

February, 2005

City Clerk
Planning and Economic Development Committee
City of Hamilton,
71 Main Street
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 4Y5

Dear Sirs:

Re: Notice of Public Meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee

Monday February 7th, 2005

Thank you for the notice of the aforementioned meeting and the opportunity to make comments into the matters under discussion. Unfortunately, the leadership of the Chamber is not available this specific night to attend in person, however, for the record, we do wish to provide input, as follows.

By way of introduction, as you may be aware, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is the oldest, largest and most broadly based business organization extant within the broader Hamilton economic region. Today, we comprise almost 1,750 individual members that voluntarily represent about 1,150 companies and organizations that collectively employ 75,000 people full time from all parts of the "new" City of Hamilton, indeed, and beyond. While most of Hamilton's top 100 employers, both public and private sector, are members, overwhelming most of our members are small to mid sized enterprises.

For many years, the Chamber has championed balanced waterfront development. In fact, a key part of the rationale for locating our Chamber headquarters down to the waterfront in 1989 was to demonstrate clear leadership, in this regard. Since then, our waterfront business has grown and prospered. Today, the Chamber of Commerce alone attracts anywhere from 60,000 to 75,000 people visits each year to Hamilton's waterfront, many of them from out of town, indeed not an insignificant number from out of the country; providing them with a unique and flattering view of the City and its harbor. We have always held the view that effective development of the West Harbour was key to downtown revitalization and could be, if properly managed, a critical element in the renaissance of the whole North End, indeed of the City as a whole.

We are glad to see the City demonstrating solid leadership in this matter as evidenced by your Setting Sail initiative. For the most part, with some exceptions noted below, we most part heartily endorse this strategy and the process followed by City Staff in this exercise. As you know, we issued a brief report in June of 2003 (a copy of which is attached) outlining our specific recommendations at that time. For the most part, we are encouraged that the plans that are now proposed largely seem to be in alignment with this document.

However, please allow us to make the following general observation with respect to the **Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan Amendment**, as proposed. With respect to the specific deletion of the east-west Arterial (i.e. Perimeter) Road; the Chamber fully acknowledges that current usage and traffic patterns may not be able to justify the cost of this planned infrastructure in the short term.

Nevertheless, in the longer term, particularly from an economic development perspective, the Chamber remains convinced of the need for a stronger east west link in the north end of the City for movement of goods and services.. This is critically important in the re-development of existing Brownfield into viable employment lands. "just in time" delivery systems are no longer just a business competitive advantage. In today's international trade environment, the ability to move goods expeditiously is a business necessity. Coupled with the long term need to direct vehicular traffic away from the Downtown Core, as much as is possible; this means that we simply will need at some future date an ability to allow employers in Hamilton's east end to be able to move goods more quickly to access Highway #403, and thus markets in the American Mid West by allowing them to flow more effectively across the North end of the City. Thus, if the Perimeter road itself, is indeed truly 'dead", we must look more closely at how to effectively move goods and services east west. To fail to do so will in the long contribute to urban sprawl and create increased pressure on suburban infrastructure by forcing potential employers to seek development of employment lands where they can have better access to series 400 highways; perhaps even outside of Hamilton.

We thus urge the City to aggressively explore ways to improve routing of such traffic in the North End. This should be a high priority in our view.

Sincerely,

John Dolbec
Chief Executive Officer