Thank you for the opportunity to update council on the Hamilton Economic Summit.

I’m here on behalf of the summit advisory committee, which I chair, and our participating organizations and networks.

I want to share some background information, and talk about this year’s summit — our goals, what we accomplished and where we want to go next.

Let me begin by expressing appreciation to the City of Hamilton — to Mayor Eisenberger, city council and staff — for being supportive.

During this time of change, it’s essential that we all pull together and perform to the best of our abilities as we boost confidence in Hamilton’s future.

You’re doing your part in many ways, including demonstrating a commitment to collaborative leadership — this enables the Hamilton Economic Summit, the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, and many other organizations, to join up with city council and staff to build a better Hamilton. Thank you.

Hamilton has a community-wide vision that recognizes the need to engage citizens and to provide diverse economic opportunities.

The Hamilton Economic Summit helps address these needs.

- We operate on the same principles as the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative and work hard to involve all Hamiltonians as agents of economic change;

- We collaborate with our three core partners — the City, JPC and Hamilton Chamber of Commerce — to help advance prosperity for all; and,

- We provide stewardship of the ideas, recommendations and commitments that arise from our annual summit — including feedback city council and staff can use to further strengthen your economic development strategy.
It’s important to reiterate that the Hamilton Economic Summit is a community initiative guided by an advisory committee that includes representatives from a variety of organizations, including the City of Hamilton, the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative, and others.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, which introduced the summit initiative in 2007, continues to provide strategic and administrative support through an arms length relationship.

That said, the Chamber is one of our three core summit partners and it plays its role in enabling post-summit activities — similar to how the City and JPC are encouraged to play their respective roles.

It’s a dynamic relationship based on collaborative leadership. As a new partnership, we’re finding our way and getting stronger together.

It looks like we’re heading in the right direction. Earlier this year, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce recognized the Hamilton Economic Summit with an award celebrating best practices in community-based economic development.

What’s important here is the emphasis on community engagement — a priority we all share.

Similarly, continued support and funding from the provincial government demonstrates that our summit — and summits in other cities across Ontario — are significant contributors to revitalizing communities in transition.

Economic development is obviously a large and complex task that involves many stakeholders.

The role of the Hamilton Economic Summit is to host an annual leadership forum to generate shared solutions to economic challenges and to offer stewardship of these solutions through a part time secretariat solely funded through summit proceeds.

We think the stewardship function is something that makes our summit extra special. It means that delegates’ input lives on after the event. And it means working closely with the City, JPC and the Chamber to help ensure that good suggestions get implemented through the most appropriate mechanisms and governance structures. In most cases, it’s about working together to accelerate projects and overcome barriers.
At last year’s inaugural economic summit, the delegates — which included members of council and city staff — agreed on a goal that Hamilton become one of Canada’s top ten cities as measured by the Conference Board of Canada through its *City Magnets* research project.

Following the summit, the City, JPC and Chamber — and many other organizations — worked hard and accomplished a great deal, including draft versions of the City’s new Economic Development Strategy and the JPC’s new Framework on Jobs and Prosperity.

At this year’s summit, our goal was to invite community leaders from all sectors to provide concrete feedback on these two plans and to become more active as agents of economic development. This goal aligned well with the city’s current public consultations on economic development and Hamilton’s official plan.

Delegates broke into discussion groups and together generated more than 250 ideas and recommendations. Our secretariat is now organizing this feedback into a document that will be shared with representatives from the City, JPC and Chamber, and distributed to all 155 summit delegates. This will take place over the coming weeks.

Here’s a preliminary snap shot of what the delegates — a broad sample of our community’s diverse leadership — said:

- Delegates were very positive about our community’s progress in the areas of *collaborative leadership* and *citizen engagement* in economic development. They believe we’re on the right track.

- Delegates liked the overall direction of the City’s economic strategy and the JPC’s framework. Again, we’re moving in the right direction and playing as a team.

- Delegates recommended that the City and JPC sharpen the focus of their plans and provide detailed implementation strategies and timelines — which we know is in the works.

- Delegates expressed some frustration with Hamilton’s recent record of accomplishment — community leaders are clearly hungry for decisive action that would accelerate change and get more things done.
Delegates’ feedback centred around seven recurrent themes that we anticipate will be of interest to city council and staff as you move your economic development strategy forward and support other initiatives:

- Think big
- Act regionally
- Emphasize wealth creation
- Attract external investment
- Embrace our interdependencies
- Engage the next generation
- Be courageous

Looking at the summit outputs in general, one common message jumps out: Hamilton’s community leadership thinks our compass bearing is right and is now eager for more implementation — ultimately leading to more jobs and more prosperity.

It’s also important to say that many delegates who attended the summit are responding to an invitation to become partners in prosperity, both in the community and in the workplace — a sign that people increasingly understand that economic development is a shared responsibility.

In our post-event evaluation, delegates were consistently positive about the summit experience — they particularly valued learning from some of today’s top thought leaders, contributing to the City and JPC plans, watching video vignettes showcasing local examples of economic development, and learning about how Hamilton can become a next generation community — the topic of our public luncheon.

The summit also generated significant media exposure — including regional and national coverage by CBC Radio, TVO and the Globe and Mail’s Report on Business magazine. We all know the importance of sharing Hamilton’s good news stories — and the annual summit provides a platform that now commands national attention.

As part of this year’s summit, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce introduced a complementary event called City of Change: Hamilton Youth Engaged in Economic Development.

This free event was held at McMaster Innovation Park the day following the summit. It attracted more than 250 local students and youth.
These young people — our next generation — participated in hands-on activities and produced a unique set of ideas and recommendations to help shape the Hamilton of tomorrow. It was great to see Mayor Eisenberger and other elected officials in attendance and interacting with youth.

Input from the youth event will be incorporated into our post-summit proceedings document.

The final document will be *doubly special* — it will include perspectives from today’s community leaders *and* from our next generation of city builders. We look forward to sharing this document with you and benefiting from your leadership insights.

I want to finish off with a few words about next steps.

- Our first priority is to complete and distribute our post-summit proceedings document — this will include face-to-face meetings across the community to share information.

- Next, we will work with our partners to establish goals we can report on between now and next year’s summit — these goals will be informed by what delegates talked about at this year’s summit and will align with the work of the city and other partners.

- Next, our advisory committee will begin planning next year’s summit. Here we want to ensure that we incorporate ideas we have received to help improve the summit, including ways to broaden the involvement of city council and staff, and ways to blend together our leadership summit *and* youth day.

- Finally, we will continue to update our website with more free summit-related resources so that everyone can benefit from the work of the Hamilton Economic Summit — a positive community initiative that the City of Hamilton is helping to make possible.

Thank you for your support, interest and attention.