



**BURLINGTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
PRESENTATION TO BURLINGTON STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM
MAY 17, 2007
ROSALENE PHILLIPS, CHAIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

It is a real pleasure to be here today representing the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has always had a very positive and proactive relationship with the city, and this opportunity that you are giving us and others is an excellent example of a council that wants to stay in touch with its constituents. I have to begin by saying that the issues I will be discussing are not burning platforms. Chamber members generally feel that the city is well run and well managed. While there are always improvements that can be made, the types of improvements that are discussed at Chamber meetings are usually less significant in nature.

There are four issues that I would like to discuss today.

First is the proposal to bring a McMaster University campus to Burlington. This is a very high profile issue that Council is dealing with right now. To put it plainly, the Chamber urges Council to do all it can to ensure this campus comes to Burlington. While the up front cost of ten million dollars seems high, we believe that focussing on the ten million dollars is focussing on the short term pain. We submit that there are also short-term benefits to the city and to business. Many of the integrated services will be supplied by companies in Burlington, strengthening the local economy. Also, businesses tend to be attracted to a community with a post-secondary education institution. In addition, we encourage you think of the long term benefits such as spin-off companies that typically emerge from education institutions. Often these spin-off companies stay in the city where they were conceived. The Chamber is not concerned with the impact students will have in either the downtown or a residential area. These are graduate students, most with their own cars. They are not looking for wild nights at bars. They are looking for a quality education in a professional setting with potential opportunities to perhaps relax and spend money after hours. The proposal for the campus also includes a teaching medical facility which the Chamber supported in February 2006. This is another bonus for Burlington.... more senior students to spend money in the city plus, doctors have a history of settling in the community where they are educated. In a recent Chamber survey, 60 percent said they want the campus downtown. While this is just a slight majority, it does indicate what the business community is thinking. What is

just as important here is this poll had the highest response rate ever in two and a half years of Chamber polls. There is great interest in the business community on bringing a university campus to Burlington and we urge council not to miss this opportunity.

The second topic I would like to discuss deals with garbage collection and, more specifically, fine paper recycling. A recent Chamber survey showed that members are generally very satisfied with their garbage collection. That is to say, they are getting an appropriate level of service for their tax dollars. However, the concern they express deals more with the environmental aspects of garbage. One of the top waste products generated by many businesses is fine paper. We might live in an electronic society but we still produce a lot of paper. Much of this paper ends up in landfill. The option of fine paper recycling is not available to many offices in Burlington even though this is the primary waste they generate. We know that the region provides waste pickup services but we also understand that it is the city that defines those services and then pays the region to provide the service. We urge the city to consider providing fine paper recycling for commercial areas as part of the waste collection agreement with Halton Region.

Transportation is a hot topic with businesses in Burlington. In a recent survey of Chamber members, city street congestion was a top concern. As a matter of fact, companies that transport goods cited city street congestion as a bigger transportation problem than highway congestion. So, reducing city street congestion is good for business. We encourage council to think twice before reducing the number of lanes on city streets and before adding centre islands. While reducing the number of lanes achieves the objective of slowing down traffic, we remind council that it slows down traffic; thereby increasing traffic congestion. Brant Street and Lakeshore are the prime examples of this. We understand the need to balance pedestrians and vehicles, particularly downtown, but please don't lose sight of or underestimate the impact on business of slowing down traffic on city streets. Also, adding a centre island too close to an intersection means that if more than two cars are turning left, through-traffic is stopped. The city has just added an island on Brant just south of Baldwin with very little room in the left turn lane. This will slow down North-bound traffic on Brant Street even more. It is interesting to note that the centre island on Lakeshore at Maple was just dropped to grade level to avoid this problem. Our point here is this, use lane reductions and centre islands sparingly. While they might be good for pedestrians, they increase traffic congestion and that is a problem for business. We know solutions to transportation problems tend to be complicated and expensive. From a larger perspective, we also know that transportation issues are bigger than cities themselves. That is why the Chamber supported the formation of the GTTA and continues to support a regional and multi-modal approach to traffic. We strongly encourage the city to have an active voice with the GTTA to ensure that Burlington is part of a regional traffic strategy.

And finally, I would like to address development charges. Recently the Halton Region Development Charges Advisory Committee was re-struck with Councillor John Taylor as the Chair. This committee will be looking at and making recommendations on development charges throughout the region. In 2004 the Chamber was involved with the DC review process. At that time we came out in favour of discounts for the commercial and industrial sectors. The intent of these discounts was to encourage new economic development in these sectors. Commercial and industrial developers are looking to develop in cities where resources are plentiful and costs are reasonable. New commercial and industrial development brings jobs to the city, adds to the tax base, and supports the economic well-being of the city. Our feeling was that discounts were not required for the retail sector since, generally speaking, retail goes where there is a residential market. With development charges being looked at again, we continue to support the concept of discounts for ICI. As the recommendations of the DC Task Force are brought forward we urge this council to support the concept of discounts for commercial and industrial development.

I thank you for the opportunity to present these issues to you today. On behalf of the Chamber's more than 1,000 member companies, I am pleased to say we are encouraged by Council's open approach to strategic priority setting. The Chamber will continue to work with you proactively to ensure Burlington is one of the best communities in the province in which to live and work.

Thank you.