

December 4th, 2018

Since its inception in 1845, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce has served as the definitive voice of local business. Throughout its history, the Chamber has played an important role in advocating for policies that enhance the social and economic prosperity of our city.

Under this capacity, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is writing to you, on behalf of our members, to recommend courses of action for the Planning Committee.

Municipal red tape issues are a common concern in communities across the world. Every business, before being allowed to operate legally, is required to comply with an extensive set of government bylaws, regulations and licenses based on the nature of their business. Navigating this process creates a natural conflict with the desire for businesses to build, renovate and operate their enterprise in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

While this dialogue can often turn antagonistic in many communities, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the City of Hamilton have maintained a mutually-respectful working relationship to facilitate a constructive dialogue that addresses the concerns of our members and the wider business community.

In our engagement with businesses, several members spoke positively of the City's measurable improvements in response time and customer service within certain processes.

Despite these areas of relative improvement, a recent survey of our members identified the frustrations of dealing with red tape at City Hall as a major concern. We are now in the process of establishing a Task Force and will be canvassing our members to identify specific issues they face and to collaboratively work with the City to investigate improvements that could be implemented.

In the meantime, based on the input we have received to date, we would suggest the Planning Committee consider the following items:

1. Prioritize the expanded use of AMANDA and Digital Development Applications, in order to expedite the development process;
2. Request additional staff resources within the Planning and Economic Development division, in order to assist development approval reviews, to address increasing demand and improve response times;
3. Establish set timelines for approval reviews and staff comments, where response timelines do not already exist, to create certainty within the process for businesses looking to expand or develop.

We ask that you make these recommendations a priority during your term on council and the Planning Committee.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is pleased to play a leadership role in facilitating a constructive dialogue on critically important municipal issues. I welcome the chance to work with you directly on next steps and I thank you in advance for your contribution to our local governance.

With highest regards,



Keanin Loomis,
President and CEO
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce