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EMAIL MEMORANDUM

To: Ontario Chamber of Commerce

From: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

Re: Cambridge Memorial Hospital – Infrastructure Funding

We bring to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce an issue of importance, we believe for the entire Province.

By way of background, on September 29th, 2005, the Conference Board of Canada announced the Kitchener (Region of Waterloo) area is one of the fastest growing economic regions in the Country. We all understand and note that this Region is a significant contributor to the overall well-being of the Province and Country.

The Cambridge Chamber of Commerce as well as the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, has identified health care as a key economic driver. The Prosperity Council of Waterloo Region, led by the two Chamber's, has it as a principal priority in driving and fostering our "Good To Great" agenda. An agenda that focuses on key triggers that positively impact economic growth and prosperity. Quality health care is a significant factor in attracting and keeping the brightest and best people and businesses, not just in our Region, but in Canada.

In 1998 the Provincial Government legislated the findings of the Health Services Restructuring Commission (HSRC), which pointed to two important factors on primary health services in the Region of Waterloo. The first addressed the area infrastructure supporting the delivery of health services. In short the HSRC found infrastructure to be dramatically behind growth and as such recommended an immediate well coordinated investment into the three hospitals throughout the Region. Secondly, it also pointed to cooperative health care in the Region, with the ability for area hospitals to as well as provide essential acute care, should have focused programs and services and act as Regional facilities for cancer, mental health, etc. Again, the recommendations of the HSRC were mandatory.

In 2003, then Minister of Health, Tony Clement presented a cheque, and officially announced the 80 million dollar addition for Cambridge Memorial Hospital would be "funded". This project was predicated on the HSRC mandate and the Minister of Health and Long Term Care's announcement, a comprehensive community fundraising campaign that raised 23 million dollars of philanthropic support for the project, enjoyed enormous success. The communities and residents in the Waterloo Region acknowledged the need, and importance of primary care.

Today, while Minister George Smitherman is authorizing millions of infrastructure funding dollars to hospitals in his riding, he is “shelving” the Cambridge Memorial Hospital expansion. This now tabled expansion was a critical project to provide the essential primary care services and basic fundamental needs required by the 500,000 residents in the Region of Waterloo.

Given that this areas prosperity is good for all of Ontario and Canada, we believe support from the Ontario Chamber is appropriate and imperative. The Region of Waterloo, your two Chamber’s representing the grass roots of this area, are working very hard collaboratively to create even more prosperity, and foster new and innovative companies to locate here and contribute to our collective economy.

We believe that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in its role as an advocate for business in Ontario, should engage the Premier and his Government, thereby encouraging the fulfillment of the Province’s own commitment to health care, to the legislation and to the people of Ontario, and in doing so, restore all the infrastructure funding recommended by the 1998 HSRC review. We believe that the recommendations of the HSRC, and subsequent legislation were key recommendations to enhance and improve the delivery of health services in the Province of Ontario, and should not be subject to political maneuvering. It is incumbent upon our elected officials to heed the knowledge of experts. While we understand budget restraints, we also understand that infrastructure projects not recommended by the HSRC have received funding allocations ahead of HSRC recommendations.

In light of this important economic development issue across the Province, we would appreciate your support and involvement in reversing this devastating decision by the current Government of Ontario.

Greg Durocher
General Manager
Cambridge Chamber of Commerce