

REPORT FROM CITY HALL

By Ed Corrigan, Councillor Ward 7

Being a member of London City Council involves making decisions that can have a tremendous impact on the residents of Ward 7 and the City of London. Tough choices sometimes have to be made. The recent September 2, 2003 vote over Canada/Ontario Infrastructure Works Programs City of London priorities, is an excellent example. Cuts had to be made as the City did not have sufficient funds to complete all the approved infrastructure projects at this time. It came down to a choice between (A) the Hale/Trafalgar Overpass or (B) the Commissioners Road expansion between Wonderland and Wharncliffe and the Oxford Street expansion from Sanatorium to Wonderland. These last two projects directly affect Ward 7.

SAVING TAXPAYER DOLLARS

I voted to reduce our capital spending on these projects. The total budget saving produced by the new project combination was \$2.7 million. I also voted to access \$2.66 million of CN money to build the Hale and Trafalgar bridge.

CN had approached the City stating it needed more uninterrupted track to shunt or build trains that would not interfere with London traffic. They requested the closing of Hale Street or building a bridge over the tracks at Hale and Trafalgar. If this clear line of track was not available, CN could not assemble trains to meet the needs of our major industries, and might be forced to move their operation from our city. Expanding the CN shunting yards in London will keep CN jobs in London. This also helps our existing industries like Ford, Cami and General Dynamics. It also creates the potential to attract new industry, new jobs and increase industrial and commercial tax assessment which helps our local economy and lowers property taxes.

PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

But most important, my vote was to invest the federal and provincial infrastructure money in ways that would maximize economic development potential for residents of Ward 7 and all of London. The projects I supported met these economic development objectives. The extension of Commissioners and Oxford has little or no economic development potential. If you lose your job due to CN leaving, or a factory closing, the extra two or three minutes you will save in convenience time by the road expansion will not matter. Infrastructure projects like the expansion of Airport Road, the servicing of the two Industrial Parks and the Hale/Trafalgar Overpass have real economic development potential which benefits all Londoners.

If we are going to use federal and provincial infrastructure money and our own scarce municipal taxpayers' dollars, we had better invest it wisely to help our City prosper and to help reduce property taxes. We risked losing millions of dollars if we delayed our decision making. I voted to support economic development and to help generate new money for London and Ward 7. This was the smart way to vote. The majority of Council also saw it the same way.

The impact of losing the CN jobs would be bad enough but what if Ford, Cami or General Dynamics closed because we could not provide adequate rail service? It would be devastating to our local economy and hurt thousands of Londoners, including many in Ward 7. Just think of the

positive economic impact of getting another major industry to locate in London because we can provide the rail service that they need. If we want to create wealth, bring new jobs for residents of Ward 7, reduce City welfare rolls and create new property tax assessment when we invest federal and provincial infrastructure money, the choice is clear. Economic development has to be the focus of this investment in our City's infrastructure.

IMPROVING TRAFFIC

The Commissioners Road and Oxford Street expansions are still high on the City priority list. I have recommended to City Staff both of these road widenings for completion in the near future. They now may be eligible for some of the two billion new infrastructure money recently approved for release by the federal government. With this new federal money we may be able to complete both of these additional projects in the near future.

Favouring one ward over another will not help our City prosper. In fact it will hurt London. We must spend our financial resources in a way to obtain the maximum benefit. I stand by my vote as it is by far in the best interests of Ward 7 and the City to invest this money in ways that will enhance the economic development of London.

It has been a pleasure to assist hundreds of residents of Ward 7 with their concerns during the past three years. I would like to hear your views on these issues and other City related matters. You can reach me by email at ecorriga@city.london.on.ca, by phone at City Hall 661-1558 or at home 652-0973.