January 23, 2007

His Worship Fred Eisenberger  
City of Hamilton  
City Hall, 71 Main Street West  
Hamilton ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Eisenberger:

Recently the Hamilton Civic Coalition’s Economic Development Committee met several times to consider what improvements might be made to the City’s current approach to economic development. Because of its inquiries, the Committee identified a short list of issues in need of urgent attention and, subsequently, the full Coalition endorsed those recommendations. Our Committee’s inquiries indicate that there is a widespread belief within the business community that the process required to move ahead with development projects could be made more efficient and streamlined. In order to identify those areas in which improvements might be made we recommend that the City, with representation from the private sector, strike a task force. Its objective would be to make recommendations designed to effectively reduce “red tape” and make it clear that Hamilton is truly “open for business”.

We also believe that the resources provided to the City’s Economic Development Department are inadequate to get the job done effectively. Compared to other municipalities with which we are competing for investment, our department is seriously under-resourced. We realize that the department must compete for funds with other urgent municipal needs. Still, we believe that in order to fulfill its mandate it must be resourced competitively.

We understand that the City is currently exploring the possibility of establishing a public/private cooperative effort to pursue economic development. We believe that approach has considerable promise and would like to lend our support to the further exploration of that option. There is a strong consensus within the business community, we have found, that more serviced employment lands are necessary in order to provide jobs for a Hamilton population that is expected to grow significantly over the next few decades. Our dearth of serviced land has resulted in many companies bypassing Hamilton in favour of neighbouring communities, such as Brantford and Halton, who
have moved ahead sooner and more boldly in meeting investor needs. Unless we make it a priority to bring new serviced land on line quickly, we will continue to lose out. Our tax base will continue to fall and the City will be unable to fulfill its goals of poverty reduction, harbour remediation and downtown revival among others.

Because residents have consistently refused to accommodate airplane noise, for the airport to maintain its competitive advantage of being able to operate on a 24/7 basis, it is necessary to create a no residential development zone around it. Seen from that perspective, as noted in Richard Gilbert’s recent Peak Oil Report, the City’s plan to use some of that land for industrial development makes considerable sense.

There is concern within the Hamilton community that tying the City’s economic prospects tightly to the airport is unwise because of the possibility of rapidly rising fuel costs. To allay those fears, in its transportation planning the Hamilton Civic Coalition believes that the City must ensure that employment lands are accessible not only by air but also by road and rail and, indirectly, by water.

To ensure the efficient movement of both goods and people, we strongly urge the City to fully integrate into GRIDS, as quickly as possible, a comprehensive transportation plan. The plan should meet the needs of investors for goods movement and the needs of residents, and especially those from neighborhoods of high poverty, to access areas of employment growth such as the Ancaster and Glanbrook Industrial Parks and the Airport.

We also recommend that the City continue its review of business taxes and development charges with a view towards eventually making those business expenses competitive with communities competing with us for scarce investment dollars.

Finally, we would like to bring to your attention two additional recommendations put forth by our Arts and Recreation Committee and endorsed by the full Coalition. First, we recommend that the City fund a thorough Hamilton arts inventory. In order to know how best we might help our arts and cultural community to thrive, thereby enriching current Hamiltonians and encouraging employers and the highly skilled people they will need to come to Hamilton, we must first have a good and comprehensive estimate of the state of our arts and our artists. Secondly, we understand that the City is contemplating establishing a Business Ambassador Program under which prominent Hamiltonians would actively educate their colleagues about the benefits of coming to Hamilton. We fully support the development of that program.

As background to these recommendations, we would like to point out that the Coalition has, from its outset, been a strong supporter of the triple bottom line and Vision 2020. The principles embedded in those concepts require that the economic development we
seek be sustainable and respect and help us to attain our social and environmental goals. Nevertheless, with that said, inadequate investment will ensure that our diverse goals are not met.

We should also point out that the Hamilton Civic Coalition has several other committees that are looking at issues - such as downtown revival, affordable housing and immigrant integration - that have implications for economic development. Thus, the issues mentioned in this letter do not exhaust the agenda of actions we believe are required to stimulate economic development in Hamilton. Rather than compose a comprehensive document laying out every implication for economic development, we instead have recommended to our committee chairs that they consider making arrangements to appear before appropriate City committees should they consider that course of action to be warranted.

Our Economic Development Committee would be pleased to have the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and with the appropriate City Council forum.

Sincerely,

Peter George
Co-chair

Don Pether
Co-chair

Roy Adams
Executive Director

cc  City Councillors
    City Clerk
    Hamilton Civic Coalition
Hamilton Civic Coalition – January 2007

Roy Adams, Professor Emeritus, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University
Richard Allen, Executive Director, Industry-Education Council of Hamilton
Laura Babcock, President, POWERGROUP Communications
Doug Barber, Distinguished Professor-in-Residence, McMaster University
Judith Bishop, Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
Mark Chamberlain, President & CEO, Trivaris Ltd.
Fran Cheyne, President, Heritage Household Services
Dennis Concordia, President, POWERGROUP Resources
Dave Conrath, Professor Emeritus, McMaster University
Justin Cooper, President, Redeemer University College
Donna Cripps, President & CEO, St. Peter's Health System
Bill Curran, Chair, Hamilton & Burlington Society of Architects
John Dolbec, CEO, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce
Len Falbo, President & CEO, LCM ASSOCIATES – Management Consultants
Ron Foxcroft, CEO, Fluke Transportation Group
Don Fraser, President, Hamilton and District Labour Council
Jeremy Freiburger, Executive Director, Imperial Cotton Centre for the Arts
Peter George, President & Vice-Chancellor, McMaster University
George Heisz, Vice-President-HAMILTON DISTRICT, BMO Bank of Montreal
Laurence Hewick, Director of Incubation, Hamilton Incubator of Technology
Vincent Isber, Regional Vice-President-Greater Hamilton Market, Royal Bank of Canada
Morteza Jafarpour, Executive Director, Settlement & Integration Services Organization
Don Jaffray, Executive Director, Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton
Paul Johnson, Executive Director, Wesley Urban Ministries
Richard Koroscil, President & CEO, John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport
Nick Markettos, Senior Advisor-Strategic Partnerships, McMaster University
Murray Martin, President & CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences
Carolyn Milne, President & CEO, Hamilton Community Foundation
Ian Oliver, Publisher, The Hamilton Spectator
Glen Peace, City Manager, City of Hamilton
Don Pether, Chairman, Dofasco Inc.
Rene Quercia, District Vice-President-Greater Hamilton District, TD Canada Trust
Keith Robson, President & CEO, Hamilton Port Authority
Jack Santa-Barbara, Director, The Sustainable Scale Project
Mamdouh Shoukri, Vice-President-Research & International Affairs, McMaster University
Darrel Skidmore, CEO, United Way of Burlington & Greater Hamilton
Kevin Smith, President & CEO, St. Joseph's Health Care
Chris Spence, Director of Education, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
Mark Sproule-Jones, Victor K. Copps Professor of Urban Studies, McMaster University
Cathy Staats, Executive Director, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
Joseph Sullivan, Specialist in Civil Litigation, Camporese Sullivan DiGregorio Associates – Lawyers
Roger Trull, Vice-President-University Advancement, McMaster University
Carl Turkstra, Chairman, Turkstra Lumber Company Ltd.
Steven Varey, District Vice-President, Scotiabank
MaryLynn West-Moynes, President, Mohawk College