

Ensure Representation in Decision-Making by pursuing gender balance and diverse representation in decision-making circles and consider pursuing a social procurement policy.

Track the Status of Women in Hamilton by establishing a Gender Advisory Council that monitors recovery by tracking key socio-economic indicators, such as employment, average wages, workforce participation, housing insecurity, etc.

Address (Un)Affordability | All levels of government need to urgently recognize the need for expanded, long-term, dedicated supports for affordable housing development – these include financial resources, subsidies and incentives, support a living wage, and study and communicate the benefits of a Universal Basic Income strategy.

2 CHILDCARE & CAREGIVING

Increase Investments in Childcare at All Levels | Ensure that considerations on affordable and accessible childcare informs future economic recovery initiatives and is considered an integral component of all economic development activities.

Support Sector Growth & Retention | Government should promote further professionalization of the sector by subsidizing a living wage, enabling better working conditions and increased employee retention.

Increased recognition of caregivers, RECES, healthcare workers, and educators in order to ensure long-term viability and employment attraction to the sector, all levels of government must commit to implementing a living wage across all sectors of the economy, but even more so for those essential services that have been historically under-appreciated.

Create Family Caregiving Resources & Support by establishing a local family caregiving community resources network that will provide families and caregivers a single point of access to supports for home caregiving that include early childhood education resources, mental health supports and access to tutoring.

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3 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

Maximize Micro-credential Opportunities | All levels of government need to ensure that gender-focused micro-credentialing strategies and programs are designed and informed by inputs from women, women's organizations, and employers. For programs to be successful, enhanced awareness around micro-credential opportunities and their value needs to be communicated, especially to employers who ultimately determine if the micro-credential holder has the necessary skill set.

Develop Youth Training and Workforce Development Strategies | Establish targeted program interventions for young women in secondary school that tap into mentorship opportunities from established women in a given field, namely those in traditionally male-dominated sectors of the economy.

Increase Support to Women-Specific Reskilling Programming | Design training opportunities to address skills shortages by utilizing labour market data, employer input, and the feedback from job-seekers in equity-seeking groups, including through flexible formats, customized support and wraparound services.

Women's Participation in Employment Recruitment | All levels of government should pursue financial incentives for organizations that seek to diversify their workforce, particularly among male-dominated sectors of the economy, to provide incentives for equitable employment practices. Employers ought to explore flexible working arrangements where possible, to further incentivize women to seek employment within their organization.

4 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Establish Women's Entrepreneur Support Networks & Mentorship Opportunities

Increase BIPOC & Women Owned Business Development Supports | Consider additional targeted support to underrepresented groups in the form of grants, loans and subsidies, but also in the form of essential business skills training and mentorship. Support women-led businesses with financing, legal advice, financial literacy, digital literacy, and other supports essential to running a successful business.

Support Access to Talent | To further connect employers with job seekers in need of part-time, flexible work, establish a job board designed specifically to foster those connections. To further incentivize and support the success of women and BIPOC entrepreneurs, government ought to consider employment incentives and subsidies for hiring, training and onboarding new employees.

5 WORKPLACE POLICIES & EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Promote Mental Health-Friendly Workplaces | Mental health policies and considerations on accommodations are essential and it is encouraged that all employers establish a mental health policy – government should provide draft policies that account for best-practices and allow employer flexibility to adapt accordingly. Sustain the conversation on mental health well beyond the pandemic to destigmatize and acknowledge the potential consequences of mental health challenges.

Create Inclusive Human Resource Policies | Anti-harassment, anti-racism, mental health, sick-leave and equity, diversity and inclusion policies must become commonplace human resource requirements.

Consider On-site Childcare | Governments and employers ought to evaluate demand for workplace-based childcare, and if deemed appropriate, incentivize employers to offer on-site childcare or mobile child care for long-term infrastructure projects in remote areas.

Improve Workplace Culture, Advancement and Retention | Provide incentives to employers to participate in further managerial training that seeks to educate on the benefits of equity, diversity and inclusion in team building, gender-based analysis in creating a safe and inclusive workplace, and to foster progressive leadership qualities among managerial staff.