

## **Hamilton Chamber of Commerce Places to Grow. Better Choices. Brighter Future.**

### **Issue:**

In 2004, the Province of Ontario released a discussion paper entitled "Places to Grow, Better Choices, Brighter Future". This discussion paper outlined the Province's growth management strategy for the Greater Golden Horseshoe over a 30-year period. On June 16, 2006, the Province approved the Places to Grow Plan. This plan will now govern land use planning decisions in all municipal jurisdictions throughout the Golden Horseshoe Area.

### **Background:**

After a thirty-year absence, the Province of Ontario has once again taken a leadership role in managing Ontario's growth. It is projected that over the next thirty years the province's population will increase by 4 million people with 3 million locating within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The growth management strategy concentrates on four key areas; intensification and compact urban form, priority urban centres and future growth areas, economic strength, and rural communities.

The province is to be commended for its efforts in attempting to ease the liability issues associated with brownfield redevelopment and providing financial incentives for remediation and redevelopment. Unfortunately, it does not adequately address the civil liability issue associated with cross-boundary contamination. This is still a major disincentive for brownfield redevelopment. The province must also assist the development community and municipalities in changing the attitudes of both the insurance and financial industries which have not supported re-investment in existing downtowns and have become a major impediment to brownfield redevelopment and downtown revitalization.

The province is to be commended for its identification of Priority Urban Centres and Future Growth Areas. This will provide municipalities and the business community with certainty as to where capital investments will be made. Municipalities will require the province's support through infrastructure investment in order to fully capitalize on redevelopment of its brownfields and greyfields. The required upgrades to municipal sanitary, water and road infrastructure is beyond the realm of many municipal capital budgets and will require provincial assistance. Greater Provincial investment in transit infrastructure will also allow municipalities to accommodate projected growth targets.

The province must ensure that there is enough land allocated for future growth which will be unaffected by the proposed Greenbelt. In order to reverse commuter deficits and provide a wide range of housing to meet consumer demand, municipalities must have the ability to expand in a responsible manner without having to amend provincial legislation to adjust the greenbelt boundary.

A key component of the province's economic strategy is to ease the movement of goods to/from the Greater Golden Horseshoe to the key markets in the United States. We commend the province for specifically identifying the Hamilton International Airport as a top economic priority and its importance to the economy of the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe.

With its integrated network of shipping, rail, road and airport infrastructure, the province's economic plan has a strong foundation for economic prosperity that will require proper investment of provincial infrastructure dollars to reach its potential. In this regard, it is critical that the planning and construction of the Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor be completed as soon as possible. The expeditious completion of the Environmental Assessment will not only to ease congestion on the QEW but to also relieve development pressure on tender fruit areas adjacent the QEW corridor.

Agri-business and the farming community are integral to Ontario's future. We support the province's commitment to rural communities in order to preserve their unique characteristics, cultural heritage and economy. It was made abundantly clear to the province through the Greenbelt Taskforce consultation process, that the best way to preserve rural communities is by ensuring the viability of Ontario's agricultural economy. If there is not adequate room to accommodate new growth in the area between the existing urban area and the "inside" limit of the Greenbelt Plan, the Plan will severely affect housing affordability, and will encourage "leap frogging" into rural communities that are unable and unprepared to handle the increase in growth pressure.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

That the Province of Ontario:

1) Demonstrate its commitment to "Priority Urban Centres" and "Provincial Growth Areas" through the allocation of provincial infrastructure funding for the revitalization of downtown cores and for future employment lands.

2) Allow municipalities to designate sufficient land for future growth through their Official Plans in the area between existing urban areas and the "inside" limit of the Greenbelt Plan, in order to:

- accommodate the employment and residential needs of the province to at least the year 2037
- allow for the design and implementation of complete communities as opposed to simply accommodating incremental extension of existing subdivision
- provide reasonable long-term expectations for those lands located between the existing urban boundary and the limits of the Greenbelt Plan.
- allow for the proper planning and design of long-term infrastructure needs
- and implement appropriate phasing strategies

3) Commit to the construction of the Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor and a timetable for its completion.