



## **St. Catharines Spectator Facility Program**

**A Presentation to City Council**

**Prepared by the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce**

**December 5, 2011**

Good evening Mayor McMullan, members of City Council and City staff, my name is Kithio Mwanzia and I am the Director of Policy and Government Relations for the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce, we are pleased this evening to comment on this important community initiative.

As you know, the Chamber is a member-driven business organization. With a current membership of more than 1,200 members representing over 28,000 employees. We are one of the largest business organizations in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the voice of business for St. Catharines – Thorold - Niagara.

Today, the Chamber is before you to provide our recommendation to Council on this important issue for our community. Tonight, city council will be making an important decision for the city and the region. As we have stated before, investment in civic projects like this fosters a more liveable community. Vibrant, liveable communities attract investment from the private sector and encourage growth and prosperity.

To that end, I would like affirm that the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce believes that there is a need for a state-of-the-art, high capacity, well planned and managed spectator facility as has been recommended in the report. The current spectator facility has had a glowing 73 year history, however it is not the facility of the future that St. Catharines and Niagara requires. We urge council to vote in favour of the design and construction of a 5,000 seat spectator facility as outlined in the Report from Chief Administration Office dated November 23, 2011.

The City of St. Catharines will have to consider a number of financial models in order to pay for the new facility while remaining compliant with the Municipal Act debt guidelines. To that end the Chamber is in favour and urges council to support

the financial model that includes using the \$17 million remaining in the Civic Project Fund, and \$5 million in fundraising.

Notwithstanding the Chamber's support for these elements of this project there are a few key questions that remain unanswered that need to be in order to fully proceed:

1. The decision on site selection should be reserved until all the details associated with the cost of the lower level site are available. The report indicates that both there are unknown variables related to soil contamination and geotechnical integrity. These unknown variables could alter the costs of the project significantly. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Chamber to continue to explore alternative sites outside of the Garden City Complex and the Lower Level Parking Site.
2. In terms of the additional 700-seat arena, the city's ice usage report was conducted a few years ago. Before moving forward with this element, it will be important to conduct another ice usage study to ensure that an additional 700-seat arena is required.
3. From a financing perspective the report does not provide detail about how the project will gain access to federal gas tax monies. 'Gas tax' allocations have prescribed parameters in that they fund municipal infrastructure to support cleaner air, water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The report does not provide the detail needed to include this as part of the financing model.

Therefore the Chamber recommends a phased approach to the decision on this important civic matter.

## Phase One

- Support for the design and construction of a 5,000 seat spectator facility
- Support a financing model that includes using \$17 million from the Civic Project Fund and \$5 million in fundraising
- Prepare a detailed report on potential funding from the Government of Canada and Province of Ontario
- Issue a Request for Proposal to engage a P3 Consultant
- Enter into discussions regarding licences/leases with the Niagara IceDogs Hockey Club Inc. and the St. Catharines “Junior B” Hockey Club

## Phase Two

Request a report or series of reports to be received no later than the spring of 2012 that will include:

- Details about alternative sites including potential private site developments
- Details on soil contamination, geotechnical integrity and potential associated costs for lower level area
- Details on ice facility usage and future capacity needs
- Details on federal gas tax access criteria application

We would like to recognize councils and staff's due diligence on this issue to date. We are confident that the issues raised can be resolved. We look forward to working with you on this important initiative for St. Catharines – Niagara, and proceeding with a well planned, well researched project that will serve our community long into the future

Thank you,

I look forward to your questions.