

May 3, 2023

**Re: Item 8.2 – Better Homes Hamilton – Home Energy Retrofit Program**

Dear Members of the General Issues Committee,

As President & CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton's oldest institution at 177 years old, I have the privilege of speaking for our 1,000+ members that employ over 75,000 people in our community. The Chamber would like to take this opportunity to highlight its support for the proposed Better Homes Hamilton – Home Energy Retrofit (HERO) Program as an important economic and environmental municipal investment.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is committed to advancing a net zero carbon future because the economic and social prosperity of our community is directly linked to our ability to preserve and sustain our ecological diversity. Moreover, without significant contributions to and investments in decarbonizing our local economies, we risk losing major nodes of employment and opportunities to establish made-in-Ontario solutions to our collective decarbonization challenge. It is important to note that Hamilton's built infrastructure contributes to our overall community emissions profile, and the Chamber believes that the proposed HERO Program is an effective solution to help Hamiltonians take the necessary step towards reducing overall energy consumption and waste.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce recently hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Canada's Innovation Corridor Summit that gathered governmental, economic, environmental, and social leaders from across the GTHA to discuss the region's collective transition to net-zero. The message was clear: private enterprise is acting now to significantly reduce their operating emissions, but they cannot do it alone. All levels of government must facilitate smart investments and creative policymaking solutions to support our economy as it transitions. Supporting a HERO Program locally is an excellent example of this ingenuity, and moreover, effectively addresses the identified carbon footprint of our existing building inventory while supporting property and retrofit business owners alike on our shared goal of decarbonization.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is also a proud and founding member of the Bay Area Climate Change Council (BACCC) at Mohawk College's Centre for Climate Change Management, and was closely involved in supporting BACCC in its efforts to work collaboratively with the municipality to pursue funding for and to help shape the details of a local HERO Program.

According to BACCC's data, nearly 18 percent of our region's carbon pollution comes from heating, cooling, and powering our homes, apartments and commercial buildings.

The only pathway to a low-carbon future for Hamilton involves transitioning our existing buildings off fossil fuels and undertaking deep energy retrofits on a massive scale. At the same time, we ought to be building new structures to a low- or zero-carbon standard. Alongside our colleagues at BACCC, the Chamber supports the successful implementation of HERO programs locally.

While the HERO Program itself will help individual property owners at the incubation stage with a maximum \$20,000 per property at a 0% introductory interest rate, it importantly will serve to demonstrate the efficacy and local interest in these types of programs. Establishing a HERO program in Hamilton decarbonization hub would demonstrate a cross-sectoral commitment of community partners looking to advance Hamilton as a leader in economic transition and to provide the opportunity for those partners to execute on the program's intentions. This investment would not only work to retain a large portion of current building stock, but also support significant job creation in the energy retrofitting sector while simultaneously tackling our collective emissions reductions targets.

Through the Chamber's ongoing partnership with Hamilton Community Enterprises to advance its Energy Harvesting Project that seeks to expand Hamilton's existing district energy system and network, we are already seeing the interest and investments private sector partners are making to decarbonize their operations. These employers are seeking creative and viable decarbonization solutions to ensure the longevity of their operations and to improve their bottom line. There is a huge appetite for support and discovery in collaborating with others on best practices, and the Chamber believes that a local HERO Program would only serve to benefit our members and community in taking climate action, and open up Hamilton to bigger conversations about creative solutions to our energy consumption challenges, including further exploring district energy expansion viability.

In closing, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce strongly encourages members of the General Issues Committee to endorse this request and be a part helping Hamiltonians make the decision to invest in the greening of their residential properties. The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce looks forward to the opportunity this program will create for dozens of local contractors in the home energy audit and retrofit business. There are numerous instances of successful HERO programs in other jurisdictions, and we are eager to support the municipality, its business owners, and residents as we collectively pursue net-zero emissions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G.D.', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the second letter.

Greg Dunnett  
President & CEO