

HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Response to the Draft The “Places to Grow” Act

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Background

On February 16th, 2005 the Province issued the Draft *Places to Grow* document which, if passed will formulate the provisions for The *Places to Grow* Act. The document’s purpose is to introduce how the Province intends to implement their vision of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area. The GGH area consists of the inner ring (traditional Golden Horseshoe) bordered by the Greenbelt and the outer ring, which is the area outside the Greenbelt area including, among other areas, Brantford, Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph.

The most important issue facing the City of Hamilton is the lack of employment lands available to curtail the commuter deficit of Hamilton residents employed outside the city. The Province of Ontario must allow Hamilton to have the ability to immediately implement the economic cluster strategy passed by council, and their *Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy* (GRIDS) process once it is complete. Paramount to this strategy is the designation and zoning of lands around the Hamilton International Airport for employment uses. As currently drafted, the *Places to Grow* legislation will not allow urban boundary expansions for a minimum of 5 years and the legislation will be reviewed every 10 years. This is simply unacceptable and jeopardizes Hamilton’s economic future.

As you are aware, Hamilton is included in two Sub-Areas Growth Strategy areas – the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), as well as Niagara. Thus, regardless of the GRIDS process, the City of Hamilton will not be permitted to move forward with employment lands around the airport for an estimated +/- 5 years if the legislation is accepted in its current form. Hamilton should be part of one Sub-Area growth strategy, that being the GTA, given that it is the economic centre of the western part of the region. Hamilton must be allowed to finalize and implement the recommendations of the GRIDS process independent of the Sub-Area growth strategies. The threat of the future development of the Pickering airport (which is exempt from this legislation as it is located on Federal lands) and the missed employment opportunities being lost to neighboring municipalities is of immediate concern and requires immediate action.

Recommendations:

That the Provincial Government:

1. Exempt the lands around Hamilton International Airport from the Sub-Area Growth Strategy groups of the proposed *The Places to Grow Act*;
2. Permit the City of Hamilton to make an Official Plan amendment to extend the urban boundary to include the lands around the airport;
3. Include Hamilton in the GTA Sub-Area Growth strategy **only**; and
4. Allowed the City of Hamilton to finalize and implement the recommendations of the *Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy* (“GRIDS”) process independent of the Sub-Area Growth strategies.

That both the City of Hamilton and the Province:

5. Should move expeditiously so as to, within the next 12 months, amend the official plan so as to permit re-zoning and, in fact, re-zone said lands around Hamilton International Airport for use as employment lands; i.e. either the Places to Grow Legislation or the GRIDS process should not in any way delay or impeded such re-zoning.