

# Economic engine back on track, says Saunderson

By BRAD REAUME  
The Champion

Ontario has the highest rate of economic growth of place in the G7 group of industrialized nations, according to the minister of economic development, trade and tourism.

William Saunderson spoke last week at a Milton Chamber of Commerce breakfast and outlined his government's approach to international trade. He screened a video which is being shown to business leaders around the world who might invest in Ontario.

"We are delivering on what we said we could do," said Mr. Saunderson. "We cut the employee health tax and that is starting to show results for small business. The housing market has had the best back-to-back performance in years.

Confidence is growing."

Mr. Saunderson said the Ontario government closed 17 trade offices around the world, which cost \$30 million annually to operate. The focus is now smaller, including using Ontario business people who travel the world as ambassadors to international firms.

The province is mounting an advertising campaign to raise its business profile, which will appear in influential business trade publications such as Forbes Magazine and Fortune, and on the Cable News Network (CNN), which is broadcast around the world.

"There have been a number of announcements for new plants in Ontario including Listowel, Shelburne, Elora and Mississauga," noted Mr. Saunderson, who represents the riding of Eglinton. "The success builds upon itself. The

economy is picking up. We are going to see a much better time in Ontario. Being a pro-business government helps."

Mr. Saunderson also said the Ontario aerospace industry, currently the sixth largest of any

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William Saunderson

jurisdiction in the world, would likely pass Germany and Japan to become the fourth biggest in the next few years.

He added that the days of major tax incentives to entice business are likely ended because many companies found that while they received a tax holiday, infrastructure upon which they were

relying was crumbling.

Mr. Saunderson said the federal government's increase of unemployment insurance premiums (now called employment insurance) is largely negating Ontario's reduction in the employer health tax. He said the federal government is trying to balance the budget using the wrong methods.

Responding to a question from the floor, Mr. Saunderson said provincial efforts at marketing Ont. should dovetail with efforts of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) mayors' committee.

However, "ultimately one economic development body is more effective," he said. "We will attempt to work together. It stops bidding wars between municipalities. Economic growth is good for everyone. Remember, when the tide comes in all boats rise up."

## Tentative step toward a big change

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Town council has agreed to let Mayor Gord Krantz peek past Milton's border and see how Wellington County is coping with amalgamation proposals.

The move last week was the first tentative step toward reform by Milton council. Mayor Krantz has publicly stated he could support changes to local wards, Milton's municipal and Halton Region's boundaries.

"I've been hesitant to do anything without the support of council," Mayor Krantz said. "Then there is the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) services board. Something is going to evolve there, especially in water services, which so much affect this municipality."

The mayor also said waste management is high on the agenda of the Greater Toronto Services Board (GTSB), which was recently created to deal with issues common to all municipalities in the GTA.

Raising the specter of other GTA municipalities eyeing use of Milton's garbage dump, Mr. Krantz warned, "I don't have to remind council that we have one of the few approved landfill sites in the province of Ontario. And don't think that they (the GTSB) don't know it too."

Milton's chief administrative officer, David Hipgrave, said the GTSB is supposed to provide the provincial government with a position on GTSB responsibilities by March 14. Mr. Hipgrave said it is unknown if they favour just a coordinating body or if they will go for more control of services. Currently they are expected to be involved in water, waste management and transit at the very least.

"These are significant changes and they are coming," said Mr. Hipgrave. Mr. Hipgrave told council that provisions which give counties and municipalities outside the GTA the power to amalgamate have been extended to municipalities inside the GTA until March 31.

A majority of regional councillors and municipalities in the region, representing a majority of citizens, are required to effect changes.

"It didn't work that way in Toronto," said Councillor Barry Lee. "I want to know the rules of the game."

It was Councillor Gerry Brooks who first suggested an exploration of the process in Wellington County. He said Wellington had made significant progress but Mr. Lee disagreed, saying media reports suggest the process is bogged down.

"They might not make any progress overnight for sure but we should be in contact, if only to be kept abreast," said Mr. Brooks.

Mr. Brooks' motion to allow the mayor to make some inquiries passed without debate.

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