

NOTES FOR REMARKS BY THE
HONOURABLE DWIGHT DUNCAN
MPP WINDSOR-ST.CLAIR

TO THE WINDSOR & DISTRICT
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CABOTO CLUB

WINDSOR, ONTARIO

APRIL 8, 2005

Good afternoon and thank you Kirk for that kind introduction.

It's my pleasure to be here among so many friends.

Before I get started, I would like to take a moment to thank the Windsor and District Chamber of Commerce for organizing today's luncheon.

I can't tell you how much it encourages me to see so many leaders in so many areas of our community here this afternoon.

The strength of our city depends on the strength of our leaders – and I want to salute you for making Windsor stronger every day...

I am often asked what the McGuinty government is doing for Windsor, and my answer is simple...we are building a stronger community by changing things for the better.

...And we are doing it by seizing vital opportunities to achieve our city's potential...

...potential in our hospitals, potential in our schools, and potential in our economy.

We understand the important issues that make Windsor unique and we are addressing these issues to ensure a bright future for Windsor and Essex County...

18 months ago, the people of Windsor voted for change, and 18 months later, change is what you are getting...

Take healthcare.

When we took office, we learned that 60 per cent of cancer patients across Ontario do not receive the radiation treatment they need within the four-week period recommended by doctors.

So we've taken action.

We've invested in a second MRI machine for Windsor that will shorten waiting times for vital scans that improve the treatment and diagnosis of serious diseases like cancer.

And we've announced close to \$11 million dollars in investments at Hotel-Dieu Grace and Windsor Regional Hospital to upgrade diagnostic and medical equipment, and to shorten wait times for vital health and diagnostic services.

Our government is ensuring that people in Windsor have better access to better quality healthcare. That's what we said we would do – and that's what we're delivering.

Take education.

With fewer than 60 per cent of Ontario students meeting the provincial standard in reading, writing and math, and 30 per cent of our kids dropping out of high school — we've got our work cut out for us.

So we're taking action.

We've provided over \$20 million in education funding in Windsor and Essex to reduce class sizes, improve math and literacy skills and to help ensure our at-risk youth graduate high school.

And we've committed 39 million dollars for local schools in need of repair and renewal, to give Windsor and Essex schools the facelift they require to help our students succeed.

But to afford the health care we need, and the education our children deserve, we must build a strong and prosperous economy.

And that's what our government is doing.

For example, Premier McGuinty's \$500 million dollar Automotive Investment Strategy will be of huge benefit to Windsor's economy...because it will mean more investment, better skills and even more jobs.

Our \$2.5 million dollar commitment to the University of Windsor's Strategic Engineering Skills for the automotive industry will help our youth get the necessary skills they need to ensure Windsor remains a leader in the automotive industry.

And our government's \$400 million dollar boost to Casino Windsor, including a new convention space, auditorium, and hotel tower, will mean increased tourism, a more competitive casino, more jobs and tremendous spin off benefits in the retail, tourism, arts, advertising, construction and supply sectors.

All of this – in just 18 months as a government – should leave no doubt that our government believes in Windsor, we believe in the people of Windsor, and we believe in everything the city of Windsor has to offer.

Strong people make for a strong economy and our government recognizes Windsor and Essex County as an important part of the economic engine that powers Ontario.

This is a very exciting time for Windsor, and there are many exciting opportunities right within our grasp.

Opportunities such as a full medical school, and a solution to our border challenge that has been left unsolved for far too long.

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As you all know, the citizens of Windsor-Essex have a great history of coming together to seize opportunities facing our community.

It was just five years ago when we brought together an insightful and non-partisan committee of some of Windsor's best and brightest to explore the benefits of bringing a medical school to our community.

And because of their hard work and dedication to the cause, we are now home to the South Western Ontario Medical Education Network, the satellite campus of Western Ontario's medical school.

Of course we had people say it would never happen....

We had people say it wasn't realistic...

But almost 18 months to the day the committee was formed, we had our satellite medical school.

This success highlights Windsor's commitment to the health and well being of our citizens.

This type of innovation and collaboration in Windsor-Essex is not uncommon...throughout the last 50 years our region has demonstrated leadership in developing the unique programs and services necessary to meet the specific health needs of our citizens.

The satellite medical school is a prime example of our community embracing a challenge and creating an opportunity...

...which is why I believe the time is right for Windsor to embrace the idea of bringing home a full-fledged medical school.

At a recent council meeting, the Physician Recruitment Office for Windsor and Essex County stressed that Ontario is facing a physician shortage of unprecedented proportions...

Based on 2001 census data, Windsor-Essex should have 277 general practitioners working in our city...however, in all of Windsor and Essex County, we are suffering from a deficit of 121 family doctors, while in Windsor alone, we are short 62 family doctors.

And not only are we one of the most medically under-serviced urban communities in all of Canada...we are the largest city in Canada without a stand-alone medical school.

Our challenges in Windsor are not unique. Last year, we only had 2,200 students enrolled in medical schools nation-wide, while the Canadian Medical Association claims Canada needs at least 3,000 students graduating each year to be self-sufficient.

And the president of the Canadian Medical Association, Albert Schumacher, said himself, the best solution to alleviate our nation's doctor shortage is to create new medical schools in under-serviced areas.

The evidence speaks for itself and it's clear that Windsor has the patient volume to sustain a medical school...

I see dozens of constituents every year who do not have a family physician, and who are forced onto long waiting lists to see specialists to get the care they need...

Our government is aware there is a problem, and we have taken action.

Over the last six months we have implemented key programs to increase the number of doctors to the province including:

56 more graduates per year thanks to the new Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and

141 new family physician residency positions at Ontario's existing medical schools, which includes 66 positions for Canadian medical graduates and 75 positions for international medical graduates...

...This will lead to 337 more doctors ready to practice by 2008.

This is progress, but I also think it's up to us locally to examine our own solutions.

Windsor's satellite school brought with it space for 36 medical residents who train at Hotel Dieu Grace and Windsor Regional hospital every year...

It's a great start – but I think we need to think big, because I believe we can do better.

A new medical school in Windsor would add substantially more new spaces for medical students in Windsor and across Ontario, stimulate further biomedical research and development, create new direct and indirect jobs and bring enormous economic and social benefits to our community.

Take, for example, the University of Wisconsin's medical school, which is comparable in size to Ontario's medical schools.

When it was built, 9,200 direct jobs and 15,000 indirect jobs were created...that's more than Casino Windsor's original employment projections.

...but it's not all about the numbers...there is overwhelming and convincing evidence that communities with medical schools, such as London, Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa, have the lowest numbers of health care shortages, which means a better quality of life.

It's a simple fact – teaching hospitals get more money and resources, not to mention heightened reputations.

This directly leads to retention and repatriation...because studies have shown that doctors tend to remain in the region in which they studied...

...so a full medical school in Windsor would mean more doctors in our community, and better access to health care for our citizens.

Bringing a full medical school to our community will not be a simple undertaking, and there is no doubt it will take time...

This is a long-term goal that must be met with dedication and the determination to start now.

To use that old cliché, Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither will our medical school...it will take the concerted effort of our community to bring a full medical school online...

I applaud Dr. Ross Paul, our University of Windsor President, for taking the first step to pull together a group of community leaders who will once again, spearhead efforts to bring a full fledged medical school to our city.

I truly believe that a medical school would serve to heighten our university's reputation in Ontario and across Canada, and complement our engineering and law faculties. I think Dr. Paul understands this.

...and as we move forward to overcome the challenges that will face us, let's all remember that the University of Windsor once started off as a satellite campus of Western...proof that we can work together to bring a full medical school to our community.

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Speaking of overcoming challenges that face us, I want to take a few minutes to reflect on the progress we are making on the Windsor-Detroit border.

All of us here know that the Windsor-Detroit border crossing is the most valuable trans-border shipping point in the world...and I can tell you that Premier McGuinty has very strong feelings about our Windsor-Detroit gateway.

I understand the process can often be frustrating, but I want you to know improving our border's efficiency and relieving border congestion is at the top of our government's agenda.

In fact, at the Great Lakes Manufacturing Forum in Detroit last month, the Premier made it clear that solving the issue of congestion at our border is the government's number-one priority.

A safe and open border is critical to trade between Canada and the United States. With border tie-ups and traffic congestion, we must keep in mind what is economically at stake...

Cross border trade...

And trade equals a stronger economy...

...And a stronger economy equals jobs.

Ontario's export industry supports one out of every six jobs in the province and the lively-hoods of millions of Ontarians are directly tied to an efficient border crossing.

And as border congestion increases, it is obvious our border is ill prepared to handle the 180 per cent growth in trade projected over the next 11 years.

Truck gridlock is not only leading to jammed border crossings, it's directly linked to our health concerns...

We walk, run and watch our children play, while forever inhaling the fumes of idling trucks on Huron Church...our community has whole arteries choked off as trucks wait in line to cross the border, and some of our small businesses are sometimes forced to close early due to blocked storefronts.

According to a recent study by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, border delays are costing both the Canadian and the American economies more than \$13 billion Canadian annually...

That's a lot of money and time is of the essence...

Our goal is to improve the quality of life for local residents while creating new economic development opportunities for both trans-border and inter-continental trade.

Michigan is as committed to solving our congestion problems as Ontario. Recently the Detroit River International Crossing Environmental Assessment process was initiated, a key necessary step in our joint Bi-National Planning Process to develop a solution towards the path to a new crossing...

...This environmental assessment process allows for community involvement through a series of public consultations that begin this month...

Currently, our schedule assumes that we will receive environmental approvals by 2008 and open a new crossing by 2013. However, as Premier McGuinty recently said, we should challenge ourselves, and our American neighbours to move even faster...

Our government has already invested \$80 million in the infrastructure for phase one of a plan to ease border congestion.

And in January, our government received the Schwartz report...

Commissioned by the City of Windsor, I believe this report to be a firm foundation for a phase 2 agreement to get Windsor-Essex moving...

We need to aim high and think big when it comes to solving Windsor's truck gridlock crisis...

The Schwartz plan is extremely well done, well thought out and gets it right...it offers a foundation for a long-term local solution with a national vision – essential ingredients to the economy of Windsor and Ontario.

The Schwartz plan accommodates the needs of both the business community and local residents...it serves to not only improve the quality of life for local residents, but lays the foundation for new economic development opportunities for Windsor, Ontario and Canada.

This plan will remove trucks from our city streets, make our community safer and cleaner, generate jobs and bolster our economy.

The provincial government is committed to using the Schwartz report as a catalyst for action...

We are already working cooperatively with our municipal and federal counterparts to ensure a border solution that is responsive to local needs...and I am here to tell you we will be working hard over the coming weeks to conclude an agreement.

This agreement would use the Schwartz report as a foundation to ease traffic woes, congestion and gridlock. We will invest in our roads, highways, the ferry, rail, intelligent transportation systems and the bridge and tunnel plazas.

Jobs and investment, locally and nationally depend on doing this right and acting now...and our government is fully committed to seeing this through for the benefit of Windsor and all of Canada.

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Working towards a solution to relieve congestion at the busiest trade crossing in our country, and bringing a full fledged medical school to Windsor to enhance the quality of life of our citizens will remain two of my key priorities over the next 18 months as our government enters the second half of our mandate, because I believe they are two of the most important challenges facing our city...

But we're going to need the strength of our community to see these initiatives through.

These are challenging times...but they're exciting times for Windsor...times that call for co-operation and creativity as we work toward our common goals.

Through decisions we make today, we can provide a better quality of life for future generations of Windsorites...

So, let's aim for a future where we're always moving ahead to reach our potential.

Let's strive to work together and deliver a prosperous economy, a safe and efficient border crossing, a successful medical school, well-paying jobs and a quality of life that is second to none...

Let's strive for a prosperous future – a future we long for on behalf of our children and our grandchildren.

My friends – we have the vision...and the strength to fight for it...

Windsor's future generations deserve no less – our time is now.

Thank you.