



## **Tale of Two Cities**

**Remarks from the President of the St. Catharines – Thorold  
Chamber of Commerce**

**Mr. Rob DePetris**

**February 5, 2010**

**Thank you Mayor D'Angela, I am glad that you took the opportunity to mention the Thorold Economic Taskforce that the Chamber is working with Thorold's business community and the City of Thorold to build a strategy to rejuvenate Thorold's economic landscape. This is a particularly important time in our community as I am sure you are well aware, the business community is excited to form an integral part of recalibrating Thorold's economic picture.**

**It has been clearly demonstrated today that Niagara's business community does not know municipal boundaries. As the voice of the business community for St. Catharines and Thorold, our Chamber continues to be committed to ensuring that there is a vibrant business environment in St. Catharines – Thorold – Niagara. It is also our responsibility as a member driven organization representing over 1125 businesses and 28,000 employees to work with the business community and government to ensure that there is a vibrant environment in which the private sector can grow.**

**This is a particularly important time for our community, as you are all well aware in this room that Niagara has faced its fair share of challenges. Once a powerful economic engine for Ontario and Canada - the loss of traditional manufacturing in Niagara and across North America has meant that Niagara has had to recalibrate its economy. At the centre of this re-alignment is the private sector.**

**Recently I had the opportunity to be a part of a roundtable with Niagara businesses. As each business person introduced themselves around the table it became evident that we had businesses that were in various locations between Grimsby and Fort Erie, whose ideas, commitment to strong business principles, generating wealth and growing Niagara, - were showcasing that the private sector is not bound by municipal lines.**

**With economic growth stemming, by and large, from the presence of private sector entrepreneurs who decide to invest, take risks, set up businesses and make them grow, the government's role is to create an environment conducive to investment and business development by means of intelligent regulation and innovative developmental initiatives. That is to say that government must be responsive to the private sector impetus not to operate solely based on municipal boundaries. Governments' contribution is extremely important in this regard, in that their responsibility for the administration of tax and regulatory policies as well as services has an impact that on the business community and business decisions.**

**As the private sector continues to think this way, the public sector and politicians must modify the way in which they do business. Governments in Niagara can send a powerful signal to the private sector that this region is ready for investment by showcasing that municipal boundaries are simply lines on a map and not barriers to progress. By throwing away parochialism and embracing cooperation for the greater goal of economic prosperity.**

**Moving towards this thinking does not mean losing identity, it means working more innovatively to provide a better environment for business,**

**quality of life and level of service for Niagara's citizens and businesses with less bureaucracy and more efficiency.**

**In closing, Niagara's resiliency in facing the challenges of today is remarkable. This has not happened by accident as business, academia, government and community leaders have demonstrated a firm commitment to rejuvenating Niagara to its once powerful position in Ontario and Canada's economic landscape. I applaud both Mayor D'Angela and Mayor McMullan for their work thus far with the private sector and working towards strong collaborations which have laid out a framework for a more prosperous Niagara. I applaud the two Mayors as well for addressing this "joint session" if you will – of Niagara's business community. Not only will their collective remarks be important, but this opportunity for businesses to engage both government and each other is an important component of building prosperity in this region.**

**Opportunity is at Niagara's door step, in order to embrace it we must work together. I look forward to continuing this conversation on behalf of the business community.**

**Mayor of St. Catharines – Thank you**

**Thank you Mayor McMullan, we are very excited to hear about the initiatives relating to the business community that are currently underway. As you know the Chamber has played an active role in the Mayors Development Taskforce, and we look forward to the full implementation of the ‘Open for Business’ report. Similarly your participation and endorsement of the St. Catharines – Thorold Prosperity Council and the resulting *Paths to Prosperity* Report demonstrates that thinking solely along municipal boundaries is no longer an option.**

## **Closing remarks**

**In closing as we have heard from both Mayors this afternoon, Niagara's resiliency in facing the challenges of today is remarkable. Governments in Niagara have an important role and can send a powerful signal to the private sector that this region is ready for investment by showcasing that municipal boundaries are simply lines on a map and not barrier to progress.**

**I applaud both Mayor D'Angela and Mayor McMullan for their work thus far with the private sector and working towards strong collaborations which have laid out a framework for a more prosperous Niagara. I applaud the two Mayors as well for addressing this "joint session" if you will – of Niagara's business community not only will their collective remarks be important, but this opportunity for businesses to engage both government and each other is an important component of building prosperity in this region.**

**Thank you all for attending this historic event this afternoon, I look forward to continuing this conversation on behalf of the business community.**