November 20, 2006

His Worship Larry Di Ianni
Mayor
City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West
Hamilton ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Di Ianni,

Thank you for your letter requesting that Ontario municipalities be included in the planning phase for implementation of the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). I recognize and value the key role of municipalities as our partners in labour force development in Ontario, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to reply.

As of January 1, 2007, our newly integrated, regionally based training and employment service network will deliver both the labour market training and development programs now offered by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), and the Ontario employment benefits and measures specified in the LMDA. To respond to this network’s local, regional, and provincial labour market program and service needs, we are working to ensure our planning processes work together to identify more opportunities for collaboration in client services.

This collaborative, consultative labour market planning framework will inform program policy changes and resource allocation decisions for each fiscal year while supporting a decentralized approach to service delivery management. This approach will ensure that each community’s mix of labour market training and development programs and services is tailored to meet its needs, and that mutual priorities can be identified and communicated.

Recognizing the expertise of Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, such as the City of Hamilton, in articulating the economic and labour force development needs and challenges of their communities, we have already included representatives from Ontario’s municipalities in the planning and design process. My ministry, in partnership with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), has established the LMDA Ontario Works Reference Group comprised of CMSMs, District Social Service Administration Boards and MCSS Regional Offices; members are drawn from these three groups, including the City of Hamilton.

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The Reference Group has already met twice, and will continue to meet during the transitional phase of the LMDA. At prior meetings, Reference Group members have already:

- provided feedback on how best to facilitate local planning processes under the LMDA;
- identified key considerations when developing a single local planning framework;
- shared best practices from current local planning processes;
- made recommendations on how to adapt or expand established processes; and
- provided advice on specific labour market issues as requested.

As well, through representation on LMDA management committees and subcommittees, MCSS Ontario Works staff have provided valuable feedback on the proposed design, development, and delivery of Ontario’s employment benefits and measures. They have been key contributors to the joint provincial-federal task group defining the process for, and roles of, each key stakeholder in the development of the integrated labour market planning framework.

Finally, before the end of this year, the regional directors of my ministry’s new service delivery network will host several labour market planning focus groups in selected locations across the province. These focus groups will allow us to bring key government and non-government stakeholders (Ontario Works municipal service managers, employers, unions, training institutions, Service Canada offices, local groups and community agencies) to the same table.

This will be the first step in creating an expanded, inclusive regional service delivery planning forum where provincial, federal, and municipal government and non-government stakeholders with vested interests in workforce development can identify opportunities to improve service to priority clients, such as immigrants and Ontario Works participants, and consider new, innovative approaches to client service through labour market program planning. It will also be used to solicit input that will help us define the coherent local planning approach that will become a hallmark of the collaborative framework introduced for the fiscal 2008/09 labour market planning cycle.

We expect our discussions with the LMDA Ontario Works Reference Group and at the upcoming regional focus groups to add to the opportunities identified by existing local planning processes for joint local planning and coordinated service delivery as a result of LMDA implementation.

I look forward to the City of Hamilton’s participation in these discussions as a leading planner and service provider of local employment services from which Hamilton’s Ontario Works recipients and Employment Insurance claimants have benefited for decades.

Sincerely,

Christopher Bentley
Minister