

Rebuilding Our City
2009 State of the City Address
Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce
June 9, 2009

Introduction

Thank you.

Good afternoon.

I thank all of you for coming today...

For coming together as business, and community leaders...

As friends, and neighbours...

As Windsorites who have a deep and genuine concern for our region.

You –

Each of you, are a unique reflection of our great community.

The strength of this community – is our *collective* strength.

The passion and spirit of Windsor ... is a function of what *you* do – every single day.

Our strength and passion are in great supply.

And *right now*, we need them most.

No words can describe the economic hardships our community has experienced.

Nor can words describe the pressure...

The frayed nerves...

And struggles experienced by our families...

Our businesses...

Our community.

Our City.

We feel fear.

Uncertainty.

And worry.

I see it everywhere I go.

I see it in the faces of the children, who aren't thinking about family camping trips or summer vacations ... they're making sacrifices.

I see it when I meet our students.

Nervous about the risk of leaving family, friends, and the city they love.

Anguished about their parents' struggles – desperate to help.

And I see it when I speak with our unemployed friends and neighbours.

Windsorites who once enjoyed a steady income...

Who have been robbed of stability and security.

They are left asking – what now?

Our community is hurting.

Hurting like no other.

Our collective resolve is being tested.

Tested like never before.

But let's remember who we are.

Let's remember ... that our history is full of examples of resilience.

Of fighting back.

And of building anew.

Remember the Battle of Windsor of 1838.

When American supporters of MacKenzie's rebellion seized Windsor on December 4th – burning militia barracks to the ground as they attacked and took control.

Windsorites fought back. Led by Colonel John Prince, a local militia of 130 soundly and quickly defeated the Americans.

Remember the downtown fire of 1871. Our city was devastated. Upwards of 100 buildings burned to the ground.

Windsorites built anew.

Remember the tornado of 1946. Fourteen people died in what was then the third-deadliest tornado in Canadian history.

Four hundred homes were damaged. Orchards were up-rooted. Over 150 farm buildings destroyed.

Windsorites fought back. Built new homes. Planted new orchards. And harvested anew.

Remember nearly losing Chrysler to bankruptcy in 1979/80.

Chrysler needed \$9 Billion dollars. Both the U.S. and Canadian federal governments made significant loan contributions.

Ontario made a modest investment of only \$10 million dollars.

Their combined investment allowed Chrysler to look ahead, to re-build.

That included research and development into a new idea some people thought would resonate with families: a cross between a van and a station wagon that would be built in Windsor.

It worked. Windsorites re-tooled, re-built, and thrived.

We survived.

We would not be who we are ... if we had not been tested before.

We would not be Windsorites.

The lines on our faces...

The labour of our hands...

The resolve of our spirit...

And the strength of our character...

Would not be what they are, if we had not been tested before.

We would not be Windsor.

As individuals, we grow and learn the most, from times of difficulty and adversity.

The same is true for our city.

We need to look beyond the victimization.

And take responsibility for our own destinies.

Take control of our own tomorrow.

We need to build ... a new Windsor.

We don't just have to do things differently ... we have to do different things.

Today's economic realities mean that all of us need to make changes.

As individuals ... and as leaders.

But alone – none of us can solve our economic challenges.

I can't.

City Council can't.

And no individual company or organization can, either.

But if we all work together...

We can pull our City back up.

Just as we have done before.

We can lift her up ...and steady her strong.

So that she may take her rightful place...with her head proudly held high – just as she deserves.

As we deserve.

Our city...

Our community...

Back up again.

I have always marveled, at how people rebuild after a natural disaster – like a typhoon, a tornado, or an earthquake.

Always tragic. But never able to suppress the human spirit.

On a single day ... these places are torn apart. Knocked down. Ruined.

But on the very next day ... rebuilding begins.

Communities turn chaos into opportunity –

No homes, no money, no community.

Yet they look to the future and the promise of a better day.

I've seen that same attitude in the people of our city.

We can turn our community's economic crisis ...our personal crisis ...

Into opportunity.

To emerge post-recession stronger, more determined, and better positioned to succeed.

Normally, a renewal process happens piece by piece. Year over year.

But this is not normal.

And what we are living...

What we are experiencing...

This economic storm...

Requires us to move forward more quickly, and more aggressively - today.

To make Windsor a city of choice.

The first choice ...

For businesses...

For aspiring professionals...

For families...

For students...

For health care providers...

For artists...

For seniors...

And for people like you and me.

A new Windsor.

Clean. Modern. Attractive. And energetic.

We are already well on our way ... to building that new Windsor.

So today, I want to speak with you about our plans.

What we've already done to prepare for today's economic crisis, and tomorrow's economy...

What we're doing today to build a new Windsor...

And what we will achieve tomorrow, if we work together.

Recent History: Fixing the Basics

Five years ago, your City Council and I embarked on the challenging, yet necessary task of getting our financial house in order.

At that time, we understood that urgent action was needed.

Our financial situation was very bad.

In 2004, Windsor had the highest per capita debt of any municipality in Ontario.

Our bond rating outlook was to be downgraded.

In the business world, the trajectory we were on ... could have ultimately resulted in bankruptcy.

Tax increases were putting us at a competitive disadvantage.

Businesses and residents were unfairly burdened.

For City Council, ignoring our city's infrastructure deficit and mounting debt would have been like ignoring the elephant in the room.

Inaction ... would have been a shameful violation of our responsibilities, as stewards of our community.

So we got to work.

And we began the onerous task of restoring a stable financial foundation for our city.

To provide the strength we needed – regardless of the economic climate.

And to provide the financial flexibility that we need today.

We implemented a clear and cogent financial plan.

One with a business-like focus and war-like urgency.

One with a philosophy of efficiency and accountability to taxpayers – not special or narrow interests.

We focused on what matters. And fixed the basics.

First, our plan slashed our debt.

From the highest per capita debt of any municipality in Ontario in 2004, Windsor's debt today is below the provincial average.

We have already reduced our debt by approximately \$100 million dollars off its initial projection.

And by 2013, our debt will be cut in half - to \$124 million dollars.

All this means we are paying less interest to banks.

And we're saving \$6.6 million dollars in interest payments each year.

I am VERY proud of that accomplishment.

Second, we said "no" to the age-old tradition of property tax increases.

This year, your City Council delivered a zero-percent property tax rate increase.

Lower than Toronto...

Lower than Waterloo...

Lower than our neighbouring municipalities who are experiencing the same economic realities.

The lowest in all of Ontario.

Over the past four years, the average tax impact on average residential homeowners – inclusive of assessment – has been less than one percent.

Less than one percent.

Lower than the rate of inflation.

I do not believe, that there is any other Canadian municipality of our size that can make that claim.

So, when anyone asks you what the city is doing to support families in these difficult times, please share our record with them.

Because there may be nothing more important, that we can do right now...

Than keeping more money in people's pockets by holding the line on property taxes.

That's how we're providing financial relief.

Third, despite slashing debt, and holding the line on taxes, we have made important and necessary capital investments in our community.

Renewing things like roads, sewers, and watermains.

This is what getting back to basics is all about. Spending municipal tax dollars where municipal tax dollars should be spent.

Making our city a more attractive place to live.

Increasing public green space,

Working towards our goal of planting one million trees,

And improving our gateways.

It also included building modern amenities – like the transit terminal, airport terminals.

Our new home for the aged – Huron Lodge.

And the new WFCU centre – the proud home of the 2009 Memorial Cup Champion Windsor Spitfires.

Our financial plan used a pay-as-you-go approach. This meant that we paid for these projects with cash.

We broke the old habit of borrowing from banks. And avoided burdening our city with over \$367 million dollars of new debt.

Our financial plan is working.

We will cut our debt in half...

We've been able to hold the line on property taxes...

We've invested in infrastructure and amenities that modern, competitive cities need.

We have delivered on our promise to restore financial stability to city hall.

We promised we would manage your money more wisely and prudently. We have.

And we will continue to do so.

The hard work and careful planning over the past five years, have given us the flexibility we need today.

Imagine if we hadn't been prudent in our financial management.

Imagine if we hadn't managed our spending intelligently.

Faced with declining revenue...

Plant closures...

Business bankruptcies...

Residential relocations...

We would have had a crushing debt, high taxes, and no money for capital investments.

We would have been in financial ruins.

With no ability or flexibility to respond during these tough economic times.

Instead, we are looking to the future – and building a new Windsor.

It saddens me, that we are currently facing a work stoppage by our municipal workers.

And I want to take this opportunity to quickly describe the single overriding issue that led to the current strike.

It is not cutting jobs.

It is not cutting wages.

It is not reducing post-retirement benefits for *current* employees.

It is about post-retirement benefits of *future* employees. People who do not work for the city today.

We are only one of two cities of our size in Ontario that continues to offer those benefits. And I need not tell you that we simply must find ways of ensuring our long-term competitiveness, as we compete for investment with other cities in our province.

So this is not about disrespect for City employees. Or their union.

It is about balancing the need to compensate our employees fairly, while at the same time recognizing our responsibility to ratepayers.

That is what the city is going to do.

And I pledge to you, that so long as I am Mayor...

I will always stand up for our community, and her interests.

And no matter who comes to our city to berate us...

No matter how personal the attacks against me and our Council...

Your City Council and I will do the right thing.

We will stare down special interests ... and always spend your tax dollars wisely.

Build on Assets

We've worked hard to fix the basics.

But we also need to leverage our existing strengths. And continue building our assets and infrastructure.

Our financial plan, and forward thinking, have provided us with the means to invest today.

At a time when our community needs it most.

Your City Council and I have developed the largest-ever capital budget in the City's history.

An unprecedented investment of \$646 million dollars over five years - that will create jobs today, and build the city we need to compete and win in tomorrow's economy.

Investing in public infrastructure – things like roads, sewers, green space and industrial parks – is a proven way to stimulate a slowed or stalled economy.

It creates local jobs – which mean more local spending.

Better roads, bridges, and other public infrastructure matter.

Our Capital Stimulus Plan...

Together with the more than \$90 Million dollars of support from the Federal and Provincial governments...

Will help us reposition our economy.

These investments will drive competitiveness and productivity.

It is estimated that a \$1 dollar investment in public infrastructure generates approximately 17 cents in private sector cost savings.

These are all reasons why this aggressive capital spending plan makes sense.

This record \$646 million investment over the next 5 years is huge!

Over the next five years, Windsor will invest more on capital than we did over the past eight years combined.

And with our Plan over the next five years, we will invest almost the same amount as in the decade from 1996 to 2006.

Over the next two years alone, we are projecting to invest an average of \$211.5 million dollars in infrastructure spending - a 149 percent increase in capital works.

All possible, because we got our financial house in order.

We are able to get projects started now.

That's smart.

This Capital Stimulus Plan creates an immediate cash injection for the local and regional economy.

Creates jobs and opportunity.

It creates so many jobs, that even the Heavy Construction Association is happy.

That's a first for me!

There is so much work...

So many projects...

That it will take a unique and cooperative partnership between the Association, City Hall and all of the labourer unions to ensure that we have sufficient local and regional capacity to get all the work done, and done right.

From the engineer to the labourer—more work than one can imagine.

It will also mean skills training – so that many of our unemployed can find new work and opportunity.

The timing of these efforts is also smart.

Because it allows us to accelerate city capital construction ahead of the anticipated Border construction.

We will be able to avoid competing with ourselves for limited labour and materials – which would have driven construction costs higher.

Our plan provides for a more staggered approach to the billions in infrastructure spending, and provides a more sustainable number of construction jobs over a longer period of time than otherwise would have been available.

That's good for our workers, their families and our communities.

Leveraging our Transportation Infrastructure Assets - Airport

Our plan also includes making the most of one of our natural advantages: our geographic location.

We're at the heart of North America's most important transportation route with global connections, extensive reach, and incredible potential.

We are central to the most important global transportation network.

We are a transportation hub.

Yet, we cannot take this for granted. We must look to the future, and invest in our transportation assets.

That's exactly what we've done with our airport.

Three years ago, our airport was bleeding cash, and had no visionary plan for the future.

We simply could not sit passively by.

So we took action.

Some were critical and concerned about the City taking control of this asset.

In our view, our airport is a strategic asset.

One that was underperforming.

And the shareholder... the taxpayer ... you ...deserved better.

Before we took control, the deficit position of Windsor International Airport had doubled to over \$1.1 million dollars as of December 31, 2006.

Since City Council and YQG assumed control of operations in July 2007, the city has been able to collect approximately \$665 thousand dollars of unpaid property taxes.

And in eighteen short months, the airport's new leadership has delivered total retained earnings of \$538 thousand dollars – over and above the property taxes we are now collecting.

Bottom line: YQG has returned over \$1 million dollars in property taxes...

\$90 thousand dollars in cash flow loan repayments...

And delivered earnings of \$538 thousand dollars to the City of Windsor in 18 months of operation.

Windsor International Airport has been transformed.

Upgrades and investments are being made.

With the addition of modern departure lounges...

More flights to more destinations...

And efforts are underway to secure additional passenger services to Toronto Island and cities out West.

This is exciting. And it is new.

Fresh thinking means making the most of our assets within today's economy.

So we're expanding use of our airport facilities for non-passenger travel, and other services.

In April, a leading provider of travel-trade services opened a new research and development centre.

They plan to hire 15 new employees, with further growth that will create more than 100 new jobs in advanced software development.

New industry. New jobs. Skilled labour. Welcome to the New Windsor Economy.

Welcome to YQG - Your Quick Gateway.

Lufthansa Consulting is in the final stages of conducting a four-month feasibility study, evaluating our City's prospects of becoming a perishable air cargo hub.

We are creating new economic opportunities. Diversifying our economy.

All of this development will create jobs, connect our goods and services to world markets, and signal to the world that Windsor is open for business.

The Border

With our airport – we've made great progress.

And we are very close to achieving the right solution for our border.

City Council has been clear: we believe that it is time to get going.

We've been saying that for the past five years.

But we need the best solution for Windsor.

If decision-makers fifty years ago had the foresight to extend the 401 an extra twelve kilometres, we wouldn't be having this debate today.

And if your City Council hadn't been pushing relentlessly – since 2002 – for a better, more ambitious solution, we would have been stuck with a low-budget proposal to put trucks on E.C. Row.

Or an at-grade roadway--- carving our community along Huron-Church.

Remember - back in 2002, outsiders' plan for our border was small potatoes. A \$300 million band-aid solution.

Since then, we have made tremendous progress.

Thanks to our community's resolve and City Council's efforts, that initial low-budget fix has already grown to a commitment of \$1.7 billion dollars.

Our own representatives at Queen's Park have said that many of the improvements that *have* been made to the proposals, are thanks to our hard work.

We have also achieved federal and provincial support to finally – at long last – build rail grade separations at Howard and Walker, and a new tunnel plaza.

This isn't simply about cranes and construction.

It is about seizing a unique and rare opportunity to rebuild and reposition our community.

It is about reshaping Windsor - by building a modern gateway.

It's about improving air quality and public health.

Diverting pollution away from our neighbourhoods, and not adding to our City's alarming rates of chronic diseases.

It's about keeping communities together, not dividing them with congestion and noise.

And it's about adding green space, parks, and bike paths that people would actually use.

That's what we've been standing up for.

Our city used to settle for less, and shrug its shoulders, and lament that we didn't get a better deal.

Those days are over. It's not what we were elected to do.

Let's think about the impact on our city over the next 10, 20, or 30 years ... not just the next 10, 20 or 30 months.

But there are sceptics. There are special and narrow interests.

Naysayers quick to criticize City Council for not capitulating. For not giving in.

Criticizing us for standing up for our community.

The same sceptics and special interests that wanted us to settle for the \$300 million dollar solution, and have yet to recognize the \$1.4 billion dollar gain we have made for this community.

Let me tell you – your City Council members have been the unsung heroes in the border debate.

We will follow this process to the very end.

We will represent our community, and seek to achieve a better solution.

And contrary to what you may have heard, or falsely led to believe...

Today City Council is not taking action through the courts – even though other stakeholders are doing just that.

This process is not over until Cabinet makes a final decision. They are well aware of our community's position.

And I look forward to meeting with our Cabinet Ministers once cabinet exercises its authority.

We are responsible to this community. And until the first shovel is in the ground, we will continue to fight for what the people of Windsor have always deserved.

Creating the City of Choice

The next part of our plan – is making Windsor a City of Choice.

What do we mean by that?

It means creating a city that is a magnet for businesses...

Families...

And tourists.

Great cities – warm and welcoming communities – don't just happen by chance.

They are built. They are created by a group of motivated, action-oriented people.

We have the physical location, and a diverse and multicultural population base...

That all great cities enjoy.

Think of Chicago. Montreal. San Diego. Vancouver. Even Baltimore.

They made bold investments. And became places where people want to visit, and where people want to live.

And, they have worked hard to nurture their service economies.

That's key.

Economists say that service industry jobs are best placed to "bounce back" once the economy recovers from any recession.

They see the critical importance of the service sector as "simple economics".

Where we spend ... ties into job sector growth.

That includes things like our restaurants. The hospitality industry. Financial institutions. Local professional services, and retirement living.

The service sector is an engine of economic growth.

One that creates a natural counter-balance to our manufacturing strength and tradition.

But we're fortunate.

Because recently ... we've been building a critical mass of world-class assets and investments within the service industry.

The likes of which are the envy of other cities, seeking to position themselves for success in the services economy.

It's happening.

Brand-new investments in our hospitality sector.

A half-billion dollar convention centre and 5,000 seat coliseum.

The commitment, energy and loyalty of the Caesars brand.

The new WFCU centre.

And also what people in the hospitality sector call "destination animation".

Events such as the Red Bull air races.

Belle Isle Grand Prix.

Special Olympics.

Canadian Track and Field Championships.

And the OHL All-Star game.

It's happening.

Health care continues to grow. And providing good health services is a component of becoming a city of choice.

Windsor Regional Hospital recently announced a major capital improvement project.

Over \$91.6 million dollars to meet the needs of our growing population, reduce patient wait times, and enhance access to services.

It's happening.

We're also well positioned to serve seniors.

We welcome the opportunities that come with new retirees moving to our community.

That's what the Windsor-Essex Active Retirement Community Initiative is all about.

Local organizations working together to put out the welcome mat to seniors – and to organizations that can help them.

Progress in making Windsor a community of choice for seniors is already well underway.

Huron Lodge is new, modern, and a home for seniors of which we can be proud.

Council also recently approved plans for a new, \$150 million dollar long-term care home and seniors residence in East Riverside.

And you can drive by the \$50 million dollar Amica mature lifestyles community being built on Riverside Drive.

It's happening.

Retail investors can see what's happening. And they are investing in kind.

Rexall. Shoppers Drug Mart. They are making approximately \$7 million dollars in new investments.

The same is true in financial services – with the TD Bank investing an additional \$8 million.

It's happening.

Our service sector has the potential to grow like gangbusters.

Maybe you haven't noticed – but it's happening.

Our service sector growth will build upon initiatives being undertaken to secure our automotive and manufacturing footprint.

And I want to take the opportunity to thank the CAW... its membership ... our provincial and federal governments ... and automotive industry leaders.

For showing leadership – and securing the automotive footprint in our community.

This is an industry unlike any other.

It built the middle class.

It attracted immigrants to our country – people like my father, in search of a better life.

It built our city ... our province.

Our talent for automotive innovation, R&D, and manufacturing isn't going away. It will only get better.

Our economy is growing in other ways.

Initiatives like wind farms. Green energy. All repositioning us for success in the new economy.

Another key to success in building a City of Choice – is our educational institutions.

We are so fortunate, to have a University and a Community College.

And recent announcements mean that they are growing stronger – and better prepared to help us to succeed in the post-recession economy.

On May 25, the University of Windsor received \$40 million dollars from the federal government to build a new Engineering Centre of Excellence. This in addition to the \$40 million dollars invest by the provincial government. That's powerful – because training engineers will have positive knock-on effects for our local economy.

On May 29, St. Clair College received a \$32 million dollar grant from the provincial and federal governments to build a new centre for Applied Health Sciences.

This is extremely exciting news.

This new building will train a new generation of health care providers.

It will offer nursing, respiratory therapy, radiation, and physiotherapy courses – among others – in the state-of-the-art labs and classrooms.

We'll need these well-trained, service economy workers – given all of that activity that has already started to attract seniors to our community.

I am also excited about the historic agreements signed by the University of Windsor, St. Clair College and local area hospitals.

The agreements will allow students unprecedented course access between campuses – particularly in health sciences.

Health care is a massive industry.

And this cross-collaboration, coupled with the recent agreements with the university and its new medical school, positions our region as a leader in health sciences.

All this – from health sciences, to financial services, to our hospitality industry and beyond...

All this – is repositioning Windsor.

But there is more to do.

All of us need to come up with ideas that complement these developments and successes.

To support and grow our service-based economy.

What do conventioners do when they get here?

What do retirees look for in their communities of choice?

That do young families or graduates look for in their City of Choice?

How do we create new opportunities?

How do we continue to make our city a more attractive place to visit, work, and play?

We must continue to explore new initiatives.

New ideas.

With creative thinking. Open minds. And a broader understanding of changing markets.

We can diversify. We can branch out. And we can thrive.

When we believe in what's possible...

And when we dare to dream a little ...

Great ideas happen.

Like the new Marina-Canal.

The Marina-Canal project will create jobs today, and become a centre of welcomed activity and business opportunity tomorrow.

The Marina-Canal riverfront project is another part of the plan to reposition Windsor.

It will create 460 jobs during the construction period...

Generate \$30 million dollars in income for local workers working on its construction...

And provide millions of dollars in new revenue for all levels of government, to invest back into things that matter.

That's just the construction phase.

Where the Marina-Canal truly gets exciting, is once it is completed.

Imagine the possibilities. Think about the number of new, service economy businesses that could come together in and around the Marina Canal.

It will become an attraction that will inject much-needed balance to our City Centre and breathe new life into our urban village concept.

It will help make Windsor a city of choice

Consider this.

For every million additional visitors that the canal attracts to Windsor, our local economy would create an additional 3,600 full time jobs.

And that doesn't include new jobs created from the private sector construction of new shops, restaurants, and office space in the canal area and across the city.

Nor does it include the impact of new economy businesses attracted to Windsor, or the recapture of spending by local residents who stay here to enjoy their city.

It builds on our wonderful riverfront legacy ... extending into the City Centre.

Unlocking new opportunities for commercial and mixed-use development that cannot be realized north of Riverside Drive.

It will attract a farmers market, children's museum, restaurants, retail.

A variety of uses that will bring people back to live, work, play and shop.

If not this, then what?

An empty parking lot is not going to do it.

It is disingenuous to sit back and talk about the decay of downtown.

The decline of the urban centre because of sprawl.

The lost municipal revenue.

Disingenuous ... if we choose to do nothing about it.

I'm very excited about the opportunities, and looking forward hearing our community's views on the potential development of the Marina Canal.

But it is only one part of our overall plan.

And I look forward to our continued community discussion.

Conclusion

That broader plan has included fixing the basics.

Delivering on a stimulus plan through capital spending.

Leveraging our transportation infrastructure.

Embracing the service economy through investments in our college and university.

And reshaping how people *think* of Windsor – through bold new initiatives.

These are the ingredients that will help reposition our city for the post-recession economy.

These are the building blocks that will make Windsor a city of choice.

I believe.

That with determination...

With the right plan...

And with a focus on the future, not the past, great things happen.

Just look no further ... than our Memorial Cup champions!

They are an inspiration.

The Spitfires moved beyond a difficult past, started over, and worked together to win.

They had a game plan.

And they stuck to it.

They anticipated their opponents' moves and out-played the competition.

They displayed unwavering courage in the face of mounting pressure.

Heroic strength during times of tragedy.

They showed what's possible when you believe in yourself.

And they brought home the Memorial Cup.

They made us proud.

And they allowed us to be proud.

The timing could not have been better!

Just like the Spits, Windsor needs to rebuild.

We need to reposition our city to compete and win.

We need to re-energize our city's spirit.

To restore Windsor's confidence, and to realize our potential.

History is but a function of the actions and decisions of those who came before us.

What history are we writing for our city? What is the legacy that we are leaving our children and grandchildren?

The conclusions we draw...

The actions we take...

Should indeed address the problems we are facing now. We need economic stimulus, and we are getting it.

But what of the medium- and long-term impacts of our decisions?

In the rush to deliver jobs today, we cannot create a legacy of mediocrity for tomorrow.

In the push to keep our businesses and organizations successful, we cannot rely on what worked yesterday, or within the markets of the past.

We must look to tomorrow – and to the markets and economies of the future.

For while the pain of this recession has been profound, it provides us with the opportunity to define a new and better tomorrow.

Physically and conceptually – our city is under reconstruction.

This economic downturn has provided us with the opportunity to rebuild.

So when outsiders say how sorry they feel for us...

Say thank you...

Thank you.

BUT!

Help them to understand that we are rolling up our sleeves – preparing for tomorrow.

Tell them that we are under reconstruction.

We are renovating to serve them better.

Sorry for the inconvenience, but we'll be back better than ever.

I do not pretend that any of this will be easy.

I am not naïve enough to believe that it is easy to change old ways, or break old habits.

But we have to try.

So to our business community –

Redefine your businesses with an eye on tomorrow. Ask yourselves: how can we apply our skills, abilities, and ideas to different markets? Different kinds of clients and customers?

To our not-for-profit and government sectors –

How are you modernizing? Training the workforce of tomorrow? And making the most of our hospital, educational, and other public assets to become case studies others look to for inspiration?

And to all of you...

You have my word that I will continue to do all I can to make Windsor a better place.

A place where people want to live. A place that is modern and attractive – that people are proud to call home and to show off to visitors from out of town.

And a place that is managed cost-effectively. Intelligently. And prudently.

Building a new Windsor is going to be a team effort. It will take all of us.

Standing together for what we believe in.

That is a Windsor that says “welcome” to job creators and employers.

One that leads the way in the post-recession economy. And that earns a reputation as a place where people work hard, work together, and understand what it takes to compete and win in the economy of tomorrow.

I thank you for your help.

I thank you for your support.

And I thank you for doing all you can, to help build that new Windsor.