

# Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

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*Presentation to City of Hamilton Committee of the Whole  
Thursday, May 18, 2006*

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## RESPONSE TO FINAL GRIDS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is the oldest and most broadly based business organization in the City of Hamilton. Our membership includes 1,750 companies and organizations representing 11,150 individuals and 180,000 family members.

I want to first of all congratulate staff and Council on their initiative to consider future options for our community. We at the Chamber believe that the City of Hamilton is poised to become a major growth centre over the next few decades. We have for a number of years predicted this unfolding interest. We are now seeing it beginning to emerge. In order to properly plan and prepare ourselves, we need to consider long-term options so that we can shape our community to respond to our own particular strengths and unique characteristics.

While we feel the Plan could have gone further to prevent urban sprawl by adopting a longer term vision for the City, particularly for those lands between the Greenbelt and the Urban Area, we would very strongly urge Council to approve the Plan today. We simply cannot go anywhere as a community until this Plan is approved. Over the past few years while this study has been underway, too many good things in our community have been stalled, put off, or relocated to other municipalities. A substantial amount of investment has been lost because we have not been ready to move forward as quickly as we might have with a plan of action for the future.

Of the various options considered through this process, we are pleased to see the Nodes and Corridor option as the preferred strategy, which includes a substantial potential for a new employment and economic growth centre near the airport. We believe that the establishment of a strong Airport Employment Centre is absolutely essential to the future well being of our community. This will retain jobs and increase business assessment, thereby decreasing our reliance on the residential base. It will significantly contribute to curbing urban sprawl by allowing for an appropriate level of employment within our own boundaries.

The preferred plan we feel provides a proper balance of those things that are important to our community and to the Chamber, including matters where the Chamber has been a leading voice on issues such as downtown redevelopment and the development of brownfield sites. It is clear from

the collective experience of our membership and our role in monitoring the evolution of our community, that there is no one element of the Plan that requires an exclusive focus. It is only by integrating all of the various strengths of our community, which are represented by a variety of important corridors and nodes including not only the downtown and brownfields, but also our strong commercial centres, the harbour, and our very important parks and open space system. We believe the Plan has properly struck this balance.

Once this Plan is approved and we move forward, it will be important to use this foundation to establish further linkages to ongoing work undertaken by the City, including the preparation of a Transportation Master Plan which we believe must be fully integrated with the Goods Movement Study. Once we put all of these elements together, we begin to establish a true picture of what our community framework will look like in 20-30 years. Essential throughout this entire exercise is the necessity to incorporate external linkages, opportunities and constraints, given the regional importance of the City of Hamilton.

As this process moves forward, we would encourage Council to keep an eye on big picture, long term issues. If we become too restrictive, we encourage urban sprawl to neighbouring communities, which, as we all know, undermines the intent of this Plan. In this regard, the Hamilton Chamber has taken a lead role in putting forward a resolution which was recently adopted by all of the Chamber of Commerce organizations in the Province, to encourage the Province to allow municipalities more flexibility to adopt a broader perspective and a longer time horizon for the preparation of plans such as GRIDS. We will continue to work with the Province and the City to encourage and allow for broader strategic planning exercises that can fully prepare us for the long term future.

The bottom line is that today we need a decision. The years of study and consultation have been helpful and essential. It is now time for Council to provide the leadership that is expected from the community. As we have said many times, every great city relies on strong leadership. The Chamber of Commerce and all of its affiliated members are now looking to you to provide that leadership. We are here to tell you that we need it today.

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