

**BUILDING A MORE COMPETITIVE WINDSOR  
MAYOR EDDIE FRANCIS  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MAYOR'S LUNCHEON ADDRESS  
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Thank you, Kathy.

This has become an annual tradition, an opportunity to speak with you.

Leaders of our city.

And as I look out into the audience today, I'm reminded of the caliber of people we have right here ... among us in our community.

People who have remarkable talent.

Who work hard.

And who believe in the tremendous potential of this great city.

And, who understand the challenges we face – and the opportunities before us.

Today, intense global competition is everywhere. In all sectors of our economy.

From large businesses to small ones ...

From health care to education ...

From community organizations to associations.

You are competing for market share, for customers, and for talent.

And like you, we find ourselves as a region in global competition with other regions.

We are competing for jobs, investment and a better quality of life.

That's why we're promoting Windsor and the region that surrounds us as the best place to locate, to live and to invest.

Our competition is not with Lasalle, Lakeshore, London or Lambton.

Nor are we competing with Detroit, Wayne, Macomb or Oakland.

But together ... we are competing with places in India, Korea, South America, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the United States.

They want what we want.

A higher standard of living. And a better quality of life.

In 2006, the world truly is flat.

Globalization has brought consumers and producers together. It has connected us on a world-wide basis.

This has forced businesses, organizations and governments to respond to a new set of demands and challenges.

For all of us regardless of where you may be - from Windsor, Ontario to Wellington, New Zealand - it's no longer business as usual

One study I read recently suggested that there are four ways a city can deal with these challenges.

First, do nothing. Take no action. Close your eyes and hope to survive clinging to the status quo and hoping it will work.

Second, be reactive. Respond to the agenda of others

Third, be proactive. Create plans for the future, and hope that your assumptions hold true.

Or fourth ... be interactive. Shape your future, but have the flexibility to respond to trends and the capability to adapt at any time.

Interactive is what we want to be, and need to be.

We need to understand global trends, then adapt to them as we achieve our vision for our city.

If we are successful at being interactive, we will attract jobs ... and investment ... and people.

It's about becoming a competitive City.

Becoming more competitive as a city ... is a never-ending job and it keeps me up at night-

But know this: over the past two and a half years, we have made progress.

Tremendous progress.

And there is no clearer measure of that progress, than our municipal finances.

High taxes and a crippling debt make municipalities uncompetitive, and unattractive.

We knew this. We know this.

So your City Council and I have been busy tackling high taxes and debt.

We didn't want a short-term solution. We wanted a permanent solution. A solution that would end fiscal imprudence ... while also delivering better services.

So we went after the root causes of high taxes and debt.

And that started with the introduction of zero-based budgeting.

In today's Windsor, we no longer just accept a budget based on what was spent the previous year.

Instead, we conducted a detailed review of every line in the budget, and work hard to ensure every dollar is delivering the best possible services.

That has made us different from other municipalities in Ontario.

Many municipalities have faced higher costs. We've had more than our fair share.

Nine million dollars in pension increases...

Pay equity payments...

Provincial downloading costs...

And other unexpected costs none of us could have predicted.

In other municipalities, they have struggled. And all some could do was raise taxes, or cut important services.

But thanks to our focused and disciplined approach, we were able to absorb \$23 million dollars – this year alone.

That means no new debt ... and no new taxes.

Over the long-term, a municipality like ours simply could not continue carrying a massive debt.

Our municipal debt had grown too far, too fast.

It was projected to be \$276 million dollars by the end of this year.

That's over \$1,300 dollars of debt for every man, woman, and child in our city.

Thanks to our debt reduction plan, the debt is now only projected to be \$161 million dollars at the end of this year.

That's a \$115 million dollars less than it would have been.

Getting that debt under control ... has been one of the most important legacies of this City Council.

The reason this is so important, comes back to our city's competitiveness.

Thanks to our debt reduction plan, we're saving \$4.1 million dollars each year, that otherwise would have been lost as interest costs.

Our plan has also allowed us to pay for large projects without borrowing money.

Projects like the new Huron Lodge ...

The new 400 City Hall Square ...

And the Norwich Block.

In all, that's nearly \$130 million dollars in projects that are paid for without any new debt.

Not paying money to the banks means more money for other things.

And by 2010, our plan will result in dividends of approximately \$40 million dollars. Then another \$40 million in each and every one of the following years.

That will allow us to keep building our great city.

We are not only reducing our debt...

We're also keeping taxes down.

We've reduced the municipal property tax rate two of the last three years.

And this year, most tax classes will actually pay less taxes compared to last year.

In fact, the total residential tax rate in 2006 is lower than it was back in 1998.

Additionally, for the first time ever, Council acted to reduce the relative tax burden of the commercial, industrial and large industrial classes, in order to improve our city's business climate.

We knew that lower commercial and industrial taxes would attract jobs ... and help you.

We heard you. We listened.

We acted.

The result?

Commercial tax rates this year are down 3.6 percent.

Industrial tax rates are down 5.9 percent

And large industrial tax rates are down 9.4 percent.

Our focus is on building a better, more vibrant long-term future for this city.

We can only do that, if we're doing everything we can to attract new businesses.

And increase the advantage that your businesses and organizations deserve – for locating and staying in Windsor.

The progress we have made has gone well beyond our municipal finances.

We've made important investments in services that modern cities need. And we will continue to do so.

Allow me to share just some of our accomplishments.

We opened local Customer Care Centres in the Forest Glade and College Avenue Community Centres to provide better access to city services...

And we will be opening more centres in other parts of the city.

We launched 311 – the first in Ontario. It has revolutionized the way we do business.

And on June 20th we will be launching an equally exciting initiative called SIMPLICITY-

Taking another bold step in changing how cities do business.

We've improved the City's website, so people can pay their bills, sign up for activities, obtain permits, and get information online.

We've found tenants for the two floors the City had been paying \$1 million dollars for in the Canderel building – saving taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars per year ... and millions over the course of the lease.

We've reached a settlement with MFP Financial Services.

We've introduced a new Pesticide bylaw.

We've become the first municipality in Ontario to join the UNESCO Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination.

We've created a Small Business Task Force, under the leadership of Alfie Morgan, to help create a productive environment for Windsor's entrepreneurs and small business owners.

We've established a cultural affairs office.

We're investing record amounts on roads, sewers, and transportation infrastructure.

This year, 69 percent of our city's Capital budget is going to roads and sewers – up from 54% in 2005.

An additional \$8 million dollars has been added recently, thanks to the province.

We're bringing people back downtown.

The entire face of our downtown is transforming, and transforming for the better.

We've got the Casino expansion – a 5,000-seat theatre, and a 100,000 square-foot convention centre.

A new transit terminal.

We're working hard to bring an urban campus to the Cleary.

An urban village is being developed.

And we're continuing to improve our waterfront.

Knocking down the guest house ...

Expanding and protecting our shore line...

And finally ... filling that hole in the ground!

These are some of our successes.

We also have some immediate challenges.

One of them has been economic development.

None of you need to be reminded of the challenges that the North American auto industry has been facing.

And our unemployment rate remains high.

These are reasons we've taken politics out of economic development, and we're taking a regional approach.

Our new economic development partnership with Essex County is underway.

This is a great accomplishment that recognizes that what is good for Essex County is good for Windsor, and what's good for Windsor is good for Essex County.

I am looking forward to the day when our region in collaboration with others cities from Southwestern Ontario and South East Michigan join together to forge a strong and enhanced economic partnership.

And I want to thank the Chamber for its support and encouragement with this initiative.

I also want to recognize the Windsor Chamber and the Detroit Regional Chamber for the leadership that they continue to show when it comes to addressing the issue of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

It has been a great working partnership and it must continue for there is more work to be done before the final implementation.

But as we deal with policy challenges presented by Washington we must not lose sight of policy challenges being presented by Ottawa.

Specifically our Government's fast paced determined approach towards finalizing a free trade agreement with the Republic of Korea.

As Steven Landry has said, " This want and need to create a trade agreement with South Korea is moving too fast. It feels like the Federal government is just looking to wave a win flag instead of slowing down and doing it right. Its clearly a closed market".

I share his concern. We all share this concern.

If not done right, a trade deal with Korea poses substantial economic risk to Canada and cities like ours.

In North America it is known that the automotive industry is not a growth industry it's a market share game.

For Automakers to be successful they need to sell product and have free and fair access on a level playing field.

In 2005 Korea sold 130 000 vehicles in Canada.

Conversely, Canada sold 400 vehicles in Korea.

Our City also hopes to collaborate with all of you demanding that our Government achieve fair trade that is mutual and reciprocal.

Even in the midst of our economic challenges ...

Even as we have been rebuilding our foundation

We've seen new economic growth and job creation. We're attracting jobs and investment.

The jobs and investment already being attracted to Windsor are leading indicators of what's to come.

Just consider this.

DaimlerChrysler is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in its local manufacturing plants – including what will be one of the world's most state-of-the-art paint facilities.

Narmco Group. EcoTemp. NaviStar. Nematik. Tessonics and Commercial Alcohols.

Dieffenbacher completed the addition of 12,000 square feet to its Twin Oaks facility.

Figleaf an international distribution facility is now located here.

Technicut Tool completed a 6,000 square foot expansion.

And none of these exciting developments captures the incredible growth happening within small businesses in our city.

And thanks to plans for the new Chrysler mini-van, more exciting automotive industry news is on the way.

Several supplier plants have now located and are getting ready.

Also,

Two weeks ago, Council approved sale of land to an American company for the construction of a state-of-the-art 150,000 plus square foot manufacturing facility that will employ approximately 250 people.

Not all of these openings and investments make the news.

But they all add up.

They all create circumstances where our industrial base remains strong, and where our manufacturers continue to prove how competitive they are on the world stage.

Stay tuned. Because there is more good news coming.

Critical to sustaining our economic success, is finding a solution to our border challenges.

Finding the best solution, means seeing our border within the right global context.

The old way of thinking positioned our border – and our city – as part of the NAFTA superhighway. Connecting Eastern Canada from Halifax and Montreal through the United States and into Mexico.

The new way of thinking positions our border crossing – and our city – at the centre of an integrated trade axis that extends beyond North America.

We are connected to markets in Europe, Asia, and the Pacific Rim. The ports on the North American Pacific Coast are running out of capacity. They're just too busy. The result is that our connections to east coast ports provide us access to the growing trade line through the Suez Canal.

Windsor is more than a border City. We are a part of a global supply chain.

This presents tremendous opportunities. But also some challenges.

Consider the numbers:

In 2005, trucks moved \$188.8 billion dollars in exports. That's \$2.1 billion dollars more than in 2004.

Trucks also moved \$164.5 billion in imports into Canada from the United States. That's \$1.9 billion more than the year before.

Forecasts from the Association of Canadian Ports Authorities show that global shipping container traffic should almost double in coming decades.

Shipping container traffic in North America is projected to increase by 75 percent in the next decade-alone. Much of that increase will come from goods arriving from the Far East – especially China.

This will increase pressure on the ports of Western North America – and therefore increase the volume on our Atlantic ports. Such is the reality of modern globalization.

All this presents great opportunity for us ... but we continue to support this opportunity on infrastructure built by our grandparents.

Developing more efficient transportation infrastructure here in Windsor isn't just in the local interest.

It is in the national interest.

In Windsor, we know and accept the responsibility of being host to the world's most economically important border crossing.

And we need the provincial and federal government to share our resolve.

Our resolve to get a new border crossing done soon ... and done right.

In Windsor, we've done our part.

Our city was asked to develop our own proposal that would resolve our border crossing challenges.

And we delivered.

We presented a local solution with a national vision.

The plan took advantage of our position in the global market and provided infrastructure that would sustain our critical supply chains.

Our plan provided for new investments locally ...

But it also provided the key to unlock the potential of our international ports, and increase the efficiency of our national economy.

An investment in Windsor is an investment in every port, and every component of our national transportation system ... from land to sea ... to air.

That's because reducing the infrastructure constrains our border eases pressure on the entire system.

Our plan would make Windsor an even more vital North American air, rail, and ground transportation hub.

Most important of all, the plan would get trucks off of our city streets and out of our neighbourhoods.

For the people of our City ... for our City Council ... and for me, our bottom line has remained consistent.

While we are proud to host the world's most important border crossing, we will not let others force the wrong approach upon us.

An approach that will make our problems worse tomorrow than they are today.

Our City Council and I believe, that's what a twelve-lane, at-grade highway would do.

At a recent meeting with residents who live along the Talbot Road/Huron Church corridor, DRIC officials said that it was not part of their mandate to improve the air quality in Windsor...their mandate is only not to make it any worse.

Let me repeat that. They don't see their mandate as improving air quality in Windsor – just not to make it worse.

I find that absolutely unacceptable. City Council finds that unacceptable. And you should find that unacceptable.

Their current proposal would cheaply intrude into our communities and into our lives.

It would impact our schools ... our churches ...our neighbourhoods.

It would increase air pollution.

And it would impact our quality of life.

Do we not deserve a better quality of life?

At a time when we're building a vision of a better Windsor, their approach is shockingly short-sighted.

And it comes when other places are using feats of modern engineering as a source of pride and tourism attraction – not something to be done on the cheap.

In Dubai, engineers can build islands in the ocean off the desert. Islands that can be seen from space.

But in Windsor, the senior levels are challenged by the Grand Maris drain!

What do we want our city to be?

We need to be bold.

To embrace the infrastructure that is part of our urban space – and see it as an opportunity to enhance our own quality of life, and improve the experience of visitors to our city.

Imagine...

Just imagine the impact on other world cities, if they had not made the most of the opportunities that came from new buildings or infrastructure.

What if the people of Sydney Australia had decided to build a modest, pedestrian opera house?

Or if, years ago, the City Council in New York City had turned down the application to create the Empire State Building?

Or, if urban planners in San Francisco determined that the cost of painting the Golden Gate Bridge was too high, and went with something more bland instead?

The way we think about these places would be different. And they would not be what they are today.

Why then ...

Why, I ask, can't we have the same ambitions for our city?

We can also take inspiration from a tale of two cities – Chicago and St. Louis.

Both cities during the age of Industrialization were investing in rail roads for better access to the markets.

In St. Louis, they said, “why would we build? We’ve got the Mississippi right here. We have access today--Why waste our money? We’ll build it when we need to.

Chicago – on the other hand – saw opportunity.

They built, they invested forged ahead, and have never looked back.

While Chicago became one of the great world cities, St. Louis never did catch up.

We need to ask ourselves: Do we want to be a border city that connects to Detroit, or do we want to be a border city that connects to world markets?

This border crossing is a precious opportunity. An opportunity to enhance what people think of Windsor, and of our region.

A chance to improve our quality of life ... and an opportunity to improve our national infrastructure while securing our international supply chain.

But we need to act.

We are ready.

Have been from day one.

We just need to do it right

A sound fiscal position. High-quality, efficient infrastructure.

These are important ingredients in our plan to make Windsor more competitive.

As is skilled labour.

Competitive cities mobilize labour resources quickly and efficiently to meet global business demands.

Job creators are not looking at the cost of labour, but the quality of labour.

We're transforming from an industrial economy to a new model of urban development – driven by the knowledge economy.

This new economy is about brains and creativity. About developing big ideas, and making them happen.

That's why we are so fortunate to have two outstanding educational facilities – our University and College.

They are the fuel for our new economy.

The premise is simple:

First, people create innovative ideas at our University and College.

Second, our skilled labour force and ambitious entrepreneurs turn those ideas into successful, job creating products - turned into things people want to buy.

We've all heard about the challenges with Canada's aging population.

That aging population is a more daunting concern, when coupled with a shortage of skilled labour.

We are fortunate, to have a labour force that is growing and replenishing itself.

Windsor is one of the most popular destinations for immigrants to this country.

Only Calgary attracts more new immigrants on a per capita basis. As populations stagnate across the Western world, ours is projected to double over the next fifty years.

While other cities are seeking people ... we have people seeking us.

These people are coming to our city to fulfill their dreams, and build successful lives for themselves and their children.

Yet they face difficult barriers. Like a lack of skills recognition and language challenges – resulting in unemployment or underemployment.

Sixty percent of all immigrants came to Canada with a trade certificate, non-university diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctorate.

We're taking action to help our newcomers – many of whom are very well-trained, and have skills that we need to put to good use.

In partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we are developing a workforce development plan.

We're taking action to find ways to help newcomers get settled and on with the job of building a better Windsor.

This is an important initiative for our local economy – and one in which we will be working with the Chamber.

One of the things that draws new people to a new city is its physical environment, amenities, and quality of life.

And one of our roles as municipal leaders ... is to ensure that we continue to invest in creating a better quality of life.

An investment in our parks.

In our art gallery,

In our symphony,

In our neighborhoods

In our environment

And in our Arenas

is an investment in jobs.

A KPMG study of U.S.-based corporations determined that quality of life indicators were important to business location decisions.

Enhancing the Quality of life in our City is about more than just the above.

It is about wanting to help each other.

It is about a willingness to work together to build a strong social fabric.

Eighty percent of Canadians also consider it a priority to maintain healthy, socially-cohesive and environmentally-sustainable communities.

I want to applaud the United Way for its continued commitment to the Windsor-Essex community and for the release of its 2006 Wellness Report.

The report speaks to the current state of well-being in our community calls us all to become community builders.

The United Way, through its report, challenges us to create a unified vision, build on neighbourhood strengths, form partnerships, enact progressive public policies, and, while taking stock of the challenges we face, take advantage of the opportunities before us to improve the well-being of our community.

The report provides a solid framework for discussion and a basis on which we can move forward together to build a healthy, vibrant and dynamic city.

We must move forward from discussing to improving and I hope that you will join me in responding to their call to action.

Building a City is not just about roads, and sewers. It's about creating a liveable city that is safe and secure and that is diverse in culture, arts and music, and enjoys a healthy clean and green environment.

In a few weeks Council and I will begin to move forward with plans that would convert unused railway tracks into walking and hiking trails, and other more productive uses.

We're calling this rails to trails, and it has a lot of people very excited already.

If the riverfront was the urban renewal project for the 20th century...

Then rails to trails will be the urban renewal project of the 21st century!

We've got lots of ideas on how to improve this city ... and the quality of life we have. And we're working hard on implementing those ideas.

But we can never have too many ideas. So if you have a suggestion for the greater good – that would improve the quality of life of our city – I want to hear it.

We have built a strong foundation. We have the basics we need, and the conditions for growth and success have been established.

Let's remember all we already have.

One of the highest per capita household incomes in Canada.

Some of our nation's most affordable housing.

Access to schools and post-secondary education.

Access to parks, and a world-class waterfront.

An excellent symphony orchestra, and a fine art gallery.

A safe, clean city...a caring community.

Yes – we have a strong foundation.

Yes – we have come very far, very fast when it comes to addressing issues that had been holding our city back.

But we've got more to do, and greater opportunities to embrace.

Being competitive in today's world means creating the right conditions for economic growth.

But, it also means having the energy, the drive, and the ambition to work together, and make a difference.

Imagine this.

Ten years from now, a business owned and operated in Windsor, manufactures a high-tech product that is used by some of the most important people in the world. Demand for this product is growing exponentially.

This enterprise employs over 5,000 people in high-paying, highly-skilled jobs.

They bring millions of dollars to our economy directly, and millions more from the philanthropic, cultural, and educational donations of their founders.

And their market capitalization ranks them consistently among the top two or three companies in Canada.

Impossible?

Not at all.

The situation I've just described ... happened.

In a smaller city than Windsor, just three hours drive up the road.

That city is Waterloo. And the company is Research in Motion – makers of the Blackberry.

One of their founders, Mike Lazaridis [La-za-reed-diss], donated \$100 million dollars to create what's called the Perimeter Institute – an organization dedicated to primary research in physics – right in Waterloo. The home of the Perimeter Institute is one of the most architecturally acclaimed new buildings in Canada.

My question to you today ... is this.

Who among you is going to launch a product ... or a service ... or an idea that is going to take the world by storm? A product or service that relatively few people – if any at all – have heard of today?

Who is going to create visionary endowments for world-renowned research institutes – here in Windsor?

Regardless of how much potential your business or organization has ... all of us have a role to play.

Urban historians point out that intelligent, coordinated civic boosterism – talking up your city and promoting it – has been one of the most important activities associated with the continued vitalities of cities.

So let's resolve to stop feeling sorry for ourselves.

Let's stand up and be Proud

Let's come together.

To Promote and to Celebrate who we are and what we are about.

I believe in the people of this city.

I believe in our talent, vision, and ambition.

I believe in you.

You will continue to make our city great – by volunteering your time, and your talent.

I am proud of where we are today, and of the incredible progress that people in this city continue to make.

We are all champions of Windsor. We are Windsor's Ambassadors.

In our dealings and interactions with one another, and with people from other places, we need to constantly emphasize what an exciting, dynamic, and forward-looking city we have the privilege of calling home.

We are witnessing a renewed passion. A new, energetic attitude of commitment to one another, and to our city.

We saw it during the SuperBowl celebrations ... as people proudly showed the world what a great place Windsor is.

We saw it again as we renewed the celebration of our city's birthday on the May 24th weekend.

And we saw our community come together to mourn our City's tragic loss.

So I am challenging you today.

Challenging you to achieve more. To become more. To contribute more to the development of a great city.

The time has come for us to believe in ourselves

To dream together,

To work together,

And to achieve together.

That's what Windsor is all about

That's what we're all about.

Thank you very much!