

Remarks for

Sandra Pupatello

**Minister of Economic Development and
Trade**

**Greater Windsor Home Builders'
Association General Membership
Meeting**

May 2, 2007

Introduction

- Thanks, Joe.
- First, I want to congratulate you on your elected presidency of this wonderful association.
- During your career you've developed an impressive rapport with industry professionals and clients throughout Southwestern Ontario.
- With you at the helm, the Greater Windsor Home Builders' Association is in excellent hands.
- And what a great time to be involved in this association.
- Just a few days ago, England's prestigious Financial Times named Windsor Essex the number one small city for investment in North America.

- I am so proud of our city!
- Our government, the municipality, corporations and associations like yours have worked so hard to push Windsor forward.
- This recognition is well deserved.
- Windsor is now front and centre on the radar screen for new investments from around the world.
- As a government, we're doing everything we can to ensure your industry directly benefits from these investments.

Strong economy means strong construction industry

- It starts with our broad-based strategy for economic growth.
- The strategy has three main themes:
 - Building a modern infrastructure;
 - Boosting innovation; and
 - Winning new investment.
- The construction industry is integral to delivering on all three objectives.

Infrastructure

- Infrastructure is essential to our quality of life and the ability of business to create jobs and prosperity.

- It includes:
 - Schools, colleges and universities;
 - Hospitals;
 - Recreational and cultural facilities;
 - Water and wastewater systems; and
 - Transportation networks.

- All support a competitive economy, win investment and attract and retain skilled workers.

- After years of underinvestment, much of Ontario's infrastructure has deteriorated, preventing us from reaching our economic potential.

- When our government took office, we took action.

- We announced ReNew Ontario – an ambitious five-year \$30 billion infrastructure investment plan.
- We're investing in projects across the province – in every area of infrastructure provision.
- I'm very pleased that this city benefited from the \$4 million provided to construct the Greater Windsor Recreation and Sports Centre.
- This investment provides the local community access to health and wellness, and gets people involved in our city.

- Strong infrastructure and state-of-the art public facilities here in Southwestern Ontario brings new people to our neck of the woods and creates a solid base for:
 - New subdivisions;
 - New homes; and
 - New opportunities for homebuilders.

- We plan to stay on course with our competitive strategy and attract new investments that will help your sector succeed.

Innovation

- Our ability to compete in a global economy depends on our success at being innovation leaders.

- Our job as a government is to create an environment where innovation doesn't just happen – it's inevitable.
- We're working directly with industry to make this happen, through:
 - The Ontario Automotive Investment Strategy; and
 - The Advanced Manufacturing Investment Strategy – which we call AMIS.
- These programs set in motion a winning chain of events:
 - First, the company boosts innovation, helping to grow its market share and create jobs;
 - Capital investments are required to meet that capacity; and last,

- Plant expansions generate new jobs and bring people to the local area.

- We're off to a good start.

- The auto strategy has leveraged more than \$7 billion in new investments that will generate new jobs and construction work in Ontario's parts and assembly facilities.

- AMIS – which provides interest free loans to leverage new investments in technology and innovation – has so far supported seven projects that will generate almost \$350 million in new investments.

- These investments lead to a stronger employment base.

- A strong employment base leads to a greater need for homes.

- And more people in an area increases the attraction for new investments.
- As you can see, our investment strategy creates a cyclical process which provides advantages for you and your industry.

Investments

- To ensure your prosperity, we're working hard to bring investments to Southwestern Ontario:
 - Last September, Valiant invested \$93 million in its next generation auto assembly plant in Windsor;
 - Toyota opened a new state-of-the-art facility in Woodstock that created 2,000 direct jobs;
 - In January of 2006, Nemak invested \$100 million in this city to expand its plant and ensure its products remain leading edge;

- In 2005, DaimlerChrysler invested over \$750 million in its Windsor assembly plant; and
 - Navistar invested \$270 million to keep its Chatham operation in gear.
- But we're not focusing exclusively on the Auto industry.
 - Last November, Sutherland Global Services opened a new technical support centre in Windsor that has created more than 1,000 high value jobs;
 - We're providing funds to the Windsor Regional Hospital, so it can expand its facilities and remain top-of-the-line. Construction commences in 2008/09; and
 - We invested \$400 million in renovations and new amenities at Casino Windsor to keep it competitive.

- My Ministry is also working with the Economic Development Council of Ontario here in Windsor and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to seize opportunities for new jobs and investments.

- We also have our eyes on the Western front.

- I recently led two business missions to Alberta.

- The goals of these missions were simple:
 - To position Ontario as a value-added link in the oil sands supply chain;
 - And to create inter-provincial partnerships between innovative businesses in our jurisdictions.

- We've worked hard and are making great headway.

- Construction and manufacturing companies are already forging partnerships.

- For example:
 - OilSands Development Inc. has entered into a joint venture with, I'm proud to say, Architecttura Inc., a Windsor-based architectural firm, to develop designs for six models of pre-fabricated homes.
 - The units will be fabricated in Ontario and then shipped to Alberta for assembly.
 - The initiative will help address Alberta's accommodation shortage, while generating fabrication and professional services business in Ontario.

- Architecttura's partnership shows how innovation thrives when governments and businesses work together.

- I'm confident there will be many more success stories like this over the next few months
- My Ministry will continue to seek new investments – because when Ontario wins, you win.

Skilled Labour Training/Retention

- It takes a skilled construction sector to ensure new investments and housing projects get off the ground.
- That's why we're spending more money on apprenticeship training and retention.
- We want Ontario's construction workers to be highly skilled, highly innovative and stay in this great province.

Safe Construction Sector

- In order to protect our workers, we're taking action to fight on-site injuries.
- The government has fulfilled its commitment to make workplaces safer by hiring 200 new occupational health and safety inspectors, nearly doubling their ranks.
- Increased enforcement is part of our plan to strengthen our province by improving the health and safety of Ontarians.
- New inspectors are being deployed across the province and will target 6,000 high-risk workplaces with the highest injury rates.
- One thousand of these have been targeted by the Construction program in 2007/08.

- To help reduce on-the-job injuries, we'll visit high-risk workplaces four times a year.
- And we've joined with employers, unions and workers to implement innovative ideas to make our workplaces safer.
- For workers injured on the job, our government is committed to creating a better future for them.
- We believe in what the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board does for these workers –
- And have taken action to put more money in injured workers pockets through benefit increases.
- I know your industry has some concerns with WSIB.

- Employers' premium increases, for instance, is one issue at hand.

- I'm sure that everyone wants a safe workforce, but I know that premium hikes aren't popular with some employers.

- We can't think that paying WSIB premiums is a burden.

- We must think of it as an investment in a safer workforce.

- An investment that will:
 - Attract highly skilled workers; and
 - Contribute to extinguishing the underground workforce that plagues this industry.

- The underground economy takes away from legitimate business, hurts gross revenue for the province and adds to the labour shortage.
- It's a 'problem' we must work together to solve.
- The 200 occupational health and safety inspectors we hired will help on this front.
- Also, I know there has been talk to move WSIB forward to a name-based system.
- This will help win the fight against the underground economy, and also against businesses taking advantage of the current system.
- The debate surrounding this transition has been very vocal.

- That's why we must sit down and come up with a plan that works for government, for homebuilders and for the industry as a whole.
- I look forward to further discussions with you, so we help move the industry forward to create a stronger Ontario.

Conclusion

- As leaders in the construction sector, your voice is strong and your cooperation is vital.
- We need you to promote Ontario's initiatives among your colleagues and partners.

- We rely on you to hammer home Ontario's message:
 - Our workforce is here to stay;
 - Businesses are here to prosper; and
 - The future is now for the construction industry in Southwestern Ontario.

- We must continue open dialogue and work together to develop an action plan that's tailored to economic growth and industry safety.

- We must continue to bring new investments to this part of the province – to help your sector prosper.

- Now that Windsor is the world's top small city for new investments, I'm confident some big players will come knocking on our door.

- If we work together, we can ensure that Windsor holds on to this title for many years –
- And the construction sector of Southwestern Ontario will prosper alongside.
- Thank you for inviting me to speak today.
- It's been a pleasure.
- Enjoy the rest of the evening.