



March 6, 2006

His Worship Mayor Larry Di Ianni  
Office of the Mayor  
The City of Hamilton  
71 Main Street West, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Di Ianni:

It is our understanding that the Council has under consideration a recommendation from the Public Works Department that calls for a bus fare increase. That issue was discussed at a recent meeting of the Hamilton Civic Coalition and members expressed concern that the increase would have an adverse affect on several of the City's explicit goals. Since a large percentage of regular HSR bus riders are from low income groups, a fare increase would, in effect, be a new tax on those who are least able to afford it. That effect would seem to be directly contrary to the stated goal of the Poverty Roundtable to reduce poverty.

Public Works also estimates that the recommended fare increase would result in the loss of some 780,000 rides in the ensuing year even though an explicit goal of Vision 2020 is to increase ridership on public transit. A reduction in ridership would also weaken the constituency for the HSR. A weakened HSR system would increase reliance on automobiles, also contrary to the objectives of Vision 2020. Greater reliance on cars will almost certainly lead to more urban sprawl, more traffic congestion and more air pollution. Finally, members fear that a weakened HSR system will make Hamilton a less attractive place to live and thus a less attractive destination for business investment. We also note that more reliance on public transit and less on automobiles is an explicit goal of the provincial government.

Although the immediate concern is with the proposed fare increase, HCC members would like to see a more comprehensive transportation plan be developed for the new Hamilton. There is, for example, no public transit link to the airport and thus those who rely on public transportation are excluded from jobs there. Members believe that Hamilton's future prosperity is dependent to a significant degree on the City's making full use of the transportation advantages it has with its port and airport and that a plan be developed towards that end. Our members would be pleased to cooperate with the City in developing such a plan.

We realize that merely to balance the budget, Council has to impose property tax increases on property owners who are already sorely over-burdened. A long term solution must be found for this recurring problem. As you know, we have strongly supported the City's effort to solve the short-fall caused by social services downloading and we would be pleased to provide similar support to a project intended to bring about a fairer distribution of government income and expenditures between the federal, provincial and municipal government. Given the situation as it currently exists, however, we believe that a bus fare increase offends too many of explicit goals of both the City and the Province and thus ought to be discarded as an option in the current budget-setting process.

Sincerely,



**Peter George**  
Co-Chair



**Don Pether**  
Co-Chair



**Roy Adams**  
Executive Director

cc: Hamilton City Councillors