October 17, 2005

Kevin C. Christensen, City Clerk
71 Main Street West
City Hall, 2nd Floor
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, L8P 4Y5

Attention: Mayor Di Ianni and Members of Council

Dear Mayor Di Ianni and Members of Council

On August 23, 2005, on behalf of HPD, we delivered a hard copy of an Open Letter to the Office of the Mayor. A copy of that letter is attached for your convenience.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development has not yet received a response to our letter, nor any indication of when a response might be forthcoming.

HPD is serious about making a positive contribution to the future prosperity of Hamilton and believes that it is possible through constructive dialogue. We sincerely hope that you agree.

HPD would like to receive and look forward to your response at your earliest convenience to the challenge and issues raised in the Open Letter.

Respectfully,

Michael Desnoyers
Chair
Hamiltonians for Progressive Development

Jack Santa-Barbara
Co-chair
An Open Letter to:

The Mayor, Council and the Community

August 23, 2005

Fellow Hamiltonians,

We believe one of the most important planning issues now facing our entire community is how we collectively address the City’s approach to development around the airport. On June 29th of this year, the City of Hamilton approved the expansion of the urban boundary by some 1,215 hectares (3100 acres) around the airport, for the stated purpose of developing an aerotropolis.

We view this as one of the most significant decisions Council has ever made, and one which will shape the future of Hamilton, for better or worse, for decades to come.

On July 22, 2005 Michael and Carol Desnoyers filed an OMB appeal on behalf of Hamiltonians for Progressive Development, to challenge what many regard as regressive planning by the City.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development believes this decision by the City is a prime example of poor planning. We believe both the process used by the City to develop this plan, and the plan itself, are seriously flawed.

Our concerns are ones we believe are shared by many Hamiltonians:

1. City Council appears to have ignored its own rules and principles in approving the expansion of the urban boundary around the airport. The basic principles of Vision 2020, which the City supports, do not appear to have been used in this decision. Neither do the specific principles spelled out in the City’s own long term planning documents appear to be satisfied by this decision. There are other examples beyond the airport issue where rules and principles the City says they follow, appear to have been violated.
2. City Council seems to have ignored thoughtful citizen input to its plans for the aerotropolis. The City put forth its motion to make a large expansion of the urban boundary and gave citizens only a few days notice of their intent. Because of concerns expressed by citizens at the required public meeting, the City eventually allowed a second public meeting, at which additional concerns were expressed by the community. Nonetheless, City Council approved the expansion without follow up or meaningful community dialogue about the important issues raised.

3. The City has only minimally engaged citizens in its long term planning process, of which the aerotropolis is only a part. Shortly after amalgamation, the City undertook a long term planning process to set a direction for the future of our new city. Under the previous City administration a large and diverse community Task Force was established to provide input to the planning process. This Task Force recommended, amongst other items, significant public information and engagement activities over the several years of the planning effort. These recommendations do not appear to have been followed, and the public has been largely excluded from a newer, smaller, and less representative group now advising the mayor.

4. The economic viability of the airport is questionable given the current and expected increases in fuel costs. The airline industry has been unstable ever since deregulation occurred more than 20 years ago. This has been evident locally with the number of airlines that have moved in to Hamilton airport, and then left. In addition, of all transportation modes, air traffic is likely most vulnerable to increased fuel prices. If prices continue to climb, as expected, there will be a significant impact on the entire airline industry. Therefore, further investments could be high risk. There are less speculative and more attractive development options we believe should be considered.

5. The loss of agricultural lands which will be needed to feed a growing population is detrimental to our priority needs. Once agricultural lands are converted to commercial or industrial use it is difficult to bring them back into agricultural use. Food security is an issue of growing concern globally, and the Province of Ontario has firmly committed to preserving agricultural lands. We need to secure small family farms. Using agricultural land for commercial and industrial development should be the absolute last resort, especially when there are abundant brownfield and alternative lands available for such development.
6. **The sprawl that will occur if the aerotropolis plan continues.** The aerotropolis itself is a kind of sprawl, focusing as it does on single use land development. In addition, once the urban boundary is expanded, the City is legally obligated to service that land regardless of how it is zoned. If, for whatever reason, the airport commercial zone is not successful, the acreage will be within the urban boundary and the City will need to rezone it for best use. This could open the door to additional residential sprawl.

7. **The amount of local and global pollution caused by air travel.** Air transport may well be the most environmentally harmful mode of transportation that exists. As much as 25% of a plane’s fuel may be used in take off, concentrating pollutants to the local environment. In addition, the emission of greenhouse gases, especially at high altitudes, contributes to climate change, a serious global problem that Canada is committed to reducing. These quality of life issues will be further compromised by additional night flights, significantly increasing noise pollution. Hamilton is one of the few airports in North America that is allowed to operate on a 24/7 basis.

8. **City resources and funds allocated to this project cannot be used for more progressive types of development.** The City does not appear to have a budget for this project; a sound financial plan appears to be lacking. But there is potential for considerable tax dollars being spent, either to support the existing plan, or to deal with the failure of the plan (see item 6 above). Even if the plan has some success, it will likely take development funds and energies away from other priorities such as the downtown areas and the harbour, further impoverishing these areas and inhibiting opportunities to increase their prosperity.

9. **Employment projections are unrealistic.** As many as 52,000 jobs have been projected for this project by City planners. However, we feel these numbers are based on highly questionable assumptions and are grossly unrealistic. More realistic assumptions are needed to fairly compare these employment opportunities with those available from other options.

The Province of Ontario appears to agree with many of the concerns outlined above. In an unusual move, the Province of Ontario has filed its own OMB appeal against the City of Hamilton regarding its approach to airport development. The Province’s appeal cites violations of the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and has asked the City to first complete its long term planning process before taking action on lands surrounding the airport.
Hamiltonians for Progressive Development agrees with the Province’s position as currently set out in its OMB appeal. We wish to see a planning process which respects the principles of Vision 2020, and those laid out in the City’s own planning documents, and which follow Provincial law.

It is time for a change. It is time to take our common aspirations for a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community seriously. This requires we change how we plan and make decisions that affect our prosperity.

Our Challenge to the City of Hamilton:

*Hamiltonians for Progressive Development calls upon the City of Hamilton to reverse its decision to expand the urban boundary, and to establish a genuine community engagement process to plan for the city’s long term prosperity.*

Michael Desnoyers
Chairman
Hamiltonians for Progressive Development

Jack Santa-Barbara
Co-chair
Hamiltonians for Progressive Development