

January 14, 2012

An open letter to the citizens of Hamilton,

We are writing this letter to acknowledge the challenges of the launch of the Our Voice Our Hamilton public engagement project and with the sincere hope of restarting our conversation.

Together with our partner, the City of Hamilton, we chose to be silent the last few days and listen to the comments that have been made. We now know this silence was a mistake and we are sorry. We believe in having conversations even though at times they may be difficult. **We believe in inclusion, diversity of opinion and respect for all.** These are values we hold dear and our silence has been contrary to those values, so we are asking you now to begin this conversation with us again.

To start, we would like to take responsibility for many of the events that have transpired since January 7th. Specifically, we are sorry for asking for clarification about what HSR is, and for planning an event on January 17th which conflicts with another community event. We take responsibility for the security breaches on our website that allowed a hacker to insert a virus and for not being more rigid with our moderation of our Community Priorities survey. We created the Pinterest page and therefore take responsibility for the images that appeared there. **For this we are sorry.**

We want you to know we take these things very seriously. We are 9 months into a 13-month contract to consult, listen and talk to ALL citizens of Hamilton and engage you in a rich and meaningful conversation to identify your values and priorities, and to hear suggestions you have to help build the City that meets your needs now and in the future.

We hope you will give this important conversation a chance.

There is an impressive desire of the people in Hamilton to participate. We have already seen this through Twitter, Facebook and online surveys. We have received a variety of comments and input that include support for small business, understanding poverty, ambulance wait times, transit improvements, snow clearing, the Casino, City website, City ownership of golf courses and much more. **We hope this passion will continue to be put towards this important conversation.**

Many people have called and emailed us asking that this conversation continue, saying they are being drowned out by a few loud voices. We want to hear all those voices – loud and quiet. **Everyone needs a voice now.**

This conversation needs to happen in a meaningful and respectful manner, where there is caring and consideration for everyone involved. **Everyone deserves the right to a voice and to be treated with respect.** There will be differences of opinion and viewpoints and this conversation will be better because we didn't only have discussions with people who agree with us, but with people who don't as well. **Every citizen of Hamilton should feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts in an environment that is free of bullying, intimidation and defamation.**

This is a conversation we want to have and one we are hearing the citizens of Hamilton want as well.

Sincerely,



Stephani Roy McCallum, Managing Director
Dialogue Partners



DIALOGUE
PARTNERS