

Update – Meeting with St. Catharines and Thorold Regional Councillors

Presented by:
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St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce
St. Catharines and Thorold Regional Councilors’ Round Table Meeting Notes
July 26, 2007 • 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. • Chamber Conference Room

Present: Judy Casselman (St. Catharines), Michael Collins (St. Catharines), Ronna Katzman (St. Catharines), Tim Rigby (St. Catharines), Mayor Henry D’Angela (Thorold), Al Simpson (SCT Chamber President), Walter Sendzik (SCT Chamber General Manager), Kithio Mwanzia (SCT Chamber Policy Coordinator)

1. Transportation

a) Niagara GTA Corridor

- Believed to be important catalyst for economic growth
- The corridor must be looked at as more than a highway - part of an important transportation corridor and perhaps include multiple modes of transportation (rail for example)
- Places To Grow legislation has indicated a greater move towards the south
- Corridor will only be beneficial if matched with program to eliminate congestion at the Canada – US border

b) 406 Extension to Port Colborne

- Expansion of 406 to Port Colborne is a major short-term priority
- Expansion of 406 and the extension of Netherby road to HWY 20 were seen as a vital piece of the transportation grid and movement of people
- Expansion will facilitate better connectivity in anticipation of the new hospital complex
- Niagara – GTA corridor is a long term deliverable

c) GO transit to Niagara

- GO Train and GO Bus are both seen as important to bring to Niagara.
- It was believed that that GO Bus could be achieved faster in the short term
- In order to facilitate GO Bus, it was believed that the establishment of nodes at primary points in the region would be most effective
- All of which must be considered as part of a transportation corridor linking Niagara to Hamilton and the GTA
- Possibly lobby to use Move Ontario 2020 money to achieve expansion of GO

d) Inter-municipal Transit

- Motion for the expansion of inter-municipal transit presented to Regional Council
- Grant proposal submitted to Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Possible model for use current St. Catharines – Thorold agreement

e) Niagara District Airport

- It was believed that the Niagara District Airport is underutilized and it is for this reason that Thorold City Council voted to rescind its annual \$20,000 contribution for the management of the airport
- If Niagara District Airport is identified as a regional asset, and potential tool for commerce and trade, the region should manage and finance the airport.

- Need for a defined transportation strategy for Niagara that includes all modes of transportation to better gauge the importance of the current Niagara District Airport.

2. Manufacturing

- Inclusion of manufacturing as part of Growth South Strategy
- Continued reduction of industrial tax rate in region will keep region competitive for manufacturers
- Retaining skilled labour
- Working with post secondary to have programs designed to innovate the manufacturing industry and remain competitive as times change
- Encourage skilled immigration to the region

3. Niagara Economic Development Corporation

- Existing communication gap
- Need to examine other models like NEDCO in other jurisdictions and match their success to NEDCO's

4. St. Catharines Downtown Revitalization

- Fine Arts School and Performing Arts Centre
- Establishing regional role in the Fine Arts School and Niagara Performing Arts Centre
- Funding contributions should be established
- Ontario street conversation is slated for 2008
- Important consideration for Wine Council of Ontario to move Wine Route through Downtown

5. Niagara Regional Police Headquarters'

- Regional discussion on move will take place over the coming months
- Move would not make organizational sense in that St. Catharines is the administrative centre for the region

6. Other Issues

- Homeless housing – Tim Rigby
- Culture development – Judy Casselman
- Fair taxation – Judy Casselman
- New economic development plan – Judy Casselman
- Duplication of Services- Mayor Henry D' Angela