



St. Catharines Parking Rates and Fees

A Presentation to City Council

Prepared by the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce

May 9, 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, I am joined by Walter Sendzik the Chamber’s CEO.

As you well know, the Chamber is a member-driven business organization. With a current membership of more than 1,200 members representing more than 27,000 employees, we are the voice of business for St. Catharines – Thorold - Niagara. We are one of the largest business organizations in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Today, we stand before you to bring Council’s attention to an issue of importance to the business community and the downtown. Despite past challenges in the downtown core, a recent upswing in new restaurants, the forth coming Marilyn I Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, the announcement of new residential opportunities and the announcement of the wine route coming through the downtown have created an energy and excitement about the future of the downtown. Businesses have demonstrated this by making the required investments to prepare for a revitalized downtown.

An important component to sustaining this positive momentum is parking. The Chamber has spoken many times on the issue of downtown parking. We are concerned about the negative impact that the proposed increase in parking fees would have on the downtown and its business community.

Specifically the Chamber is concerned about the following:

- 1. Since last year the City has been making major improvements to downtown streets and infrastructure. While these improvements were needed and timely they caused significant business interruption. Several downtown businesses saw a loss in customer traffic. As these businesses begin to see a return of their customers, increasing metered parking fees hinders their ability to re-attract those customers.**
- 2. Many businesses in the downtown provide parking permits to their employees. It is a way for them to attract and retain valuable employees, an increase of 10% at this time in the year is not something that they would be able to plan for and would have significant cost implications.**
- 3. Over the last few years the Chamber has asked for a Transportation Master Plan. The recently approved Garden City Plan includes a Transportation Master Plan as one of the key components to advance the Official Plan. A parking strategy would be included as part of a Transportation Master Plan. Given that this is not yet complete, the Chamber is concerned about taking decisions on fees and rates like this without a long term vision or strategy.**

Given these issues we are asking that council not approve the new parking rates and fees as proposed this evening. We urge Council to expedite the completion of a Transportation Master Plan that will provide the long term vision and structure for parking in the downtown.

We thank you again for providing us the opportunity to speak this evening and we look forward to your questions.