

Campaign for Better Service Delivery: Is there a Better Way?
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

November 2006

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce's position on municipal reform is as follows:

Principles:

1. We believe the discussion on municipal reform begins with better service delivery for its citizens.
2. We believe that the current municipal governance structure is a hindrance to the creation of jobs and economic opportunity in Waterloo Region.
3. We believe that there must be a more concerted effort to address the hindrances to better service delivery. We encourage discussions in this regard.
4. We recognize that other structures of municipal government reform should be explored concurrently in the context of better service delivery for our Region's citizens. We confirm our support for the efficiencies that can be found in single-tier government and recognize the imperative of retaining community identity, but also acknowledge that productive discussion does not begin with statements on a preferred government structure. **The focus for immediate discussion is better service delivery for the Region's citizens.**
5. We acknowledge that the ability of local politicians to bring about meaningful reform is not without its challenges. We encourage "Made in Waterloo Region" solutions for better service delivery. We do not call upon the services of a provincial facilitator at this time.
6. As with our Prosperity Council partners, we expect diplomacy from our elected officials. Positive dialogue from all politicians on municipal reform is the expected standard, and includes an active inquiry on new ways of delivering services. Positive communication will be an asset to the outside perception of the Region (i.e. to potential investors and those looking to make Waterloo Region their home).
7. We encourage members of the business community and community-at-large to become more active on the issue of municipal reform for the purpose of better service delivery.

8. We extend our offer to assist our elected leaders in bringing about significant efficiencies and improvements to service delivery in Waterloo Region. If we can provide forums for discussions, we are happy to do so.

Recommendations

Our members have recommended that agenda items requiring detailed review and discussion include but are not restricted to the following:

ISSUE A - Expediting the servicing of East Side employment lands

The Proposed East Side Community Structure Plan and Highway 401/97 Industrial Area Expansion are important to the citizens of Waterloo Region because they impact opportunities for investment and jobs.

Recommendation

1) The East Side Community Structure Plan and 401/97 Industrial Area Expansion proceed as expeditiously as possible so that East Side employment lands can be serviced.

ISSUE B - Coordination of Water Distribution Services

Coordinating water distribution services between the local and regional levels of government is an issue of efficiency and public safety.

Recommendation

2) Based on the recommendations of numerous studies, we propose that all water distribution responsibilities be uploaded to the regional level of government. As a first step, we encourage the City of Waterloo to approach the Region of Waterloo to accept responsibility for water distribution services.

ISSUE C - Coordination Procedures for Planning Approvals

Multi-jurisdictional approvals create confusion for stakeholders. Overlapping jurisdictions cause delays in the planning process, resulting in significant costs.

Recommendation

3) We propose the creation of a Task Force, composed of government and private sector representatives, to streamline the planning process. The Task Force will operate for a fixed period of time and submit a report to the Region and local municipalities.

ISSUE D - Harmonized engineering standards among municipalities

Variances in engineering standards cause confusion for all stakeholders. Uniformity is required for consistency and adaptability.

Recommendation

4) The current system results in unnecessary costs for business and is not conducive to investment and job creation. A suggested course of action is for the Region and local municipalities to undertake a study to determine the efficiency gains of harmonizing engineering standards.

ISSUE E - Stormwater Management Utilities

The Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo are discussing a separate utility to manage stormwater.

Recommendation

5) We propose that further consultations commence on an agreement for common stormwater management standards between the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo. We also recommend a process be initiated by the two cities that coordinates approvals among the local municipalities, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, and, where appropriate, the Grand River Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Environment.

6) Until common standards and efficiencies across departments are demonstrated, the most effective solution is the funding of stormwater management through existing municipal budgets.

ISSUE F - Efficiency of Three Hydro Utilities

Are there efficiencies to be found for hydro similar to those identified by Atria, the new fibre optic network utility?

Recommendation

7) We propose that the City of Kitchener, the City of Waterloo, and the Townships of Wellesley, Woolwich and Wilmot initiate a cost-benefit analysis to determine if the consolidation of hydro services is feasible and efficient, and to determine if the aforementioned municipalities should maintain ownership positions.

ISSUE G - Separate Library Projects in Kitchener and Waterloo

Is the current plan for separate library projects in Kitchener and Waterloo an effective decision in terms of cost and service delivery for residents in both communities?

Recommendation

8) Before any decisions to construct separate new libraries in Kitchener and Waterloo occur, there should be discussions/consultations on merging library services in these two cities so citizens can benefit from both public systems.

ISSUE H - The Delivery of Economic Development Services, including Tourism

It is not immediately apparent why separate economic development departments are required for the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo. The administrative costs for two separate organizations could be more effectively allocated to programs and resources for job creation and economic growth.

Would more investment be attracted if there was a stronger, well-equipped and staffed economic development function for the Region?

Recommendation

9) The Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo develop a plan to consolidate their economic development departments.

ISSUE I - Efficient Delivery of Fire Services

Would the Region's citizens benefit from similar efficiencies and service improvements found in the delivery of police services?

Recommendation

10) We propose that the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo formulate a plan to shift fire services to the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.