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GARY YOKOYAMA, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Mayor Fred Eisenberger in the Lang Street area where he grew up. 'I'm a product of the east end and poverty.' Our declining industrial base is 'a recipe for a Detroit or Buffalo scenario.'

CODE RED: Evaporation of manufacturing jobs takes its toll

Continued from WR2

Bartley continued. "They taught us that if you can, clamp the umbilical cord and see if the father wants to cut it. And I'm thinking, as they're yelling in the background, this is like a Jerry Springer Show."

Miraculously, the baby survived.

"I found out later that the baby was withdrawing from drugs because the mother was on drugs."

But the case that has stayed with her, gnawed at her, was a suicide call to the former Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital on the west Mountain for a man who had a past history of attempts.

He had taken the lace from one his boots, tied one end around his neck and the other around the hinge of a closet door.

"It wasn't even high enough," she said quietly. "All he did was buckle his knees."

"That bothered me — that someone hates himself or his life that much that he would just let his knees buckle and his feet dangle and kill himself."

But even though she often sees the city at its worst, she has no intention of leaving.

"I have this connection with Hamilton because I can see all the need in this city, and I love to be the one to be there to help," Bartley said. "These people, they're so vulnerable."

"I really do feel needed here."



Hamilton is a unique study in contrasts, a city of upper and lower, urban and suburban, high-density inner-city neighbourhoods crammed with people and large tracts of open, sparsely inhabited farmland.

It's also a city of the very rich and the very poor, the healthy and the unhealthy, joined together.

Consider these differences uncovered by The Spectator's investigation:

■ At one extreme, the rate of emergency room visits in the neighbourhood directly in front of the U.S. Steel plant was 1,291 per 1,000 people.

At the other extreme, one Flamborough neighbourhood had an emergency room visit rate of 97 per 1,000 people. That's a difference of 13 times from best to worst.

You'll read more about emergency room use, health care costs and physician resources in the second part of this series Monday.

■ There are seven neighbourhoods in Hamilton where the rate of low birth-weight babies as a proportion of total births was higher than 20 per cent, including one neighbourhood where the rate of low birth-weight babies was 47 per cent.

The average rate of low birth-weight babies in sub-Saharan Africa is 15 per cent, according to the World Health Organization.

Based on the The Spectator's findings, Hamilton's overall rate of low birth-weight babies is more than 30 per cent higher than the Canadian average.

This is important because low birth-weight babies can suffer from poorer health in general throughout life and require substantially more health care resources.

You'll read more about the role of prenatal and postnatal care on health, along with the importance of proper childhood development during the early years in Tuesday's third part.

■ In the neighbourhood bounded by Parkdale Avenue, Red Hill Creek,



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Mark Chamberlain chairs the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. 'If I can help this person get a job, they'll be healthier and it will cost us less money. It goes on and on.'

Windermere Basin and the rail line, the average age of a person suffering a cardiovascular emergency, such as a heart attack or stroke, was 57 years of age.

In the Stoney Creek neighbourhood bounded by Barton Street, Millen Road, Highway 8 and Green Road, the average age for a cardiovascular emergency was just over 79 years.

That's a difference of 22 years from best neighbourhood to worst in Hamilton.

You'll read more about the earning years and the importance of economic factors on health in part four of the series Wednesday.

■ In one rural Ancaster neighbourhood, there were 5,071 days of hospital bed use per 1,000 people age 70 and older.

By contrast, in one rural Flamborough neighbourhood, there were 309 days of hospital bed use per 1,000 people age 70 and older, a difference of more than 16 times from best to worst.

The challenges of providing adequate care to the elderly will be explored in Thursday's fifth part.

■ The neighbourhoods with the 10 highest rates of psychiatric-related emergencies are all located in a square surrounding the downtown core.

Seven of those top 10 neighbourhoods with the highest rates of psychiatric-related emergencies are also among the top 10 neighbourhoods where patients report having no family physician.

You'll read more about the particular

challenges posed by mental health issues in part six of the series Friday.

The final part of the series will focus on possible solutions, including unique first-person accounts from a cross-section of Hamilton's leaders.



Meet Fred Eisenberger.

You know Fred, he's the mayor.

Poverty touches the lives of many people in Hamilton. What you may not know is that poverty was part of the mayor's life as he was growing up in the city.

"I'm a product of the east end and poverty, quite frankly," said Eisenberger.

"I never had an empty belly, to be honest. I didn't live at that level of poverty, I don't think."

"I'm sure we were at or below the poverty line, but not to the point where we didn't have food."

Eisenberger's parents were immigrants to Canada, a stay-at-home mom and a working dad, and the family lived in a geared-to-income housing complex on Lang Street.

"It's still there," Eisenberger said. "I don't live too far away from there, actually. I still go to the neighbourhood, I still see the same issues. I see the same kinds of families there that are struggling to make ends meet."

"And I see the same kind of kids, who deserve the opportunity to end that cycle and go through an education process."

"I think there is a need for a philosophical shift in the country," Eisenberger said, "so that we don't necessarily just say 'You're on your own, folks.'"



Just how did we get to this point?

Hamilton's story is one of immigrants and the role that immigration has long played in the city's past.

Hamilton has the country's third-highest percentage of foreign-born residents, behind Toronto and Vancouver; and in Ontario, Hamilton is second only to Toronto as the most popular destination for new immigrants.

That also leads to a concentration of new Canadians in neighbourhoods with low rents.

The last census shows one downtown neighbourhood of 2,600 people where almost one in four residents had arrived in Canada in the preceding five years.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, neighbourhoods with large concentrations of new immigrants also have high rates of people living below the poverty line (StatsCan defines the poverty line as \$21,200 for a single person or \$39,400 for a family of four, in an urban area such as Hamilton), high proportions of people reporting no family physician and high rates of emergency room visits and hospital admissions.

It's a story about a city that has a major university, a large college and a small private university, yet also has a neighbourhood where more than 40 per cent of the adults between the ages of 25 and 64 don't have a high school or postsecondary diploma.

According to the last census, there's one neighbourhood by Centre Mall that has 1,375 people between the ages of 25 and 64.

Ten of them have a university degree.

Contrast that with one Westdale neighbourhood where two out of three adults between the same ages have a university degree.

But mostly it's a story about the role of steelmaking and manufacturing in the city — for decades, a stable provider of decent-paying, blue-collar jobs in Hamilton.

There were environmental costs associated with these jobs, however, and they were jobs that didn't necessarily require a great deal of education.

Two or three generations ago, steelworker families would have lived in the shadows of Dofasco and Stelco and the other large manufacturers along Burlington Street.

But like cities all across North America, better wages, affordable housing and greater mobility allowed people to flee to the suburbs.

Then the jobs disappeared.

"It's no great secret," said the Community Foundation's Cooke, "that starting in the late '70s and early '80s, we witnessed the evisceration of much of the industry along Burlington Street that had sustained many working-class families who lived in neighbourhoods and sent their kids to local schools and took care of the properties and looked out for other kids and sustained a sense of community."

Neighbourhoods around the steel mills were no longer considered desirable places to live, in part because of the environmental legacy of steelmaking, in part because the houses were smaller and older.

Continued on WR5