



Written Submission, in lieu of delegation (i.e. Not presented “Live”)
June 11, 2010 for CoW meeting of June 18, 2010.

To: Hamilton City Council
Committee Of the Whole

From: Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

Re: Chamber Comments on Hamilton Economic Development Strategy 2010

Dear Mr. Mayor and all Members of Council:

On behalf of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hamilton Economic Development Strategy 2010.

As you are aware the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce comprises now almost 2,100 individuals who represent about 1,200 employers of all sizes, and from about 300 diverse sectors; plus, who collectively employ some 75,000 Hamiltonians Full Time from all parts of this City. Our research has confirmed that our members do indeed reasonably reflect, in suitable proportion, the broader demographics of Hamilton’s business community.

From our members, we have engaged a very strong group of about 300 active business volunteers who provide a wide variety of experience and talent through twelve standing Chamber Committees and geographic Divisions (Representing also Ancaster, Dundas, and now Glanbrook, as well as the “old” City of Hamilton). These volunteers represent collectively literally thousands of years of “hands on” practical experience regarding local business and community development issues.

What follows largely stems directly from ongoing review and comments from our standing Business Development Committee, in alignment without our existing public policy, as formally approved by our Chamber’s elected Board of Directors, who themselves are also reasonably representative of our membership in terms of diverse size and sectors of business, as well as gender, generation, etc.

Since the Strategy document being commented on is large (231 pages), the following summary of review perhaps does not do justice to the many hours that have gone into it to prepare it.

Nevertheless, in order that our **Business Development Committee** (“**BDC**”) had a chance to review comments in a timely manner for today, our comments are based on draft document that was available as at May 12, 2010; i.e. they may **not** reflect any subsequent amendments that may have been made.

We are pleased to note that there was wide stakeholder input into this Economic Strategy, including ongoing dialogue with the Chamber itself over the past 20 months (indeed and longer, as representatives from the City’s Ec. Dev. Department have always been active participants on this Committee, as indeed they are on many of the Chamber’s standing Committees/Divisions). We are convinced that this kind of ongoing liaison is absolutely vital, in order that views as widely held as possible in community at large, but particularly the business sectors, are incorporated to gain overall and widespread support, on a broad consensus basis. We are reasonably confident then that this strategy will enjoy such widespread support.

Thus, first and foremost, we must commend and congratulate City Staff, particularly, Neil Everson and his team, for not merely the obvious amount of time energy, thought and diligence that has gone into this plan; but the exhaustive and comprehensive business and broader community consulting that has been incorporated into this impressive document

This Development Strategy has extensive relevant background information. It further targets many areas that will unquestionably, in our view, attract new business, retain and expand existing businesses, and clearly sets out target clusters that are considered essential to renew and diversify Hamilton’s economy, and this ensure badly needed Jobs and Prosperity for our citizens for time to come.

To summarize, Targeted Cluster areas of growth are: – Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-business, Clean-Tech, Creative Industries, Goods Movement and last, but not least, Life Sciences.

We feel that these are indeed viable target areas, and that a realistic approach is documented to effectively attack these market segments as true clusters. All of these sectors have great potential for our Community; but a recent representative survey of our membership indicates that they feel collectively that Hi-Technology applied to Advanced Manufacturing; Health Care (both public and private sector); and Green Energy Clusters, in that order, holds the greatest potential.

However, we would be remiss if we did not point out the Recent **McMaster Institute for Transportation and Logistics** (“**MITL**”) Report (“*Driving the Development of Southern Ontario As an Environmentally Sustainable Goods Movement Gateway*” – published September 2009, based on their earlier “*Gateway*” study released at the Chamber in June 2009 (visit: <http://mitl.mcmaster.ca/research/gateway/index.html> for details). It was estimated therein that the Hamilton Region, effectively marketed as a genuine **Transportation Hub, or Gateway**, had the potential to deliver “*the creation of 35,000 gateway jobs, a regional economic model forecasts an incremental boost in (local) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$4.8 billion by 2031* “ . . . We are therefore convinced more than ever that this cluster in particular must be a priority focus for all of the very valid reasons outlined in the detailed and comprehensive MITL work.

We note that targeted clusters growth is in addition to the traditional businesses, education and other sectors, which are in the “*retention /expansion group*”, again are realistic and realizable strategies in our opinion.

The overall Strategy generally covers all the right points, (sustainable development, triple bottom line, etc.) and aspirations that would show a comprehensive direction for Hamilton to grow into a better place to live and in which to do business. All issues in full alignment with the Chamber's Mission, Visions and Core Values.

In short, The Hamilton Economic Development Department has produced a clearly understood, well considered document that reflects very well on the overall ability and capabilities of City Staff, their professionalism and consensus building.

We therefore believe that congratulations are well in order. This strategy overall has our unqualified support. We pledge the active co-operation of your Chamber of Commerce in actively assisting the City with implementation.

Naturally, as with any "*Strategy*" document, it is general in content. **It will be the application and interpretation that this and future Councils will act on (or not) on a day to day basis going forward that will ultimately count and be the true measure of its success.** In short, reasonable sticking to the broader Strategy in day-to-day Council decisions is absolutely vital to success.

Some very bold aspirations are also noted; for example, "*from Brown to Green in 5 years*". However, while aggressive, these are achievable, in our view.

While giving an overall positive approval, and keeping in mind that we looked at an "*a draft document*", there are some contradictions that some observers may note and take exception to. For example:

- It is noted in one section that there is a lack of large parcels of employment land available, while in another stating that the Port Authority has 100 acres at former Pier 22. We understand that there are some restrictions on use of Port lands, which may account for exclusion. We would be of the firm opinion that the City does need to dramatically both increase and improve our inventory of shovel ready lands for employment purposes. This includes expediting the Airport Employment Growth District ("AEGD"), as well as focusing on re-vitalization of Brownfield's and other under utilized properties throughout the City, but particularly our older industrial North and East ends.
- It is noted that rail service to employment lands are important (and we agree), but there appears to be no provision for rail service in long term for the new AEGD and Red Hill Industrial Parks plans.
- Redevelopment of "Brown fields" is noted, yet Bay front /East Hamilton are not listed in the "*shovel ready land summary*", and not in plan for next 4 years. **We do understand that to be considered as "*shovel-ready*" a parcel of land must have potential to see development occur within a short period of time (1- 2 months). The majority of parcels in the Bayfront/East Hamilton area are infill properties and may have other potential environmental concerns to be dealt with which would add considerable time to the development process. Addressing these issues is vital to attracting employers to these sites; and must be a high priority for this City, and Province.**

- Redevelopment of downtown is noted, but very little is in plan regarding LRT, nor the expected growth that normally occurs along LRT routes. Nor could we find any mention made of the potential of enhanced GO-service to North-end via say a LIUNA Station contiguous site.
- Several notations about environmental improvements are extant throughout document, but very little is in the plan for Randall cleanup (as stated before, actual implementation details will be critical).
- There are other minor points, which we our BDC could review with staff at leisure at a later date.

Notwithstanding, in our opinion, these are indeed “*minor*” points in relation to the overall body of work; but in their collectively are the type of issues that may take away from the overall POSITIVE plan, again point to the need for careful implementation.

We would also offer some general comments:

- It is hoped that a greater need of private sector growth (wealth generation) to correct tax imbalance is considered in final document.
- It is hoped that there is a greater appreciation of the spin-off benefits of the steel industry, some of the decrease in jobs directly at steel mills are now done by sub contractors, so these jobs may not show up on stats. Giving perhaps a skewed impression.
- Consideration and profile should be given to the recent **Canadian Urban Institute** report and recommendations, including impact on governance of development going forward.
- The opportunities, enthusiasm and planning and maximizing strong potential spin off benefits for the Pan Am Games, particularly from the new Stadium do need to be given top priority.

In closing, we would like to extend the full co operation of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce to work with Economic Development to further develop a timely Implementation Strategy that will renew and revitalize Hamilton for all citizens. If any elaboration of our response is required, please contact our CEO, John Dolbec at (905) 522-1151 ext. #229 or j.dolbec@hamiltonchamber.on.ca

Thank you, sincerely

Richard Koroscil, Chair,
Hamilton chamber of Commerce (“HCC”)

CC: All Directors, HCC, including Chairs of our Ancaster, Dundas & Glanbrook Divisions
All members of the Chamber’s Business Development, Transportation and Government Affairs
Committees.
All local media.