



Speaking Notes for a Presentation to City Council on December 8, 2003 on the subject of the proposed Interim Control By-law

Issue:

The vitality of the City of Windsor's Downtown core is critical for the economic well being of the entire City of Windsor and the Essex County region.

As the voice of business the Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce has vested interest in fostering economic prosperity. Tourism & Hospitality are a significant economic driver as Windsor-Essex County now lures over 7 million visitors annually, spending \$740 million. A significant amount of the tourism and hospitality economic gain is captured by the City Centre.

As the "Voice of Business," Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce represents over 1,450 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 which restrict our ability to attract new business or expand existing business must be resolved.

Over the past several years we have seen reports that show our community is concerned about its safety and security in its City Centre core.

The businesses, including the entertainment segment downtown, share these same concerns. They have to be addressed by the community, the business owners, business organizations and government alike. However, these safety concerns must be addressed while at the same time they must be balanced with the fact that we must continue to have this downtown continue to flourish.

In a recent Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce municipal election issue survey, 90% of respondents indicated that the issue of revitalizing our downtown core and improving life for our businesses and citizens is extremely important.

The downtown core is a foundation of our economic health. If the downtown core is doing well the entire City and County of Essex feel the positive economic benefits.

The issue of the downtown entertainment establishments, a subject of the proposed Interim Control By-law, becomes even more important if we note the significance of the downtown core and the large proportion of this successful City enterprise which is comprised of entertainment activities.

In 2001, Windsor City Centre had 1 ¼ million square feet of commercial space for retail, services and entertainment activities alone. Entertainment uses, broadly defined to include restaurants and the new casino, took up a quarter of the City Centre in 1990. They now comprise just over half of the downtown.

As a Chamber of Commerce our mission is to enable businesses to operate in a free enterprise environment, without interference from government whose role in our view is to focus on effectively managing the growth. The impetus is on the reputation and attractiveness of the City Centre for investors.

Therefore, the preservation of a positive business climate has to be the guiding principle in any deliberations concerning the Interim Control By-law. The Chamber believes that this approach will provide a balance to the positive move towards a safe and secure downtown.

The Chamber sees itself as an innovative community partner for the City of Windsor. This land use plan is the first step in a larger process where business people and families can generate even greater business opportunities.

Philosophically, the Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce stands with the City Centre Business Association (CCBA) in that, in principle, the proposed By-law is a negative message to the investment community that Downtown Windsor is not a place to conduct business. In principle the Chamber of Commerce sees the By-law as a dangerous precedent.

However, in a spirit of cooperation, and if Council chooses to support this proposed By-law, the Chamber of Commerce will only be able to understand and go along with and support, if in fact Council incorporates the following very strong recommendations:

Recommendations:

The Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce recommends that the City of Windsor take a reasonable approach in dealing with the City Centre safety and security issues, consulting with the business owners and relevant business organizations on the implementation of the given proposals.

1. That the project timelines described in the Land Use Study & Interim Control By-law be compressed from the proposed one year to eight months and, that the extension of time for the purposes of completion of the study not exceed four months after which time the Interim By-law should be repealed.
2. That the Planning Group work with a committee of business owners of which no less than five be “entertainment lounge” owners. Because time is of the essence we need to rely on the capable planning department of the City of Windsor to do the research and be empowered to work with the committee to see the successful completion of the land use plan.

3. That the Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce has representation on this committee along with a cross-section of stakeholders in the affected area.
4. That there be a clarification of paragraph 3 in the proposed Interim Control By-law to ensure that the Interim Control By-law cannot negatively affect any of the existing establishments by not allowing the businesses to either sell their business, or have new owners accept existing conditions, or inhibit existing business practices on an ongoing basis.
5. That the City of Windsor commits to implementing the other 13 points of the City Centre's Security Enhancement Resource Team's work plan.