

# WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL

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## Chamber of Commerce

March 9, 2010

Mayor Francis and Members of Windsor City Council  
Corporation of the City of Windsor  
350 City Hall Square West  
Windsor, Ontario N9A 6S1

Re: City of Windsor 2010 Operating Budget

Dear Mayor and Members of Windsor City Council:

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce supports the City of Windsor in approving its 2010 Budget as presented. In addition to regular monitoring of the financial variance reports, the Chamber attended the Operating Budget Committee meeting on February 8, 2010 and has had the opportunity to be briefed on this year's budget by City Administration.

The Chamber would like to recognize the work done by the Administration and the Budget Committee in putting together this budget document. The Chamber continues to be a strong advocate for fiscal prudence and adopting best business practices. These include finding cost savings, providing efficient delivery of City services and continuous improvement in financial management and reporting. This year, we have observed a City of Windsor budget process that is truly addressing all of these issues and are pleased with the end result.

We remain supportive of investments in infrastructure and therefore we are looking forward to this year's proposed Capital Budget. As with previous budgets, we are concerned about the tax rates applied to the business classes. The task of apportioning the tax burden among all classes fairly should be easier knowing the budget has been kept in line with the interests of the taxpayers. The Chamber is expecting improvements in providing more fair and equitable distribution of the tax burden. The Chamber will reserve its more detailed comments on these rates for the tax policy deliberations.

In our analysis of the 2010 Budget we agree with the administration on the major budget drivers. The main risk to future budgets is the state of the local economy and by extension the level of property assessments. A sustained downturn in the economy will drive assessment of business and residential properties further down, posing a significant obstacle to raising revenue without raising property taxes.

Knowing the reliance of the City of Windsor on the large industrial and commercial base for revenue, we reiterate the need to provide incentives for new investment in the City of Windsor and we support the initiatives such as the Brownfield Redevelopment Community Improvement Plan. The Chamber urges the City of Windsor to approve as many incentive programs as

possible to stimulate economic growth. This will in turn raise assessments for both residential and commercial properties once more jobs are created and there is more demand for commercial property development.

On the cost side of the budget, the Chamber acknowledges the difficult task of reducing the cost of wages and benefits and the unknown impact of the provincially mandated levels of compensation for police and fire services. These budgets, however, have to be addressed and solutions must be explored for the benefit of the taxpayers.

The Chamber has advocated for privatization of services to save costs when that is both prudent and efficient. We support the City of Windsor in its efforts to find alternative ways to deliver services and for considering the private sector as the delivery agent when that makes sense.

The Chamber is pleased to see the continuation of the debt management program that will ultimately provide more fiscal room for the City in subsequent budgets.

Sincerely,

Jim Drummond  
Chair of the Board