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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**March 10, 2006**

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### **URGENT NEED FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Windsor, Ontario** - The Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce believes that the current effort by the City of Windsor and Essex County Councils to approve a regional economic development organization is one of the most significant initiatives for the region in this millennium as there is an urgent need to revitalize the regional economy.

The Chamber also stated a number of factors responsible for the urgency of the Economic Development for the region. The unemployment rate in Windsor and Essex County continues to underperform compared to the national average. The Canadian Dollar is currently approaching the 90 cents U.S. mark from a level of 80 cents U.S. in 2004.

The Big three automotive manufacturers in our area experienced further market downturn, necessitating additional layoffs and job losses. The Tool Mold and Die industry is currently facing unprecedented global competition from emerging ultra low cost Countries. During 2005 Hospitality and Tourism Industry experienced further decline. In the last few years local building permits for housing, industrial and commercial construction declined precipitously.

The Chamber recommends a number of measures that would expedite the transition stated in the current Economic Development initiative. These include:

- Regional scope for the new Economic Development organization.
- Business-led and driven Board of Directors.
- Appropriate and proportional funding for Economic Development.
- Transfer all responsibilities of the current Advisory Group and Transitional Board to the new Board of Directors as soon as possible.

- more -

The Chamber urges the City of Windsor, our municipal governments and the regional government of Essex to work as full partners on a regional team basis in order to achieve the goals of the current initiative. The Chamber calls for a recast organization that understands and knows the needs of the business community. The new Economic Development organization should have a business-led Board of Directors from the region that would be capable of making binding decisions for this organization.

The Chamber thanks the current Economic Development Advisory Group that assisted in creating a regional approach and guiding the process to this point. To provide the final stage of the initiative with a clear beginning and a clear mandate, political leaders should transfer all responsibility and the necessary tools to a single leadership group, the new Board of Directors.

“Without a successful initiative the entire region will suffer as a whole as investors select other competing communities. The entire region has to be in on Economic Development,” said Lindsay Boyd, Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce Director and Spokesperson on Economic Development.

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*As the “Voice of Business,” the Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce represents over 1,400 business members who collectively employ more than 80,000 people. Our membership profile truly represents a cross-section of the business interests in our community. We actively work with government to ensure the business and investment climate in our region remains competitive and believe that any issues that restrict our ability to attract new business or expand existing business must be resolved.*