

**MUNICIPALITY OF CHATHAM-KENT**  
**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Aileen Murray, Ec.D.(F)  
Acting Director, Economic Development Services

**DATE:** September 15, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Membership in the South West Economic Alliance (SWEA)

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

1. Chatham-Kent become a member of SWEA for an initial annual fee of \$10,000.
2. That the initial fee be funded by the Reserve for Strategic Development.
3. Five voting members be appointed by Council to represent Chatham-Kent in SWEA affairs:
  - a) three members of Council
  - b) the Chief Administrative Officer
  - c) the Director of Economic Development.

**BACKGROUND:**

At its meeting of March 5, 2007, Council considered a report from Economic Development Services to support the concept of a South West Economic Alliance. The report and minutes of that meeting are attached as Appendix A.

The following excerpts from SWEA's website outline what the organization represents and what it is set to accomplish:

**The Region:**

The Southwest is a complex region bounded by the Great Lakes, the Greater Toronto Area to the East and the United States to the South. We are rich in resources and are the NAFTA corridor linking Canada's heartland and NAFTA markets in the United States and Mexico. Our region's current economic strengths include manufacturing, information

technology, food production and processing, health, education, tourism and culture.

**Mission:**

The mission of the Southwest Economic Assembly (SWEA) is to build Ontario's economy in the Southwest through strong regional leadership and cooperation.

Our supporters believe the region's businesses, communities, municipalities, and public sector institutions can achieve more by working together than they could ever achieve individually. By developing a highly motivated, highly organized economic area, our region will be in a better position to seize opportunities, attract private and public investment, improve public policy and strengthen the conditions that generate economic growth and prosperity.

**Objectives:**

SWEA's objectives reflect the work of the private and public sector leaders who attended the Assembly's founding meeting in May 2006. The Assembly will:

- a) Promote regional economic cooperation
- b) Celebrate regional economic successes
- c) Identify where economic cooperation will pay dividends
- d) Signal the benefits for improved cooperation among key sectors of the economy
- e) Outline the challenges to enhanced productivity
- f) Recognize the political challenges
- g) Produce a regional economic information base

**The Economy of the Southwest:**

While it is common to present economic statistics on a national, provincial or municipal basis, business activity usually occurs within regions that do not necessarily conform to these political boundaries. The following provides a brief summary of the Southwest's economy.

**Location:**

We are close to markets totalling more than 150 million people in Ontario and the northeastern United States, including major centres such as the Greater Toronto Area, the Buffalo region and the Greater Detroit area. Ottawa, Albany, Pittsburgh and Chicago are less than a day's drive away. Road, air, rail and waterways facilitate the easy movement of goods and people. Highways 401, 402 and 403 anchor a comprehensive network of provincial highways and county roads, linking communities to the NAFTA community. Regional airports in Waterloo, Windsor, and London and Sarnia provide scheduled service to cities in Canada, while Waterloo, Windsor and London also have services to the United States and the

Caribbean, with connecting flights to major centres around the globe. An extensive rail network and busy marine ports on Lake Erie, Lake Huron and Georgian Bay provide further access to the Southwest. Population The region's 2.3 million residents represent more than 20% of Ontario's population and almost 8% of Canada's population. Its population is larger than all of the Atlantic Provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and household incomes exceed the national average.

**Prominent Economic Sectors:**

Our diverse economy is led by manufacturing, trade and agriculture, while tourism and culture play a significant role. It is Canada's automotive region, producing more than 35% of all vehicles manufactured in the country. It is home to some of the best agricultural land in North America, more than 60% of which is dedicated to oilseed, grain or cattle farming. Research and development intensive organizations and businesses employ nearly 20% of all people working in large firms. Tourism and culture employ an additional 10%, with internationally renowned attractions such as the Stratford and Shaw festivals and popular casinos in Windsor and Niagara Falls.

**Healthcare and Education:**

The Southwest is particularly well served by healthcare and education infrastructure. World class hospitals, clinics and research institutions provide treatment and services to hundreds of thousands of patients per year. In addition, it is home to some of Canada's most respected post secondary institutions. Universities are Wilfrid Laurier, Windsor, Waterloo, Guelph and Western. Publicly funded colleges are Conestoga, Fanshawe, Lambton, Georgian, St. Clair, and Ridgeway.

**Energy Supply and Utility Services:**

From the wind farms along Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Georgian Bay to the Bruce Nuclear Plant, and to our natural gas, coal and hydro plants, the region's capacity to generate and transmit power is immense.

Furthermore, our communities share some of the most modern and extensive water systems in Canada.

**COMMENTS:**

Administration continues to support the necessity of a regional approach to global economic development issues. That does not diminish the need for a Chatham-Kent Economic Development Team since the goal of SWEA is to attract investment interest to the region and then have the region's municipalities compete for the location of that investment within the region.

As outlined in the letter from the Minister of Economic Development & Trade attached as Appendix C, Western Ontario needs an organized umbrella organization in order to

tap into the type of resources made available to Eastern Ontario. SWEA is being developed to be that umbrella organization.

SWEA recently received Provincial funding in the amount of \$300,000 to accomplish the following:

- a) development of an operating plan
- b) marketing and regional branding
- c) research to help plan for the future.

This funding gives SWEA the resources required to move forward.

Attached as Appendix B is correspondence received from SWEA's interim Board of Directors. It outlines in detail the interim governance model and corresponding fees.

SWEA is holding its third annual conference on September 24 and 25, 2008. In order to participate as a voting member at this conference, Chatham-Kent must have applied for membership and appointed five voting members. The membership application has been forwarded conditional on Council approval.

### **COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The recommendations in this report do not support, negatively or positively, a specific objective of the Community Strategic Plan. It is a neutral issue.

### **CONSULTATION:**

The Chief Administrative Officer and Acting Director of Economic Development were consulted on the development of this report and agree with the recommendations.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The initial annual fee determined by the interim Board of Directors is \$10,000. Ongoing funding and membership requirements will be reviewed by the new Board of Directors which will be put in place in the near future. Ongoing membership requirements, once determined, will be considered during the annual budget process.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

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Aileen Murray, Ec.D.(F)  
Acting Director,  
Economic Development Services

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C.D. Weldon  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments: Appendix A – March 5, 2007 RTC re Southwestern Ontario Economic  
Assembly  
Appendix B – South West Economic Alliance correspondence from the  
Board of Directors, July 25, 2008  
Appendix C – Letter from Ministry of Economic Development and Trade,  
Feb. 14, 2008

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The Mayor put the Motion.

**Motion Carried**

The General Manager, Health and Family Services asked that Council refer to Information Report Item #1a- Working to Improve the Health and Well-being of Chatham-Kent Residents. The report speaks to activities and programs currently being delivered by Ontario Works, Children's Services or, the Public Health Unit which specifically addresses some of the issues identified.

(b) Greg Borduas, Director, Economic Development Services, David Genick, Economic Development Officer, Town of Lakeshore, Mary Baruth, Manager, Culture Affairs, City of Windsor - Southwest Economic Assembly (SWEA)

(c)

**MUNICIPALITY OF CHATHAM-KENT**

**CORPORATE SERVICES**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**FROM:** G.J. (Greg) Borduas, Ec.D. (F)  
Director, Economic Development Services  
**DATE:** March 5, 2007  
**SUBJECT:** Southwestern Ontario Economic Assembly (SWEA)

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. The Southwestern Ontario Economic Assembly (SWEA) be supported by Council in its efforts to promote economic development on a regional basis.
2. The resolution of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC), supporting the SWEA initiative, be supported by Council.

**BACKGROUND**

In April 2006 a regional conference entitled Southwest Economic Assembly was held in Stratford, Ontario to discuss regional cooperation in economic development. As an outcome of the Stratford assembly, those in attendance agreed to move forward on the establishment of a regional economic development organization.

A planning meeting was held in Windsor on September 16, 2006 and approximately 80 of the Stratford attendees further explored the concept of a regional collaborative organization. The next SWEA forum is scheduled for Windsor on March 11, 2007 with approximately 350 delegates expected to attend. A planning committee has been struck to organize the event.

**COMMENTS**

A Steering Committee is co-chaired by Bruce Hein, President of Express Personnel in Samia and the Chatham-Kent Director of Economic Development. It was given the Chatham-Kent Council Minutes from its meeting held March 5, 2007

mandate to review an organizational structure for SWEA and report back to the May 11, 2007 Windsor Assembly.

The Steering Committee is proposing a geographic area comprising of 13 counties starting with Wellington/Waterloo in the east, Windsor-Essex to the south and Grey/Bruce in the north, comprising a total population of approximately 2.3 million residents.

The Steering Committee is proposing a base funding model of \$.050 per capita or a similar funding mechanism (by assessment growth) by region or \$1.2M per year for 4 years. The base funding would be used to leverage senior government and private sector funding ideally on a one-to-one basis.

Ministers Papatello (MEDT) and Bentley (MCTU) are keenly interested in this regional initiative.

The business plan for the SWEA organization would be three-fold:

- Business Development – Sector Research
- Marketing – International and Domestic
- Partnerships – Advocacy and Lobbying

It is proposed that the entity be similar to the following structures:

- Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance
- Eastern Ontario Economic Development Commission
- Halifax-Moncton Economic Partnership
- Atlantica
- Northern Ontario Economic Development Network

The Steering Committee is meeting with constituent groups over the January to March 2007 timeframe to gain feedback on the proposed model such as:

- Mayors/Wardens
- CAOs
- Private Sector
- Colleges and Universities
- Community Futures Development Corporations

At the February 9, 2007 meeting of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC) the wording of a resolution in support of SWEA was finalized and member municipalities committed to bringing the resolution to their Councils for consideration. A copy of the resolution is attached to this report.

#### **COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The recommendations in this report support the following objectives and strategic directions:

- B: Economy - We are a prosperous community.
  - B2: Make Chatham-Kent a business-friendly community and a desirable leisure destination
  - B3: Maintain and enhance new and existing infrastructure to support economic and smart growth opportunities
  - B4: Encourage the continuing growth of a diversified and sustainable economic base

### Expected Results

- Create new investment opportunities for Chatham-Kent through cooperative marketing and activities with other regional partners and senior levels of government.

### CONSULTATION

No additional consultation was required in the preparation of this report.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this time.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
G.J. (Greg) Borduas, Ec.D. (F)  
Director, Economic Development Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Wolting, B.Math, CA  
General Manager Corporate Services

Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Joe G. Pavelka, P. Eng.  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments 1: Resolution, Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC), February 9, 2007  
G:\RTC\2007 Reports\SWEA RTC March 5.doc

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### **WOWC SWEA Resolution**

February 9, 2007

Whereas: The Southwest Economic Assembly seeks to engage communities in the promotion and development of the region's economic potential, particularly with respect to trade, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, culture and the knowledge economy.

The Southwest region bounded by the Great Lakes, the Greater Toronto area to the East and the United States to the South is rich in resources and opportunity. We believe that by developing a highly motivated, organized economic area, this region is in a better position to seize opportunities, attract private and public investment, improve public policy and strengthen the conditions that generate economic growth and prosperity.

By working together we can achieve far more than what we can do individually. Business, communities, municipalities and public sector will cooperate as a region to promote opportunity, maximize areas of potential and market the region to the rest of the world. A unified voice for the region will also wield greater influence with the provincial and federal governments.

The Assembly will be a forum to promote, facilitate and celebrate economic success throughout the region and across key sectors of the economy. It will identify specific projects and initiatives where economic cooperation will pay dividends, market and promote the region globally and develop a regional economic information database.

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Chatham-Kent Council Minutes from its meeting held March 5, 2007.

Page 6 of 75

Therefore \_\_\_\_\_ fully supports the Southwest Economic Assembly and the following actions:

- 1) Focus on key sectors of the economy, Trade and Manufacturing, Agriculture and Agrifoods, Tourism and Culture, and the Knowledge Economy.
- 2) Develop a draft business plan, including governance, funding requirements, and funding to achieve the Mission, Vision and Objectives of the Assembly.
- 3) Establish an initial goal for a four-year funding commitment for economic development within Southwestern Ontario.
- 4) Reconvene community leaders for the Second Southwest Economic Assembly in Windsor, no later than May 31, 2007

Together, we will work to promote economic growth and prosperity in Southwestern Ontario.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Greg Borduas, Director, Economic Development Services, David Genick, Economic Development Officer, Town of Lakeshore, Mary Baruth, Manager, Culture Affairs, City of Windsor addressed Council and provided a PowerPoint presentation with regard to the Southwest Economic Assembly (SWEA). The Director, Economic Development Services advised that the Southwest Economic Assembly is a regional approach to building economic growth and prosperity in Southwestern Ontario through strong regional leadership and cooperation. He noted that this assembly brought together approximately 200 to 300 leaders from the private sector across Ontario. The outcome of this assembly was to provide action and create a mechanism to work collectively as a region and to approach economic development and wealth creation for the communities of Chatham-Kent. The Director, Economic Development Services reviewed the following:

- SWEA background
- Region and population
- Comments from MPP's
- What the Stratford Assembly advocate for Southwestern Ontario
- SWEA Goals
- Objectives
- Key Industry Sectors Within The Region, including:
  1. Culture and Tourism
  2. Trade and Manufacturing
  3. Knowledge Economy
  4. Agriculture and Agrifood
- Steering Committee priorities as identified at Windsor session
- Governance Model
- SWEA Structure
- SWEA Per Capita Funding Model
- SWEA Financial Forecast
- Engage Industry Stakeholders, Investors, & Champions
- Communication Strategy

- Regional Database Strategy
- What Can We Do If We Work Together Collectively?
- Asking Council to:
  - Endorse Our Resolution of Support
  - Work with the Steering Committee to Build Regional Support
  - Become a Champion for SWEA
  - Attend May 11 SWEA meeting in Windsor

The Director, Economic Development Services confirmed that Council is being asked to approve SWEA in principle. They are not seeking funding at this time.

Councillor Stirling moved, Councillor Robbins seconded:

**“That:**

- 1. The Southwestern Ontario Economic Assembly (SWEA) be supported by Council in its efforts to promote economic development on a regional basis.**
- 2. The resolution of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC), supporting the SWEA initiative, be supported by Council.”**

Councillor Stirling noted that he participated in both the Stratford Assembly and the meeting in Windsor. He noted that he did leave the meetings with concerns from those meetings.

Councillor Stirling felt that this is somewhat dominated by large urban centres such as London, Kitchener-Waterloo and to some extent Windsor. He questioned how the group could be sure that those smaller urban centres receive their fair share of any economic development opportunities that may be generated from a regional branding strategy.

Councillor Stirling noted that he felt that the Stratford session he attended was dominated by an academic perspective, while the Windsor session was dominated by the public sector perspective. Councillor Stirling felt that there was a noticeable lack of private sector involvement in both meetings however, it is clear in the presentation that the group wants the private sector to take the lead in developing and implementing a regional branding strategy for the southwest regions of Ontario. Councillor Stirling sought clarification as to what could be done to ensure that the right private sector groups are involved.

Councillor Weaver expressed support of the resolution. He reviewed what he perceived as the benefits of regional economic development. Councillor Weaver expressed the need to have regional perspective and encourage all those who are involved in this endeavour be supportive. It is good news and the right way to move to develop economic development in this area and in this municipality.

Councillor Herman sought clarification with respect to the regional aspect. She noted that Chatham-Kent is still trying to make it all work and questioned how Chatham-Kent would benefit from becoming more regional. The Director, Economic Development Services highlighted the benefits of this type of initiative.

Councillor Herman asked if we are duplicating efforts as Chatham-Kent is supposed to be using all these tools to sell Chatham-Kent. The Director, Economic Development advised that this gives us access to dollars and resources that Chatham-Kent does not have. He further noted that Chatham-Kent does not have to rely upon increased budgets to move on these types of initiatives. There are real opportunities to work collectively together.

Councillor Herman referred to the newly approved strategic directions and sought clarification as to how other regional communities would support Chatham-Kent's strategic directions.

Councillor Vercouteren sought clarification of what is requested of Council.

Councillor Vercouteren asked if any funding required would come from the economic development budget. The Director, Economic Development Services advised that the group would like to try to apportion a certain amount of money for each geographic area. It would be up to each area to identify amongst the partners in that region, where the contributions would come from. Some could be municipal, some private sector, some Community Futures Development. A particular funding model is not prescribed for each area.

Councillor Gilbert commented on southwestern Ontario being the only area in Canada that does not receive economic development funding from the federal government. She sought an update as to where the group is with organizing a meeting with federal representatives on this particular initiative. The Director, Economic Development advised that they have not had significant dialogue with both senior levels of government regarding specific senior level funding.

Councillor Parsons noted that this is another example of opportunity and partnership that Chatham-Kent can be involved with. He felt that all areas should be explored and the community should move in areas that have not been visited. This is an opportunity to join with other parts of the region to do something for southwestern Ontario.

Councillor Parsons asked for confirmation that other regional co-ops such as Eastern Ontario are receiving funding from the other levels of government that Southwestern Ontario is currently not receiving. The Director, Economic Development Services advised that there are certain monies that flow to these regional groups that do not flow locally. An example is the \$10 million dollar investment fund through the Eastern Ontario Community Futures Development Corporation. They have been advocating strongly on behalf of our region to receive funding also. The Province has noted that it prefers to fund a larger regional organization. The Province likes the concept of regionalization. He further noted that in the United States, many regional economic development initiatives are funded by the private sector.

The Mayor noted that there is concern that the larger centres will attract and benefit from the initiative. He explained funding based on assessment. The Mayor further noted that he understands that the senior levels of government are in favour of this.

The Mayor expressed his support of the resolution before Council.

The Mayor put the Motion.

**Motion Carried**

## **5. READING OF MINUTES**

- (a) Chatham-Kent Council Minutes of December 18, 2006
- (b) Chatham-Kent Council Minutes of January 15, 2007

Councillor Vercouteren moved, Councillor Robbins seconded:

**"That the Chatham-Kent Council Minutes of December 18, 2006 & January 15,**

**Chatham-Kent Council Minutes from its meeting held March 5, 2007**

Page 9 of 75



July 25, 2008

Mr. Randy Hope  
 Mayor, Municipality of Chatham-Kent  
 City Hall  
 315 King Street West  
 Chatham, Ontario  
 N7M 5K8

Mr. Dave Weldon  
 Acting CAO, Municipality of Chatham-Kent  
 City Hall  
 315 King Street West  
 Chatham, Ontario  
 N7M 5K8

Re: SWEA Membership – 2008 – 2009, Municipality of Chatham-Kent Zone 12

The interim Board of Directors of the Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA Inc) is pleased to present to your organizations an application for membership in SWEA. Also attached is an invoice for membership fees for 2008-2009.

### Membership Zones

The interim Board of Directors has identified membership zones determined by County and Region jurisdictions in 15 areas encompassing Southwestern Ontario. The region was recommended at the Stratford and Windsor Assembly sessions. The SWEA Board will review requests by other jurisdictions to join the SWEA region on a case by case basis. The population figures below include both County and separated Towns and Cities in each zone area.

Region	Population
Essex County – Zone 1	393,402
Lambton County – Zone 2	128,204
Middlesex County – Zone 3	422,333
Elgin County – Zone 4	85,351
Oxford County – Zone 5	102,756
Perth County – Zone 6	74,344
Huron County – Zone 7	59,325
Bruce County – Zone 8	65,349
Grey County – Zone 9	92,411
Wellington County – Zone 10	200,425
Brant County – Zone 11	125,099
Municipality of Chatham-Kent – Zone 12	108,589
Region of Waterloo – Zone 13	478,121
Haldimand County – Zone 14	45,212
Norfolk County – Zone 15	62,563
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,443,484</b>



### **Membership Fee Structure for 2008**

The interim Board of Directors has determined that for the initial development of the SWEA organization that a membership fee based on population base of 100,000 persons or greater. For those zones with a population of less than 100,000 persons the fee will be \$5,000 and for those zones above 100,000 persons the initial membership fee will be \$10,000. The Board of Directors will determine a contribution funding strategy to support SWEA in 2009 and beyond in the near future. An invoice has been attached to this letter for membership fees. Each zone is encouraged to have their membership fee contributed to by local private and public sector partners to strengthen the community reach of the SWEA organization.

<b>Region</b>	<b>2008 Membership Fee</b>
<b>Essex County – Zone 1</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Lambton County – Zone 2</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Middlesex County – Zone 3</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Elgin County – Zone 4</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Oxford County – Zone 5</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Perth County – Zone 6</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Huron County – Zone 7</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Bruce County – Zone 8</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Grey County – Zone 9</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Wellington County – Zone 10</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Brant County – Zone 11</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Municipality of Chatham-Kent – Zone 12</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Region of Waterloo – Zone 13</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Haldimand County – Zone 14</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Norfolk County – Zone 15</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>2008 Total Membership Fees</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>

### **Voting Members of SWEA**

The interim Board of Directors has determined that each County or Region zone shall be entitled to five (5) voting members from each SWEA member zone. Each zone is encouraged to have a cross section of public and private voting members. Voting members could be comprised of representatives from key sectors such as Agricultural, Knowledge, Tourism, Culture, Education, Manufacturing etc. A contribution strategy towards the SWEA membership fee from the local zone partners could comprise the five (5) voting members from the zone.



south west  
economic alliance

www.swea.ca

### **SWEA Annual General Meeting 2008**

The interim Board of Directors has determined the 2008 SWEA Annual General Meeting will be convened at the SWEA Annual Conference at the Holiday Inn in Sarnia on Thursday, September 25, 2008 at 9:00 am.

### **Deadline for Membership for 2008-09**

The interim Board of Directors has determined that the deadline for membership applications for voting purposes at the SWEA Annual General Meeting in Sarnia on September 25, 2008 will be Thursday, September 18, 2008 by 5:00 pm local time. Applications can be sent to Bruce Hein, SWEA Secretary/Treasurer, c/o Express Personnel, 347 Christina Street N, Sarnia, Ontario N7T 5V6.

### **SWEA Board of Directors Nomination Committee**

The interim Board of Directors will convene a Nomination Committee to receive nominees for the SWEA Board of Directors. The Nomination Committee will review the nominees received and present a slate of Directors for consideration at the SWEA Annual Meeting to be convened at the SWEA Annual Conference, Holiday Inn Sarnia, September 25, 2008.

### **2008 SWEA Annual Conference – Sarnia September 24 and 25, 2008**

An exciting 2008 SWEA Annual Conference is being planned at the Sarnia Holiday Inn on September 24 and 25, 2008. The SWEA Annual Conference will commence with an Opening Reception on the evening of Wednesday, September 24, 2008 and will continue all day of Thursday, September 25, 2008.

Participants are encouraged to book their accommodations at the Sarnia Holiday Inn as soon as possible. Participants can register for the 2008 Sarnia SWEA Annual Conference on line at [www.swea.ca](http://www.swea.ca) where further information can be obtained on the agenda, events and speakers for the conference.

Thank you for your very valuable ongoing support of SWEA and should you have any questions, please contact members of the interim SWEA Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Greg Borduas  
Interim President

Dan Gierusak  
Interim Vice  
President

Bruce Hein  
Interim Secretary  
/Treasurer

Richard Fitoussi  
Interim Director

**Minister of  
Economic Development  
and Trade**

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*C.C. RUH  
Linda Dean*

FEB 14 2008

RECEIVED  
FEB 21 2008  
WARDEN

Mr. Jim Burns  
Chair and Warden  
Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC)  
County of Lambton  
Administration Building  
Box 3000  
789 Broadway Street  
Wyoming ON N0N 1T0

Dear Warden Burns:

Thank you for your letter regarding funding given to Eastern Ontario for economic development versus the funding provided to Western Ontario.

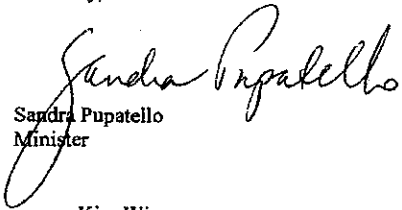
The Ontario government is sensitive to and recognizes the unique economy of each of the province's regions. As you will be aware, over the past five years there has been growing collaboration between the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, Ontario East Economic Development Corporation and the Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) in the Eastern region. The result of these efforts was the development of the Eastern Ontario Opportunities Action Plan, which prioritized a series of initiatives and actions to address economic challenges.

Collectively this work contributed to this government's decision to establish an Eastern Ontario Investment Attraction Fund. I recognize that Western Ontario faces unique economic development challenges, and would encourage the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus to consider working collaboratively with the Southwest Economic Assembly and the Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance as well as the western CFDCs to develop an economic development strategy for the region.

.../2

I have asked Kim Wingrove, Director, Communities in Transition, to follow up with you to discuss this approach further and how the province could partner with you on developing such a strategy.

Sincerely,



Sandra Pupatello  
Minister

c: Kim Wingrove  
Director, Communities in Transition

Brian Cardy  
Director, Rural Community Development  
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Michelline Riopelle  
Director, Southwest Municipal Services Office  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing