

**Hamilton Chamber of Commerce  
Government Affairs Committee  
Community Council Formations Within a Municipality**

**Issue:**

A portion of Bill 130, recently adopted into Law January 1, 2007 permits the formation of Community Councils within a Municipality of Ontario. Under this Bill (also known as "Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007"), Municipalities will now be able to impart greater powers of decision to formed Community Councils.

Community councils allow businesses to provide input on issues that directly affect their neighbourhoods and provide a forum for local input into City Council decision-making.

**Background:**

Prior to the passing of Bill 130, Municipalities wishing to create a Community Council required acceptance of Provincial Legislation, and subsequent addendums to the Municipal Act, 2001. As per the Constitution Act, 1867 Municipal Governments are not a recognized level of political government (Provincial and Federal only). The Provincial Government introduced Bill 130 as a means to bring Municipal Government more decision making powers.

Now that there is a four-year-term for Municipal Councils, Community Councils can serve two purposes. 1) They can provide a mechanism for Councillors to be accountable to the electorate between elections, and 2) they can provide Councillors with the benefit of local input from stakeholders in communities, including businesses, in an organized way.

**Community Council Coordinating Committees (CCCC):**

Communities wishing to investigate the feasibility and desirability of community councils in their municipality are encouraged to establish adhoc Community Council Coordinating Committees that reports to City Council or its designate. Give CCCCCs the responsibility for bringing forward recommendations to City Council for determining the feasibility and desirability of implementing the Community Council concept. Consider using co-chairs for the coordinating committee, an honorary chair and a working chair. CCCCCs should have representation from all wards as well as City Council. CCCCC members must be strong leaders and "broad thinkers" with experience and expertise related to the development of community councils and / or other related organizations. Give CCCCCs the responsibility of recommending terms of reference, membership guidelines, and implementation strategies for Community Councils (and for a permanent CCCCC - if it is required). Include in these responsibilities the preparation of a list of the characteristics that Community Council and CCCCC members should possess. Other organizations within a municipality may use the name "community councils". Give CCCCCs the responsibility of defining the term "community council" and / or finding a new name for community councils that reflects their role and that minimizes confusion with other groups within the city. CCCCCs should be

encouraged to bring forward recommendations to City Council for a process of identifying “natural communities” and associated community councils.

The following are a few suggestions to consider with respect to natural communities:

- a) “Natural communities” are often associated with a “downtown area”.
- b) Focusing on perceived “natural communities” and associated “downtown area” could be an effective tool for determining where “natural communities” are located.
- c) Build each “natural community” around the “downtown area” associated with the community.
- d) All “natural communities” should be encouraged to create a community council.
- e) Special attention should be given to reviewing the options for best representing rural communities.
- f) Community councils generally should be aligned along geographic lines. However, non-geographically aligned “natural communities” can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario:

1. To support initiatives by local municipalities to establish Community Councils using the referenced suggestions outlined above as guidelines.
2. To always have representation from local businesses on Community Councils (i.e. local Chambers of Commerce and BIAs)