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**Windsor & District Chamber Of Commerce Presentation to City Council (Special Meeting – Border Issue) January 6, 2004**

As you are aware, the Windsor and District Chamber of Commerce has announced its support of the proposed Windsor Gateway Nine Point Action Plan created to improve the Windsor-Detroit border crossing. In doing so we have spoken in favor of doing something about the short term solution to provide vital access to our business community. We have followed up on that position with an urgent call (to the Mayor and the City Council) to endorse and approve a short term plan that will alleviate the Border situation and to do so without delay. We are all here because we know that time is truly of the essence.

All of the Windsor-Detroit border crossings are extremely important for our local economy. We are concerned about the impact of any further problems in any of these current crossings. Consider that our Detroit-Windsor Tunnel carries 6.8 million passenger vehicles and 152,000 trucks annually. The Ambassador Bridge carries 7.0 million passenger vehicles and 3.3 million trucks annually. Consider also that 25% of all Canada-US truck traffic goes through the Windsor gateway and the importance of the crossings becomes self evident.

As the “Voice of Business” we represent a wide cross-section of businesses that are directly affected by the Border. Not only are we concerned about the manufacturing sector or the auto industry, which is a significant stakeholder in all border discussions, but we are also aware of the other pillars of our local economy. One example is the Tourism & Hospitality sector which is a significant economic driver locally and which now lures over 7 million visitors annually, spending \$740 million. Daily cross border trips that feed this local industry have recently been on the decline. Among the reasons for this trend are the perceived and real delays at the Border.

For these reasons, the Chamber has so far led the way in addressing and resolving our Border situation and will continue to play a constructive role in a process that we are positive will bring results. The Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce led the Business Transportation Task Force that created 21 recommendations for resolving the Border issues. The three guiding principles that the Task Force heeded in its review process for the continued economic prosperity of all Canadian citizens and for the enhancement of the quality of life for all Windsor/Essex County residents are:

- To expedite the movement of tourists, commuters and commercial goods and travelers across the border.
- To maintain and enhance economic growth, trade competitiveness, safety and efficiency at border crossings.
- To create a safe and secure border that does not jeopardize “Just in Time” delivery or prevent workers from getting to their jobs on either side of the border.

The ultimate goal of the government in Canada, in part, must be to modernize border management in order to accommodate current and future trade and security needs. The Task Force's vision is for a continuous, controlled access from Highway 401 to the I-75 interstate highway system creating state-of-the-art border crossings for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. This will ensure that the Windsor border crossings remain the premiere crossings in Canada, continuing to meet the needs of all Canadians.

Considering the current political climate, a renewed commitment from the Province and the Federal government to move forward with the short term border solution, we urge the City of Windsor, the Mayor and the City Council to seize the moment and do just that, move forward with the plan.

We understand the endorsement for the Nine Point Action Plan by our members, other individual businesses and business organizations as an urgent call for a quick and decisive action on the Border issues. This Border investment is long overdue. It will without a doubt bring good will, positive economic climate, increased economic activity for Windsor and Essex County and it has a potential to attract larger Border investments.

We have been very strong supporters of the Bi-national planning process because we can clearly see the benefits of such long term planning. It makes good business sense to have such a plan in place. We can also see that to anticipate the future we must prepare today. We must pave the roads, build the staging areas, work with our counterparts in the U.S. and move our goods and services across the border more efficiently each and every day.

As we speak, there are businesses that have faced the same challenges for years. With more effort we could have done more about those challenges. If we do more now, the Chamber firmly believes that we can help our business community to better face tomorrow's challenges. If our council fails to act, and act now in a balanced and proactive way to endorse the key components of the Nine Point Action plan, Windsor will place its continuing economic development and the economic prosperity of Canada in serious peril. The time to act is now.

As long as the economic outlooks remain buoyant about growth, (and they have been over the past two decades) we will have to answer the question of how to gain from that economic prosperity at home. For the business community in Windsor and Essex County a great part of that answer is that we need to invest in our efficiency, our Border crossing capacity and creating a positive economic climate that begins with the Border.

The Chamber urges, once again, the City of Windsor to step up to the challenges we have today and act now. The Chamber is willing and ready to work with you to bring a speedy resolution to our border situation.

If Council chooses to amend the existing Windsor Gateway Nine Point Action Plan, to initiate a different plan that will resolve the current short-term border situation, and as long as this plan makes Windsor and Essex County a better place to invest, improving the access to the American markets for our business community and maintain the maximum funding available, the Chamber of Commerce will support this plan.