

## Budget Opportunities Missed

Back to Back Federal and Provincial Budgets and little in it for Durham Region. Although the provincial budget removed a significant barrier to economic development with the announcement of the reduction in the Business Education Tax Rates (BET) by 2014. This will have little impact on Durham Region as the Region has been working with the province and business over the past several years on bringing down the BET rate.

“The reduction in BET Rates was a major win for the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.” for advocating for a reduction in the BET was part of comprehensive tax policy reform recommended by the OCC.

Both the Federal and Provincial Budgets were high on transportation. Durham Region was shut out with the exception of the re-announcement of the \$55 Million for the widening of Highway 7 and the \$5 million shared costs for a Regional Transit study. Two key issues of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce in its pre-budget submissions was the completion of Highway 407 to 35/115 to ease gridlock and funding for Nurse practitioners to assist in patient care with the Doctor shortage in Durham Region.

At a meeting last fall with Minister Canfield Minister of Transportation the Chamber asked how much money was in the provincial budget for Highway 407 and Minister Cansfield said she would find out and respond to our question. At a pre-budget session with Minister Sorbara, Minister of Finance for Ontario the Chamber once again stressed the importance of the completion of Highway 407 across Durham.

In its submission the Chamber asked that money be set aside in the budget for the 407. The submission stated that the continuing delays on the Highway 407 Extension across Durham Region from Brock Road in Pickering to Clarington is having and will continue to have a major economic impact on Durham Region.

During the meeting Minister Sorbara suggested that Durham would be pleased to see what was in the budget for the 407.

At the Federal Governments recent FLOW announcement at Downsview the government stated in its “FLOW – Canada on the Move” flyer “FLOW takes the 407 deep into Durham, all the way to Highway 35/115, links it to the 401 .... This extension is expected to be complete by 2013”.

In the provincial budget the selected highlights state “new commitments to Greater Toronto Area (GTA) transit and transportation priorities including ..... Durham’s Regional Transit, Highway 7, Highway 404 and the 407 East extension” but no dollar amount was committed to the 407. \$55 million dollars was in the budget for the re-announcement of the re-construction of Highway 7 and \$5 million for a Transit study.

The Environmental Assessment is to be complete by December 2008 and once complete the next stage is the design build leading to construction. If the province and the Feds were serious about the 407 being completed by 2013 then money should have been set aside over the next five years in the current budget to move forward with the construction.

The Chamber also called on the province to reflect in the 2007 Budget the importance of the Family Physician and that the province put dollars to work to assist Nurse Practitioners and to expedite the process of licensing family physicians who have an interest in relocation to Ontario and to increase the number of training positions for International Medical Graduates.

The budget highlight's include re-announcements of hiring more Nurses, creating a better working environment, expanding education and training increasing nurse practitioner spaces from 75 in 2004 to 150 in 2006 and training more doctors — first-year medical school enrolment is being increased by 23 per cent between 2004–05 and 2009–10; assessment positions for international medical graduates have more than doubled to 200 per year, up from 90 in 2002. The Budget did not specifically state there would be an increase in the number of spaces at Medical School for international medical graduates and it was silent on a funding formula for nurse practitioners.