

**POSITION STATEMENT**  
**of**  
**Hamiltonians for Progressive Development**

**For Release August 23, 2005 at City Hall Media Conference**

**Bring the Vision Home! Stop Desperation Planning**

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development (HPD) is formally launched today by members of its executive, Michael Desnoyers and Jack Santa-Barbara.

Michael Desnoyers is founder, president and CEO of Etratech, a successful high tech business. Jack Santa-Barbara is a retired business executive, and former Co-Chair of Action 2020.

The Mission of Hamiltonians for Progressive Development is to articulate and support the implementation of a progressive approach to city planning and development. We believe Hamilton will prosper if and only if we follow the principles underlying Vision 2020.

Cities around the world which are prospering are ones which are learning to integrate economic, environmental and social goals in each and every major undertaking. These are the principles underlying Vision 2020. These ideas were developed in Hamilton over a decade ago, but have been more actively implemented elsewhere. We believe it is time to bring the Vision home.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development believes that Hamilton is falling behind because our municipal development processes are outdated and flawed. City Council does not appear to be following agreed rules and principles in the development plans it approves. We do not seem to be implementing Vision 2020 as it was originally conceived. Our municipal government appears to pursue economic development which neglects social and environmental goals that are equally important for our quality of life. Hamiltonians deserve better.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development regard economic issues as vitally important to our community. But all economic development is not

the same. We believe it takes more than traditional approaches to economic development to generate community prosperity. The community embraced this principle and expressed it in Vision 2020 over a decade ago. This vision remains alive in the minds and hearts of many Hamiltonians despite what we see as a lack of leadership from the City in achieving it.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development believes that economic prosperity is possible only when social and environmental objectives are actually implemented with each and every major development decision. This simple principle is at the heart of Vision 2020. We believe the current approach has hampered rather than benefited the economic prosperity of Hamilton.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development believes in a second central principle of Vision 2020 – true community prosperity can only occur with broad community engagement in major municipal decisions. This approach requires the creative input and participation of all sectors of our community, not just those with special interests and influence. None of us alone have the answers. Together we can bring prosperity to Hamilton.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development seek to expand and encourage community engagement in major decisions. We believe it is essential to generate confidence throughout the community that broadly held community views will be respected in major decisions. We seek to foster genuine community participation to overcome the distrust and alienation generated amongst many people who are deeply committed to Hamilton.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development seeks to revive these two basic principles of the vision – considering prosperity in the broadest possible terms, and increasing community engagement. We seek to encourage and support City Council in actually implementing the vision. It has been over a decade since the vision was developed, but there is little evidence of real progress. Much more can and should be done.

The Hamiltonians for Progressive Development approach requires a new way of thinking about how to bring creativity into municipal planning so that all three determinants of sustainable prosperity– economic, social and environmental – are allowed to flourish when we implement a new plan. This approach must be at the core of all our thinking for a vibrant and prosperous community.

The caring and creative forces which are abundant in our community need to be brought to bear in planning a prosperous future. Hamiltonians for Progressive Development believes that considerably more involvement

and engagement with the broader community is essential to bring the vision home to Hamilton.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development will therefore work to broaden community engagement in the planning process, and to encourage municipal decisions which are transparent, respectful of differing views, and open to innovative ideas.

We invite all Hamiltonians who share our concerns to bring their energies and ideas to work together and move our community in a positive direction. Contact us at [progressivedevelopment@gmail.com](mailto:progressivedevelopment@gmail.com) .

We will be organizing a number of events over the coming months to share ideas about how planning activities can be broadened and make a real contribution to quality of life for all Hamiltonians.

In addition to bringing forward some progressive development ideas, we feel it is also important to clearly identify what we believe is not working and what needs changing.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development intends to actively oppose major municipal decisions that ignore the vision, that do not enhance quality of life in Hamilton, or that only serve narrow interests.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development feel a new approach to planning and development is essential for our city's well being. Key aspects of our approach are summarized in the following table.

## Hamiltonians for Progressive Development: Approaches to a Prosperous Community

What We Would Like to See:	What We Do Not Want to See:
Ensuring agreed rules, principles and guidelines are followed, and respected in spirit as well as in law, and in implementation as well as in publicity	Ignoring agreed rules, principles and guidelines in actual implementation (e.g. Vision 2020, GRIDS Principles, Provincial Policy Statement, etc)
Enhance community input from all sectors and ensure real dialogue and respectful debate	Restrict community input and avoid actual dialogue and exchange
Open, transparent planning and decision making; broadly circulating information for consideration prior to decisions	Secrecy, closed- door planning, and withholding of information and rushed debate and decisions
Ensure that all major decisions enhance economic, environmental and social goals which benefit the entire community	Focus on economic development that benefits narrow interests, and without adequately considering social and environmental costs and implications
Seek broad engagement, collaboration and dialogue	Give precedence to narrow interests and ignore others
Explore a range of desirable alternatives and broadly circulate complete and clear information prior to decision to act	Decide first, then do studies and plan

## **An Open Letter to the Mayor, Council and the Community**

**August 23, 2005**

Fellow Hamiltonians

We believe one of the most important planning issues now facing our entire community is how we collectively address the City's approach to development around the airport. On June 29<sup>th</sup> of this year, the City of Hamilton approved the expansion of the urban boundary by some 1,215 hectares (3100 acres) around the airport, for the stated purpose of developing an aerotropolis.

We view this as one of the most significant decisions Council has ever made, and one which will shape the future of Hamilton, for better or worse, for decades to come.

On July 22, 2005 Michael and Carol Desnoyers filed an OMB appeal on behalf of Hamiltonians for Progressive Development, to challenge what many regard as regressive planning by the City.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development believes this decision by the City is a prime example of poor planning. We believe both the process used by the City to develop this plan, and the plan itself, are seriously flawed.

Our concerns are ones we believe are shared by many Hamiltonians:

1. City Council appears to have ignored its own rules and principles in approving the expansion of the urban boundary around the airport. The basic principles of Vision 2020, which the City supports, do not appear to have been used in this decision. Neither do the specific principles spelled out in the City's own long term planning documents appear to be satisfied by this decision. There are other examples beyond the airport issue where rules and principles the City says they follow, appear to have been violated.
2. City Council seems to have ignored thoughtful citizen input to its plans for the aerotropolis. The City put forth its motion to make a large expansion of the urban boundary and gave citizens only a few days notice of their intent. Because of concerns expressed by citizens at the required public meeting, the City eventually allowed a second public meeting, at which additional concerns were expressed by the community. Nonetheless, City Council approved

the expansion without follow up or meaningful community dialogue about the important issues raised.

3. The City has only minimally engaged citizens in its long term planning process, of which the aerotropolis is only a part. Shortly after amalgamation, the City undertook a long term planning process to set a direction for the future of our new city. Under the previous City administration a large and diverse community Task Force was established to provide input to the planning process. This Task Force recommended, amongst other items, significant public information and engagement activities over the several years of the planning effort. These recommendations do not appear to have been followed, and the public has been largely excluded from a newer, smaller, and less representative group now advising the mayor.
4. The economic viability of the airport is questionable given the current and expected increases in fuel costs. The airline industry has been unstable ever since deregulation occurred more than 20 years ago. This has been evident locally with the number of airlines that have moved in to Hamilton airport, and then left. In addition, of all transportation modes, air traffic is likely most vulnerable to increased fuel prices. If prices continue to climb, as expected, there will be a significant impact on the entire airline industry. Therefore, further investments could be high risk. There are less speculative and more attractive development options we believe should be considered.
5. The loss of agricultural lands which will be needed to feed a growing population is detrimental to our priority needs. Once agricultural lands are converted to commercial or industrial use it is difficult to bring them back into agricultural use. Food security is an issue of growing concern globally, and the Province of Ontario has firmly committed to preserving agricultural lands. We need to secure small family farms. Using agricultural land for commercial and industrial development should be the absolute last resort, especially when there are abundant brownfield and alternative lands available for such development.
6. The sprawl that will occur if the aerotropolis plan continues. The aerotropolis itself is a kind of sprawl, focusing as it does on single use land development. In addition, once the urban boundary is expanded, the City is legally obligated to service that land regardless of how it is rezoned. If, for whatever reason, the airport commercial zone is not successful, the acreage will be within the

urban boundary and the City will need to rezone it for best use. This could open the door to additional residential sprawl.

7. The amount of local and global pollution caused by air travel. Air transport may well be the most environmentally harmful mode of transportation that exists. As much as 25% of a plane's fuel may be used in take off, concentrating pollutants to the local environment. In addition, the emission of greenhouse gases, especially at high altitudes, contributes to climate change, a serious global problem that Canada is committed to reducing. These quality of life issues will be further compromised by additional night flights, significantly increasing noise pollution. Hamilton is one of the few airports in North America that is allowed to operate on a 24/7 basis.
8. City resources and funds allocated to this project cannot be used for more progressive types of development. The City does not appear to have a budget for this project; a sound financial plan appears to be lacking. But there is potential for considerable tax dollars being spent, either to support the existing plan, or to deal with the failure of the plan (see item 6 above). Even if the plan has some success, it will likely take development funds and energies away from other priorities such as the downtown areas and the harbour, further impoverishing these areas and inhibiting opportunities to increase their prosperity.
9. Employment projections are unrealistic. As many as 52,000 jobs have been projected for this project by City planners. However, we feel these numbers are based on highly questionable assumptions and are grossly unrealistic. More realistic assumptions are needed to fairly compare these employment opportunities with those available from other options.

The Province of Ontario appears to agree with many of the concerns outlined above. In an unusual move, the Province of Ontario has filed its own OMB appeal against the City of Hamilton regarding its approach to airport development. The Province's appeal cites violations of the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and has asked the City to first complete its long term planning process before taking action on lands surrounding the airport.

Hamiltonians for Progressive Development agrees with the Province's position as currently set out in its OMB appeal. We wish to see a planning process which respects the principles of Vision 2020, and those laid out in the City's own planning documents, and which follow Provincial law.

It is time for a change. It is time to take our common aspirations for a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community seriously. This requires we change how we plan and make decisions that affect our prosperity.

### **Our Challenge to the City of Hamilton**

*Hamiltonians for Progressive Development calls upon the City of Hamilton to reverse its decision to expand the urban boundary, and to establish a genuine community engagement process to plan for the city's long term prosperity.*

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Michael Desnoyers  
Chairman  
Hamiltonians for Progressive Development

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Jack Santa-Barbara  
Co-chair