

March 3, 2010

Excerpt from AGM Business Meeting Remarks

Richard Koroscil

It's an honour and a pleasure to stand in front of you tonight as the new chair of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

The sense of history is unmistakable: 165 years ago, Hamilton businessman Isaac Buchanan and a group of other merchants formed the business organization that is known today as the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

Isaac Buchanan was a legendary public figure of his day - he was a community leader, member of Parliament, a merchant in both Hamilton and Toronto, and he built the beautiful Auchmar estate on Hamilton mountain as his summer home.

Isaac was a man of vision - and a man of action.

My goal, as your new chair, is that a year from now the words "vision and action" will be used to describe the 2010/2011 Chamber year.

This past weekend your Chamber board – both the outgoing and incoming members – and CEO **John Dolbec**, had the first-annual Chamber Strategic Planning Retreat, with the view to define where

we want to be three years from now and how we're going to get there.

Here's what we accomplished:

1. We identified the elements of a long-term vision for this Chamber. The vision statement's exact wording is being crafted now, but I can tell you it will be about the strength and presence of the Chamber, its ability to attract members and participants, and reputation as a sought-after partner.
2. From there we tightened the focus on our strategic directions to advocacy, and engaging the business community. We developed a list of desired outcomes and action items for each strategic direction.
3. A few words about each strategic direction: Advocacy is about our influence and leadership in issues that matter to the business community – and by extension, to Hamilton at large. It's not just about being a voice, but being one that is listened to. We will be at the tables that matter, and invite others to our table.
4. So let me share a few of the things on our advocacy "to do list" this year. Whether it's pushing for full funding for Light Rapid Transit or bringing our influence to the establishment of a Transit Commission and an arms-length Economic

Development Commission, our voice will be heard. And you'll see us taking an active role in this fall's municipal election.

5. I'd like to recognize the following board members who will champion our advocacy action plan: **Louise Dompierre, Sharon White, Moira Wallace, Neil Dring**, and of course support from Chamber staff. I will also be very involved in these action items.
6. Strategic direction number two: Engaging the business community. This includes but isn't limited to our membership. Here, our action items include boosting our revenue and recruitment by reshaping Chamber events - adding new and different experiences. We're going to invite larger companies in town to share their expertise with the Chamber in very specific ways, which in turn, will allow us to do more for you, and for the community.
7. We're also going to take a closer look at member retention, and part of that involves getting a better understanding of why people leave – or stay. And we'll improve our member and media communications.
8. Our board champions for this strategic direction are **Monique Biancucci, Demetrius Tsafardis, Sue Davidson, Moira Wallace, Neil Dring** and **Andrew Furgal**, again supported by Chamber staff.

A word about the champions: they are not necessarily the “doers”, they are the facilitators. None of these action items is going to be accomplished single-handedly. So my message here is: we’re looking for you. We have up to 2,000 individual members that we’d like to get engaged.

This is truly going to be a team effort!

At the same time, I ask you to hold us, as your board, accountable. Our theme for this year is: *Getting things done*. At the end of the year we’ll report back on what has been done and you can tell us if your Chamber has lived up to that motto.

Next steps: We will shape the elements of the vision into a statement and refine the action plan. And we’ll share both with members so that you can get a clear picture of how we’re working for you in the months ahead.

Thank you! I hope you will all stay for the reception to follow.