



2011 Advocacy Plan

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Advocacy Plan 2011

Preamble

The St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce in its commitment to further strengthen the investment and economic growth environment in our communities has undertaken an aggressive Advocacy Plan for 2011. The 2009 and 2010 Advocacy Plans focused on advocating for relief for business, business friendly planning solutions and linking business with economic development.

Through the work of the Government Affairs Committee, Executive Committee and Board of Directors, the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce was able to achieve the following deliverables from the 2010 Advocacy Plan:

- Recognition of Chamber advocacy positions on provincial uploading and the Region's capital affordability.
- Establishment of the Niagara Resource Alliance
- Successfully advocated for the establishment of a single Regional Tourism Organization.
- Announcement of the establishment of the Transportation and Energy Committee and Regional Working Group on Water and Wastewater.
- Successfully advocated for reform in public participation and presentation format for Regional Budget.

The achieved deliverables from the 2010 Advocacy Plan and the emerging concerns from the business community form the basis of the 2011 Advocacy Plan. In addition the 2011 Advocacy Plan is in line with the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011, the St. Catharines – Thorold Prosperity Council *Paths to Prosperity* Report, the Niagara Labour Market Plan, the *Supporting Prosperity through Effective Government in Niagara* Report and the Niagara Economic Growth Strategy.

A. Primary

1. Establish the framework for governance reform in Niagara

Strategy:

- Advance the governance recommendations in the *Supporting Prosperity through Effective Government in Niagara* Report
- Reinforce need for a reduction in layers of regulation and relief for businesses provisions as the basis of advocacy initiatives
- Engage St. Catharines and Thorold Regional Councillors, the Office of the Regional Chair and Regional Staff
- Develop a communication strategy to disseminate information to membership and public

2. Address the rising cost of public expenditure versus the business community's ability pay and value for money.

Strategy:

- Advance the recommendations contained in the *Supporting Prosperity through Effective Government in Niagara* Report to establish the Office of the Auditor General
- Advocate for business friendly solutions for municipal public finance by determine net cost of doing business in Niagara and the impacts of capital, operating, waste, water and waste water budgets and operating inefficiencies.
- Seek business friendly policy options for utilization of provincial uploading
- Engage St. Catharines and Thorold Regional Councillors, City Staff and Regional Staff
- Engage Regional Chambers
- Advance concerns at relevant Regional committees
- Leverage participation in public consultations and presentations for visibility and commitments

3. Take a leadership role in furthering Niagara's position as a growing green economy.

Strategy:

- Advocate for the placement of 'Welcome to Niagara the Green Energy Capital of Canada' signage at Niagara's gateways
- Seek and contribute to government and private sector round table discussions, announcements and education seminars related to green energy and the green economy
- Advance the recommendations contained in the Chamber's *Niagara's Green Procurement Policy*
- Actively engage businesses in green energy and identify common issues and develop relevant lobby strategies.

4. Increase the capacity for organic business growth and entrepreneurship development.

Strategy:

- Engage business service delivery offices in St. Catharines and Thorold.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to incubate entrepreneurial proposals that emerge from academic and extra-curricular programs
- Foster linkages with the Jaycees to expand the provision of professional development for young entrepreneurs.
- Develop framework for concierge service for business service delivery

5. Assist the Municipality of Thorold in developing its Strategic Plan objective in building an economic development strategy.

Strategy:

- Utilize the survey data from the Chamber's Thorold wide business survey to build upon economic development opportunities.
- Identify which opportunities have region wide overlap and are targeted within the Strategic Plan
- Work with Thorold Economic Development taskforce to develop strategy document
- Leverage official plan process for commitments

6. Explore and foster greater bi-national linkages with the Western New York business community and governments

Strategy:

- Participate in discussions with bi-national economic development, tourism and policy stakeholders
- Engage business organizations in Western New York
- Develop common priorities
- Advance the Chamber's Ontario Chamber of Commerce Resolution –*Investing in Infrastructure to Support the Peace Bridge Expansion*

B. Secondary

1. Work with relevant stakeholders to develop downtown advocacy strategies.

Strategy:

- Engage Thorold and St. Catharines Downtown Business Improvement Area Associations.
- Develop common priorities
- Leverage budget processes for visibility and commitments.

2. Foster greater linkages with Niagara Chambers

Strategy:

- Remain committed to the Finance and Taxation Committee Regional Budget Working Group and Regional Working Group on Water and Wastewater
- Expand Government Affairs Committee to include other Niagara Chambers on issues with region wide relevance

3. Raise the profile of multi-modal transportation for Niagara for transportation infrastructure investment and planning.

Strategy:

- Continue to press the case for the extension of the 406 to Netherby Road in meetings with local government officials.
- Include the servicing of Hwy 20 and 406 Commercial Corridor in the Region's Master Servicing Plan
- Advance Chamber position on inter-municipal transit
- Collaborate with key opinion leaders to develop common positions (Other Chambers, Hotel and Retail Associations, etc)
- Continue to advocate for the completion of a St. Catharines Transportation Master-Plan

4. Report on the success of the St. Catharines – Thorold Prosperity Council *Paths to Prosperity* report.

Strategy:

- Evaluate the key successes and challenges from the St. Catharines – Thorold Prosperity Council *Paths to Prosperity* report
- Engage relevant Chamber committees
- Establish communication strategy