

Memo #2 to Hamilton: From Sidelines to Centre Field

The City of Hamilton stands to benefit significantly from co-hosting the Pan-Am Games in 2015. It will gain revenues from the many thousands of athletes and visitors to the city. It will acquire new infrastructure in the form of sport and recreation facilities. It will enjoy an improved transportation system.

Equally important, the City of Hamilton will see its name up in lights on the world stage. The Games provide a spectacular platform on which to build. They are an extraordinary opportunity – not just for athletes – to do great things.

With millions of eyes and ears tuning in across the globe, the Games have the potential to bring about significant shifts in communities.

This power is often referred to as “transformative change.” It not only can transform physical landscape. It can also move hearts and minds.

Transformative change involves a shift in mental landscape – and how we see the world. It means a change in attitudes and, ideally, in associated actions.

Hamilton City Council recognized this seismic power when it committed, as Games co-host, to respecting several core principles. Social inclusion was high on its guiding-light list.

Social inclusion is both end and means. As an end or objective, it seeks to ensure that all citizens can participate in diverse aspects of community opportunity including its economic, social, recreational and cultural dimensions. Jobs, training, volunteer placements, and accessible spaces and information are all part of the mix.

As means, social inclusion refers to the importance of ensuring that all citizens have a voice in shaping local decisions. Social inclusion involves listening to both the vocal and those without voice. It means providing opportunities for quiet voices to be heard – and heeded.

The PanAm Games may be the immediate focus of attention. But social inclusion means, in the long run, that the citizens of Hamilton are the main event. The challenge is to make authentic the commitment to this ideal.

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Vice-President

The Caledon Institute of Social Policy has been asked by the Community Services Department of the City of Hamilton to prepare a social inclusion vision for the 2015 Pan-Am and ParaPan Games.

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