



Speaking Notes for Mayor Dave Ryan

Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade

February 21, 2007

Mayors' Address: Pickering Business Vision

Thank you for the warm introduction and thanks to each of you for taking the time to be here this morning.

Starting off, I would like to thank our new Board of Trade President Diana Hills-Milligan and Executive Director Kathy McKay for coordinating today's function and for their continued efforts in supporting our business community. I'd also like to acknowledge Joan Wideman and Tracy Paterson for their tireless efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge Pickering City Councillors and staff here today. Together, we are committed to working diligently on your behalf.

I would also like to thank the Board of Trade for supporting the Pickering Museum Village, by making it today's designated charity. The Pickering Museum Village is one of our city's premier tourist destinations.

Over this past term, we have forged an even stronger and more collaborative relationship with the Board of Trade. As the definitive voice of our business community, it has been a strong ally in lobbying senior levels of government on important issues, such as hospital funding and the expansion of Highway 407.

My Council and I look forward to working with your new board, which represents 455 members of our business community. The City and the Board of Trade share mutual objectives and I look forward to continued partnership as we shape and strengthen Pickering's commercial landscape.

Over the past three years, the Business Advisory Council I established at the beginning of my first term as mayor has played an important role in validating Pickering's economic development programs and initiatives.

I am proud to report that 2,200 new jobs were created and 1.5 million-square-feet of new commercial, industrial space was constructed in the last term of office.

And I am even more proud to say that our efforts are receiving much-deserved national recognition. In the June 2006 issue of Profit Magazine, Pickering was named one of the Top 10 municipalities in Canada to start and grow a business.

As Mayor, I am very proud of Pickering's burgeoning reputation as a preferred place for business. Over the last term, we have worked very hard to strengthen this reputation. And I can assure you that we've only just begun.

To help build upon this momentum, the BAC will be evolving into the Business Development Committee. The BDC's new mandate will be to seek out and help accelerate economic growth opportunities and synergies. I will introduce sub-committees with a priority-specific focus – such as commercial-real estate development and downtown intensification – which will allow us to leverage the expertise of our members.

We have a strong foundation upon which to expand our commercial tax base that will help ease the property tax burden on our residents and businesses. That foundation includes the Regional Municipality of Durham. The City looks forward to working with the Region as we build partnerships and collaborate on issues that will help us achieve important local and regional goals.

For example, the City of Pickering has been working with the Region to expand the services of the BACD or the Business Advisory Centre Durham, of which Councillor McLean is a board member. If we are to be successful in creating an environment fertile for business, it is important that we help encourage and nurture our budding young entrepreneurs. The BACD, in partnership with our Central Library, is a valuable information resource for entrepreneurs looking to turn their business idea into a reality.

As well, the City and the Region are working together on the 407 Employment Lands Study to ensure that we maximize our job potential in this most vital employment corridor.

While I take a great deal of pride in Pickering's leadership status among municipalities, I will be the first one to tell you that we cannot operate in silos.

We need to work in partnership with our neighbouring municipalities, businesses and stakeholders within the framework of the region so that we can harness and focus our respective strengths and resources for our collective advantage.

For example, Pickering was very instrumental in the founding of the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance, an organization dedicated to fostering an energy-friendly environment in Durham. Quite simply, the DSEA is the bridge between our energy needs, commercial development efforts and sustainability initiatives.

Some of the DSEA business members include Ontario Power Generation, Siemens, Veridian, Areva, AECL, Enbridge, Intellimeter and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology – the majority of which are Pickering based.

As the DSEA solidifies Durham's reputation as the energy capital of the province, Pickering will continue to be the nucleus of this emerging power.

The Province of Ontario's *Places to Grow* legislation has identified our downtown as an urban growth centre. Creating a downtown rich in opportunity has been – and remains – an important priority.

Interest in developing our downtown core is at an all-time high. Our planning department is busy fielding inquiries and working on plans that will see a dramatic improvement to this key area including both residential and commercial development.

One of the most visible examples of intensification will be the Bay Ridges Plaza redevelopment, which will see the construction of two towers containing ground floor retail businesses, 347 apartment units, 12 live-work townhouse units, and 114 townhouse dwelling units.

In addition, we will see the rise of a 10-storey mixed use LEED standards building at Kingston Road and Fairport, which will contain a minimum of 1500 square metres of commercial floor area and 196 condominium apartment dwelling units. The highlight of which will be its heavily manicured green roof - the first of its kind in Durham.

Kingston and Dixie Road will see a revitalized destination area anchored by a large 12,000 square metre Home Depot store. This will include additional retail, commercial uses, professional offices and a pedestrian area lined with sidewalk cafes, which will define the western gateway to our downtown core.

A high-end condominium townhouse complex at Brock and Finch and an 8-storey seniors residential building next to the Recreation Complex are also added to the mix.

The City's Planning staff are excited by the prospect of working with Allan Arsenault and the Pickering Town Centre team to effect the revitalization of the Liverpool Road commercial corridor.

The previously announced 20-storey office tower, a visual landmark that will signify a new and prosperous era for Pickering, is moving from concept to reality. Pickering Town Centre has instructed JJ Barnicke to actively market the office tower in conjunction with the City.

Our plan is to link the tower to the GO station with a pedestrian bridge. I just want to make it clear that the bridge is contingent on the construction of the office tower. The bridge project will be jointly funded by the municipality, senior levels of government and the private sector.

We are also evaluating several revenue generation opportunities, such as the installation of solar panels and fiber optic cables, which will help offset the capital and maintenance costs. Once completed, it will be the only work/transit hub of its kind east of Union Station. This will be a key selling feature for prestige companies looking to locate to Pickering and Durham Region.

Yes, we want more businesses here, but we want to make it possible for people to leave their cars at home.

Encouraging public transit is vital for the future health and sustainability of our communities. Major transportation corridors need to be built before connecting roads are established.

For example, the TTC has been struggling with the issue of its lame duck Scarborough RT line. Instead of burying it or implementing a Toronto-centric transit strategy, would it not make sense to enhance the Scarborough RT line and extend it into Pickering and the Region of Durham, as well as Markham and the Region of York?

The Scarborough RT line extended to the University of Toronto at Scarborough, then through Seaton to UOIT and Durham College in Oshawa, will service hundreds of thousands of residents. In between these two institutions, a cluster of research and development facilities should be nurtured and developed, to create a world-class intellectual hub.

From the U of T Scarborough terminus, a line could also service York Region, creating a major transportation network, which would link millions of people, several key businesses corridors and two university campuses within three separate municipal regions.

We need to think creatively and beyond our borders. Utilizing existing hydro corridors, abandoned rail rights of way or the 407 corridor would minimize capital costs and provide strategic high-speed links across the region and GTA.

I have spoken with Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield, in this regard. And while she is generally supportive, we will need to obtain Rob Maclsaac and the GTTA's support in order to

effectively lobby both the provincial and federal governments to invest the needed resources into these and other related transit projects.

While we are talking about transportation alternatives, I think it's about time that the federal government made a decision on the proposed airport. The airport lands comprise a significant portion of our total land area. Keeping these lands in limbo for 35 years has compromised our ability to plan our municipality.

We all know that an airport in Pickering would have a tremendous financial benefit. The recently released economic impact study coming out of Oshawa indicates the Oshawa Airport is responsible for nearly \$60 million in added-value local gross domestic product.

It is expected that a Pickering airport would have an annual economic worth in the hundreds of millions. However, before an airport can be sited, the social and environmental impacts must be taken into account as well.

Whatever decision the federal government makes, Pickering will be prepared to move forward and act accordingly. We just ask that the decision be made fairly soon. We cannot afford another 35 years of indecision and stagnation.

As the Regional representative on the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance Board of Directors, I will promote Pickering and Durham's unparalleled business advantages and I solicit your suggestions as we go forward.

The GTMA is organizing a business mission to Denmark, Sweden and Holland in June with an emphasis on energy generation, sustainability and the environment. I encourage local businesses to seriously consider offshore opportunities and their representation on this important business mission.

For those interested, the Region and the GTMA are co-hosting an information session on this business mission on February 27th at the Durham Region headquarters. I hope to see many of you there.

The City of Pickering is an emerging leader in sustainability. Just a couple of weeks back, internationally-renowned environmentalist – Dr. David Suzuki paid an official visit to Pickering, provided us with his perspective on the environment, and praised the work that Pickering and its partners are doing. He acknowledged that we are aligning our corporate vision and strategies with the tenets of sustainability.

Quite simply, sustainability means living within the earth's limits. It requires doing things better – not doing without.

Through our Business Development Committee, and Sustainable Pickering initiatives, we will be encouraging businesses and organizations to join us on our journey. We will be adopting LEED standards – as part of our commitment to ensuring all new development in Pickering meets or exceeds sustainability targets.

Pickering will continue to work with the provincial and federal governments to ensure our vision of Seaton as the most energy-efficient community in Canada if not North America is realized.

Opportunities such as Seaton underscore the importance of managing development potential. I believe that it is a municipality's responsibility to plan for its future growth. However, the provincial and federal governments are still controlling much of our land.

We must encourage the Province to release, market and service employment lands along Highway 407 and Brock Road. Employment lands must be serviced before any residential foundations are poured.

I am very concerned that the Province has already reduced the size of the employment lands in the Seaton plan. This means that if we are to reach our employment target of 35,000 new jobs, we will need to build upwards and have a greater concentration of knowledge-based jobs instead of manufacturing which requires a broader footprint.

The Province has a responsibility to help us meet these employment targets. This would mean it would have to not only actively market these lands, but to offer incentives so the right types of businesses will want to relocate here.

In a related matter, I implore senior levels of government to implement meaningful solutions that address the health and sustainability of the entire GTA. Our social infrastructure needs a complete overhaul. To say there is a health care crisis in our communities is an understatement.

The downloading of social programs and emergency measure has placed an unfair tax burden on our residents and businesses. Nowhere is this more evident than the funding crisis facing our hospitals.

We need to see a revised funding formula based on population that will complement the Province's Places to Grow strategy. We need to develop a health and social services strategy in consultation with the GTA/905 stakeholders, including members of the Strong Communities Coalition.

Funding is not the only problem. We are all aware of the doctor shortage. While the Province can help by making it easier to recognize the credentials of foreign doctors, I strongly believe that as a community, we can play a major role in recruiting. When a physician is looking to relocate, he or she is looking for a good community to live in – somewhere nice to raise their family.

As part of the hospital's Physician Recruitment Team, I was able showcase our municipalities and all they have to offer, as well as to demonstrate how the community fully supports the hospital and its staff.

I congratulate the Physician Recruitment Team for being able to secure four new doctors in the past year, with two additional doctors on the verge of signing. These six new doctors are greatly welcomed and will serve our community well for many years to come.

In addition to physician recruitment, community fundraising is another way to support the hospital.

That's why I founded the Mayor's Gala in 2005, so that we could create a signature black-tie fundraiser for important community matters.

Over the past two years, the Gala has raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars. Most recently, \$65,000 will go towards the purchase of much needed diagnostic equipment for the hospital

Like many of you, I believe the cultural health of a community is as important as its recreational health, which is why I am pleased that \$50,000 will go towards the future construction of the Durham West Arts Centre.

I thank you for supporting the Mayor's Gala and invite you to support another exciting initiative: Communities in Bloom. Pickering will be participating in this friendly competition for the first time this year.

This annual competition is designed to foster civic pride while promoting environmental responsibility and beautification.

While the City of Pickering will be leading this initiative, I invite the entire community particularly our local stores, companies and businesses to be participants.

Win or lose, it doesn't matter. What's most important is that we galvanize the community in a coordinated effort to showcase Pickering in all of its glory.

It's an exciting time in the City of Pickering. I'm proud of the many accomplishments achieved in this past term of office and look forward to building upon them as we continue planning for the future of Pickering.

In conclusion, I turn to you – our valued members of the Board of Trade. This morning I have spoken to you about many important issues that affect you, your businesses, families, clients and our community.

Speak to your MP's and MPP's about our infrastructure and social needs.

Write to the various ministers who hold the keys to our prosperity.

Let us work together again in lobbying efforts for the hospital, the 407, rail transit, the airport and the employment lands.

With two impending elections over the next eight month time frame, we have a window of opportunity to not only speak out, but to be heard on these most important issues. Let's take advantage of this golden opportunity.

We need to make the senior levels of government know that we are united in cause, united in spirit, and united in determination. Together, we will secure the tools, the funding and political support to realize our community's fullest potential.

Once again, I thank you for your continued support. As always, my door is open to you and I look forward to working with you in 2007 and beyond!