

**State of the City Address**  
**By Mayor Ted Salci**  
**Given at the Fallsview Hilton Hotel, Hosted by the Chamber of Commerce**  
**February 26, 2009**

Thank you fellow members of the Chamber of Commerce for hosting today's luncheon. I would like to acknowledge Chairman of the Board Larry Vaughn, Chamber President Carolyn Bones and fellow members of the Chamber.

I would also like take a moment to recognize City of Niagara Falls Members of Council here this afternoon along with Regional Mayors and Members of Regional Council. Thank you to all of you for being here today. I would like to acknowledge Chairman Peter Partington.

2009 is a year that has come in like a lion. In Niagara Falls we have already felt the effects of the uncertain global economy and we are bracing ourselves for what will come next.

But, with feet planted firmly, here in Niagara Falls we are poised with many opportunities to strengthen our community. What is more, we will realize potential in a number of areas, and we have reason to do more than just hope to get through this difficult time.

My focus has been on building up, not tearing down— and that building has provided a solid ground on which to stand during this uncertain time. We will get through this.

Niagara Falls residents have always been the number one priority in all of our decision making and this year is no exception. Affordability of living, quality of life and your expectations of your elected officials are of utmost importance. We will aim to provide continued leadership and guidance in 2009 and beyond.

We have exciting projects and exceptional initiatives in store that build on our success of the past number of years and the amazing developments made here in 2008.

**Positive news**

***Private Sector Investment Continues***

To begin, I'll ask you to look around you. The Hilton, this structure, this outstanding development, epitomizes where we are in Niagara Falls. We are growing.

The Hilton is one exceptional place that exemplifies the commitment and the determination of our private sector in Niagara Falls. Business owners like the DiCosimo Family and members of the Fallsview BIA have risen to the occasion. They have responded to government investment in our community and continue to build up their offerings, which strengthens our position as a first class tourist destination.

In this time of uncertainty, where industrial plants are closing, or paring down operations, I have to tell you that our hotels are our new plants— offering in excess of hundreds of jobs. The rule of thumb is that every room equals one job. Look at this facility here, the Hilton is currently working hard to fill 450 new jobs for Niagara.

The private sector in Niagara Falls has been nothing less than spectacular. They have contributed more than 2.5 billion dollars in investment in our community. We are proud of their achievements and their vision to see the potential in the growth of our City.

**Positive news**

***Downtown grows***

There have been many other success stories that feature the private sector and their investment in Niagara Falls. You, as business owners and operators, have been here for our community. Just look at our downtown, the accomplishments through the Community Improvement Plan implemented by City Council are undeniable.

Staff and Council continue to work with the Downtown BIA to develop programs, provide assistance and keep the spark alive in our revitalized downtown.

In 2008 we saw the overwhelming success of “Springlicious” the food and entertainment festival that drew more than 30,000 people to our downtown core, along with other events. This sparked a revolution whereby people became involved again. They recalled their roots, they started to visit businesses and they began paying attention to downtown Niagara Falls.

A unique arts district has been cultivated, attracting exceptional national talent like John Newby and Edward Spera. It is an honour to have them and their fellow artisans downtown.

This has led the way to a number of substantial private investments, including successful small businesses, cafés, restaurants, and many building upgrades and facade improvements to beautify and update the area.

**Positive news**

***Pan Am Games Announcement***

People are paying attention to what we’re doing in Niagara Falls. We were thrilled to recently learn of the Pan Am Games 2015 Organizing Committee’s decision to list Niagara Falls as the “welcome site” for the 2015 games. The Pan Am Games will not only be making a substantial investment in the infrastructure of a welcome-centre here, to the tune of 1.2 million dollars or more, but they will market our City as the welcome point for the 10,000 athletes, and the more than 250,000 spectators drawn to the games.

**Positive news**

***Olympic Torch Relay***

Even bigger than the Pan Am Games are the Olympics and Niagara Falls will be “the Olympic City for a day” on December 20, 2009. En route to the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, the torch will make a stop in Niagara Falls. We are thrilled to be a “Celebration City.” This will draw national attention, and be a wonderful time for all of the people in our community to catch the Olympic spirit.

**Positive news**

***Niagara Civic and Convention Centre progresses***

More exciting news comes to us by way of an update on the progress of our Niagara Civic and Convention Centre. We are one step closer to opening this facility that will bring prosperity and year-round jobs to the people of our community. I am happy to announce that a contractor is now in place and construction is planned to begin this Spring.

During construction, approximately 31 million dollars will be spent on supplies and materials, which will provide 867 person years of direct employment during this phase. Once complete, the NCCC will boost City-wide occupancy levels by 5%, year round, generating 22.6 million dollars in room revenue annually.

More than 70% of this new demand will be outside the peak Summer months. Not to mention, 150 new jobs will be added to our community with Convention Centre personnel alone. As we know, this extraordinary project will raise the quality of life for those living and working in the entire Niagara Region. Not only will the Convention Centre strengthen the economy from the beginning of the construction phase forward, it will poise the City as a magnet for even more jobs, once opened.

We're certainly excited to be at this stage and beginning construction shortly.

### **Positive news**

#### ***Tourism Competitiveness Study***

Under MPP Greg Sorbara, The Provincial Government undertook an extensive study on the state of tourism in Ontario. The study outlines goals, and potential for tourism growth in our Province. Let me tell you that the prognosis for Niagara is not good, it's great. The study tells us that we are poised for even more growth. Sorbara establishes a focus for the Provincial government and a plan to double this \$22 billion dollar-a-year industry— and Niagara will play a major role.

First, the study reveals that tourism is the number one employer of young people in Ontario. This is good news for us, as we already know that young people have jobs here. We have to make a consistent effort to retain them in our Region and augment our permanent work-force through the right training and opportunities.

In January, Niagara College once again announced a record increase in enrollment. They report that enrollment is up 28 per cent over last year. Our young people are looking for quality educational and training programs and they are looking right here. The stats show that Niagara College is the fastest growing college in Ontario.

Our young people are here and with a developing culinary, hospitality, customer service and management sector, we can work to keep them. Sorbara's "Report on the Future of Tourism" in Ontario highlights the need for investment in training and education as a priority for major tourist centres.

In his plan, the Niagara Region, led by Niagara Falls, will become a focal point for investment by the Province, along with only two other cities being Toronto and Ottawa. We have long been a leader in tourism in the Province, and now with this affirmation of our position, we look to take on a major role in our Region and lead the way as tourism grows and expands.

**Government attention and investment here**

***Go Transit***

One of the major points that the Tourism Study highlights is the need for a stronger transportation link between Toronto and Niagara. Confirming this makes all of our discussions with “Go Transit” even more important, and a “Go” link between Niagara Falls and Toronto, ever more viable.

We are optimistic that with this expressed confidence from the Provincial Government that this partnership will be solidified very soon. We look forward to the coming date when we can promote an easy travel link to and from Toronto.

**Government attention and investment here**

***positive government relations***

“Go” is just one of a number of relationships that we have been pursuing with other levels of government. We have worked diligently to develop our relationships with both the Provincial and Federal Governments. We know that a great deal is gained when we as leaders invest in partnerships and communicate with our elected peers on a regular basis.

I have done that and have developed sound connections and spent time discussing Niagara Falls with the people that can make a difference here. Our good working relationships have helped make us a priority community for investment and have kept Niagara Falls on the top of the minds of decision makers at Queens Park and on Parliament Hill.

**Government attention and investment here**

***Museum Legacy Project***

City Council endorsed the magnificent Lundy’s Lane Battlefield Legacy Project. Very recently the Federal and Provincial Governments confirmed the worth of the project, as they announced a joint contribution. Combined, they committed more than \$6.4 million, with our Council and Museum Board to fund the final third.

This incredible development will not only provide value to the historic culture of the area, but will create an educational experience for visitors and locals, young and old, at this, an iconic site in our Country’s formation.

What is more important is that this project is in keeping with our Historic Drummondville Community Improvement Plan. Our Council’s C.I.P. would see investors utilizing incentives to restore this area, rejuvenating it’s vitality. In 2008, we have seen businesses participate in the CIP there, namely the significant upgrading project by Patterson Funeral Home. This local business is currently building an addition, an investment valuing more than 2 million dollars in our Main and Ferry area.

Future plans there include Council’s approved retrofit for the farmers market that will highlight Niagara’s home grown produce and strength in culinary arts and hospitality.

Investment here will serve as a stimulus to position this area as the hub for International 2012- 14 Celebrations that are in store to commemorate the Bi-Centennial of the War of 1812.

**Business development**  
*industrial trade show*

We are doing more to invest in the business community in Niagara and we have continued to pay attention to industry here. We hosted The Niagara Industrial Trade Show for the first time in 2008. This exceptional event is a joint effort between our partners in the Region, the Niagara Development Corridor and the Niagara Industrial Association, and it proved to be a major success.

We continue to work harder than ever to meet the needs and provide support for our larger industries and businesses. We just held the Trade Event again in February, for the second year in a row. This year, I was pleased to introduce Minister of Economic Development, Michael Bryant to participate and help cultivate and encourage strong trade in Niagara.

**Business development**  
*Montrose/ McLeod*

We have worked to encourage continued business development in our community, by our investment in underground and road infrastructure. This has allowed us to literally lay the ground work for more jobs and increased investment in the City's South West sector. With new services extending past Niagara Square on Montrose Road and through to the Grassy Brook area, we have vastly increased potential for development on a number of projects, including, the Warren Woods Life-style community, Grand Niagara, and the Minacs call centre. We have made these investments because we know what it means to our community. Stay tuned for announcement about new developments at the QEW/ McLeod Road intersection.

**Business development**  
*Niagara Square*

The Niagara Square has led the way with exemplary new business development in the West end of our City. New businesses that we are proud to welcome to our community that have opened there in 2008 are BouClair, Michael's, Jysk, The Mandarin and The Brick.

**Business development**  
*Minacs*

Again, we have wonderful examples of when we have invested, our private companies have answered the call. Minacs, for example, has provided more than 400 new jobs at their South End call-centre. With new infrastructure and a transportation plan, they are positioned to increase their employee compliment even further.

**Business development**  
*Centennial Construction*

In other areas of our City, our Stanley Avenue Business Park saw the addition of with "Centennial Construction" in 2008. They relocated their offices there from Niagara On The Lake. We welcome them as a new business partner here in our community.

## **Business development**

### ***Transforce***

We will continue to move forward with development projects like the Montrose Business Park. Services are being installed and as a result of the diligent work of the City's development team, a new building site is being prepared for construction. A new trucking distribution centre is being built that will be occupied by "Transforce." We look forward to their opening later this year.

## **Weathering the storm**

During these uncertain times, we must all be creative, be responsible, and be diligent. Even with these major investments by the government and by our responsive private sector that I have described, we recognize that we have more to do in the face of the challenges that are ahead.

## **Weathering the storm**

### ***Belt tightening at City Hall***

At City Hall, we have taken the leadership role in starting with ourselves. City Council made a commitment to get as close to a 0% increase for Niagara Falls taxpayers. We froze salaries of City Council and Senior Staff at City Hall even before the year began which resulted in an immediate savings for Niagara Falls taxpayers.

We know that the public can't afford an increase in their taxes and we have been working hard to trim city spending to avoid a tax hike this year. We still have more work to do, but will do so while keeping important municipal jobs in our community secure.

## **Weathering the storm**

### ***Massive WSIB savings***

Due to service delivery reviews and diligent staff finding ways to create more and more efficiencies, we have had much internal success. In our own Human Resources Department, we credit our competent staff with reducing annual WSIB costs from the previous year by more than 1 million dollars.

## **Leading the way**

### ***Community facilities***

#### ***Gale Centre***

We have gone even further by making the decision to maximize the return for taxpayers by opting to replace outdated arena sites with our new Gale Centre. What is really important is this savings comes to us, by having made real investments to improve the aging infrastructure in our community. This has been a major focus since 2003 and we now have vast improvements in our City's infrastructure that had been ailing for many years before.

A superior example of upgrading that leads to cost-savings for residents is the Gale Centre. This new 4-pad arena will save the City operational costs by creating new efficiencies.

The cost to run this one state of the art arena with four ice surfaces saves us money over operating separate, aging facilities at Memorial, Jack Bell and Stamford Arenas.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> marked an exciting milestone in our community when we held the groundbreaking that officially began the construction of the Gale Centre. We are engaged in an aggressive work schedule with the facility expected to be up and running to its full capacity by Spring/ Summer 2010.

### **Leading the way**

There are many examples of how we are leading the way in our community, the Gale Centre being just one of them. I would like to highlight some of the areas in which we have achieved great success in 2008. We will build on these successes and work to strengthen our position for the coming year.

### **Leading the way** *Community facilities* *Artificial Turf Field*

Residents want and deserve more investment throughout the City in quality of life enhancers like parks and recreational facilities.

So, staff worked with partners and pioneered ways to establish improvements with minimal cost to the taxpayers.

In 2008, in conjunction with Niagara United Soccer Club City Staff spearheaded a project to build an artificial turf field unique to the Region, in the Garner neighbourhood. We were proud to officially open the field in September, and it has recorded solid bookings since then.

### **Leading the way** *Community facilities* *Lion's Park*

Other community improvements include the enhanced Lion's Park project. This park has been refurbished with an accessible playspace and splashpad through a unique partnership between the Trillium Foundation, Ronald McDonald House and fundraising efforts by the Niagara Falls Lion's.

### **Leading the way** *Community facilities* *Park at MacBain*

We have seen the completion of the splashpad outside at the MacBain Centre. It opened in July to rave reviews of kids and families all over our City.

### **Leading the way** *Community facilities* *Patrick Cummings Memorial Park*

Patrick Cummings Memorial Park in Chippawa continued to grow in 2008. With input from residents, the playground was installed and plans are laid out for a new splashpad and washroom facility as well.

**Leading the way**  
*Community facilities*  
*Other park upgrades*

Other park upgrades have taken place around the City including: Garner neighbourhood Park with the installation of basketball courts, a recreational pathway and children's playspace. Crimson and Bambi neighbourhood parks also saw enhancements in 2008 and Oakes Park was fitted with a new stone entry way.

**Leading the way**  
*Community facilities*  
*Coronation 50 Plus*

We are leading the way with growth and expansion of our Senior's Citizen's facilities. New investments and original ideas have allowed the Staff and Members of our Coronation 50 Plus Centre to successfully create enterprise there.

I have been pleased to visit on occasion, their new "Craft House Café." In an innovative design, it is run entirely by volunteers and is open for lunch through the week. The benefits of "The Craft House Café" are many. Members can get a hot meal at an affordable price, the café atmosphere provides a social function for seniors and café revenues surpassed projected goals by more than \$10,00 in their inaugural year.

**Leading the way**  
*Infrastructure improvements*

Beyond our exceptional and ever-growing community resources, we literally need solid groundwork. For the past number of years, residents have told us they want improvements in road, sewer and water infrastructure, while keeping taxes in line.

As the economy ebbs and flows, there have been times to invest, and there is certainly a time to tighten our belts. We have made vast improvements in our municipal infrastructure and now we will continue to push for all of the improvements we can afford while prioritizing tax savings and efficiencies for the benefit of the tax payer in Niagara Falls. \$ 20.3 million was spent on infrastructure projects in 2008. This has meant a crucial investment in our sewers, watermains, roads and sidewalks, as much headway has been made.

**Leading the way**  
*Openness and transparency*

We have led the way in our insistence on openness and transparency at City Hall. This will remain important throughout fiscally challenging times. This is the hallmark of a new and improved standard of practice that I led the way to establish in 2003. I am proud that we're going to implement the Public Sector Accounting Board ("PSAB") guidelines this year, which will regulate accounting principles and practices for all levels of government in Canada. Municipalities will be required to provide standard fiscal reports, which means more accountability to the taxpayer.

**Leading the way**  
*Homelessness Initiative*

Beyond our leadership in accountability, we are taking responsibility where gaps are showing in our community. In 2008 I established the “Mayor’s Task Force on Homelessness” to address the issue of homelessness in our City.

There was a clear need to bring the parties together to discuss what services were being provided and by whom in our community, how they were funded, and where duplication existed.

Finally, with all the players at the table, including government agencies like Niagara Regional Housing and the United Way, Project SHARE, Hannah House, the YWCA, the Salvation Army and the Ministerial Society, we are making headway.

We are taking the lead to create an inventory of the services provided to the homeless and working poor in Niagara Falls. From there, we will assess the outlying needs, establish priorities and work toward a mutual solution.

**Leading the way**  
*Transit accessibility*

In meeting the needs of our community, we have worked to further enhance our Transit system. Currently, we are making improvements to our fleet. Last year, six low-floor buses were retrofitted with accessibility ramps. As we look to purchase vehicles, any new buses will be low-floor accessible and have low emission diesel engines.

**Leading the way**  
*Intermunicipal Transit*

We have implemented improved access to Niagara College and Brock University via an intermunicipal transportation system. This line of transportation has been further enhanced this year to include Fort Erie.

The service is being enjoyed not only by student travelers, but by many customers who utilize the bus for employment, medical and social opportunities.

**Leading the way**  
*Public Safety*  
*Police Headquarters*

We pride ourselves on our optimum public safety in Niagara Falls. We continue to work to ensure safety is a priority in our community.

In 2008 Council and Staff established a comprehensive submission to bring a Regional Police headquarters to our community. We not only met the needs of the Police Services Board, but exceeded their expectations by working along with partnership opportunities and providing a number of land options for a new headquarters that included brownfield and greenfield sites throughout our City.

As it has been well recorded in the media, we all know that the Region is now working with the Police Services Board to come to a decision regarding the location of a centralized police headquarters that will make for a more adequate and cost effective Niagara Regional Police operation.

We are confident that we have put forward the best, most meaningful scenario not only for the people of Niagara Falls, but for the entire Niagara Region.

**Leading the way**

***Public Safety***

*Niagara Falls Fire Department*

*Cavendish Fire success story*

Another way Niagara Falls is a leader in the realm of public safety is through the fantastic efforts of the Niagara Falls Fire Department.

We are truly grateful to our Fire Chief Lee Smith, Assistant Chiefs Phil Ross and Jim Jessop, and the fire services team for being the heroes in a true success story this past year that received attention throughout the Province.

The Cavendish Manor fire in May of 2008 resulted in no casualties due to the quick action of our fire services personnel. The outcome of an assessment of the fire, resulted in more stringent regulations and updates at a number of nursing homes in our community.

**Leading the way**

***Public Safety***

*Niagara Falls Fire Department*

*Grow-ops*

Our continued commitment to eliminating grow-ops in our community has garnered national attention. Over the last few years, an exceptionally strong team has been created in Niagara Falls as our Fire Department has joined with police, and the City's legal, finance and building departments to beat this problem.

We all know that our Fire Department has taken a lead role in preventing and reducing grow-ops in Niagara Falls because the fire hazard in a grow-op house is more than 25 times what it is in a normal home. We also know that in addition to the fire-hazard, the extended damage to property, like mold and structural damage and health impact can become a nightmare for residents.

Since the tough stance began in 2004, we have seen unprecedented success in reducing grow-ops in Niagara Falls. Since the height of the problem a few years ago when 1 in every 257 homes contained an illegal grow op 2008 numbers show that we have seen a 500 per cent reduction in the number of grow-ops in Niagara Falls and we continue to be committed to this cause and leaders amongst our peers throughout the Province.

This is success for Niagara Falls. This is a team effort that has resulted in safety and protection for the people of our community.

**Leading the way**  
***Focus on Culture***  
*Fairview Cemetery*

We have had a substantial focus on community culture and the environment in 2008. One of the cultural highlights of the year was the Fairview Cemetery's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary with celebrations that included a focus on history with the publication of "the Fairview Family History Book," time capsule, cemetery tours and multicultural events, tree plantings and established donations to the cemetery.

**Leading the way**  
***Focus on the environment***  
*Tree planting*

I would like everyone in the community to know of the outstanding stewardship that has been demonstrated by Parks, Recreation and Culture's tree planting program.

126 new trees were planted in various parks as a part of a reforestation effort spearheaded by The Park in the City Committee. Through their participation in "the national tree planting challenge," The Park in the City Committee made a commitment to plant 500 trees between 2007 and 2010. It is my pleasure to boast that they have already met this challenge with help from the City, staff and members of our community.

**Leading the way**  
***Focus on the environment***  
*Communities in Bloom*

The Park in the City Committee has also taken a leadership role in preparing for our entry in the 2009 "communities in bloom" competition. We look forward to supporting this effort as Niagara Falls historically has a good showing due to the large scale of community participation, and greening events. As well, they have worked to get the whole community involved in City-wide clean sweep days to keep our City streets clean and clear of litter.

**Leading the way**  
***Focus on the environment***  
*Plastic bags*

Another environmental initiative that I am proud to say is working at City Hall is our effort to reduce waste, by eliminating disposable styro-foam and plastic utensils in Niagara Falls.

I was proud of the youth of our community when the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee came forward to Council last Spring and requested our attention to this matter and asked that we ban plastic bags in the City. What came out of this, was a motion of Council to reduce waste at city buildings and to provide environmentally friendly options to bottled water.

The Park in the City Committee has since held public consultations to compile information to move forward with this initiative on the direction of Council, which has now been adopted.

## **Looking ahead**

### ***Youth***

As we look ahead to the coming year, I am excited about continued environmental awareness. The youth of our community are our future leaders and I am pleased that they have come forward with a number of ideas that we have embraced.

This group of involved students has worked to strengthen the youth voice in our community and I am proud of their achievements. They have established their own youth page in our daily newspaper, the Niagara Falls Review. The page is called “upload” and we will be anxious to read the latest youth stories every week.

## **Looking ahead**

### ***2031 Growth Management Study- Niagara Region***

As we look into 2009 and the coming years, we in Niagara Falls are in a good place. I would like to reference the Niagara Region’s Growth Management Strategy where they outline growth in the Region through 2031. This study reveals that one fifth of the population growth in Niagara over the next 25 years will occur in Niagara Falls. Our population growth is set to increase to more than 100, 000 people, out-pacing growth in other municipalities in our Region. We already know that the Region relies on our success in Niagara Falls and now their 2031 growth Management study confirms this.

We are in good hands as we move forward doing what we do best in our City by supporting a successful service economy. The groundwork has been laid in our hospitality sector. Our private sector has responded. Our diligence at City Hall will pay off and there will not only be continued growth and expansion in Niagara Falls, but with tourism as our focus industry, this will mean more jobs, not only in tourism, but through the creation of infrastructure and in retail offshoots to service the growing number of people that will call Niagara Falls home.

Here in Niagara Falls we always knew that we possessed the qualities to keep people coming back. We are poised for growth and we are ready.

## **Looking ahead**

### ***Building permits***

In fact, the numbers from 2008 already solidify our position as the hub for growth. Numbers of building permits in Niagara Falls were very strong in 2008. We issued 1263 building permits at City Hall totaling more than 176 million dollars, compared to St. Catharines numbers that are hovering at about 100 million dollars.

## **Looking ahead**

### ***NHS restructuring***

Looking ahead we see that Niagara Health System services in Niagara Falls will be even more necessary, to service our growing population.

At every opportunity in 2008, we spoke up and let the NHS and the plan review team know what residents in Niagara Falls wanted and needed. Our voices were heard. The Local Health Integration Network has announced that many of our requests are being implemented, including

keeping the Greater Niagara General Hospital site open with full operations of its Emergency Room.

In the coming years we will see “centres of excellence” develop throughout our Region and in our City. These will provide the opportunity for accessible, top of the line health care for all Niagarans. “Centres of excellence” will benefit our large, growing, unified Region as our population grows and ages.

We will continue to fight to ensure that the highest quality care is available to everyone in Niagara by way of a viable transportation system that must be the responsibility of the NHS in their changing health care system.

### **Looking ahead**

#### ***More infrastructure improvements***

As we head into 2009, infrastructure development will be maintained. Many important projects are already budgeted, including a rebuild of the Weightman Bridge in Chippawa. This work will provide improved level of service and will increase the security of our supply of potable water.

### **Looking ahead**

#### ***Continued strength in tourism***

Looking ahead to 2009, even in the midst of challenges, we have many things to look forward to. Tourism has historically increased the year after an American presidential election. Our stakeholders have weathered storms before during the economic crises of the late 80's and early 90's.

We are optimistic about many factors that will boost tourism, including our competitive dollar, creative packaging and incentives by proprietors.

We are working harder than ever to invite Americans back and we continue to promote to our primary visitor markets in Canada and abroad.

### **Looking ahead**

#### ***Ease of visitation to Niagara Falls***

We must work hard to make visiting Niagara Falls as easy as possible for our friends overseas and from across the border. We continue to work with the other levels of government, for their support to ensure our borders remain accessible and safe.

We are pleased to hear the words of our Prime Minister in his discussion with U.S. President Obama– where he confirms his confidence in trade and his support of ease of border travel between our two countries.

Our bi-national partnership has never been more important and we will be pleased to celebrate the monumental boundary waters treaty with the United States later this year. There are big things planned, including an exciting celebration that will highlight Niagara Falls on the international stage.

Beyond our relationship with the U.S., we look further to our Federal Government for their efforts to achieve “Approved Destination Status” with China. This will be very important in moving forward, in the coming year, as China remains a major potential source of visitors to Canada and Niagara Falls.

I was pleased to be invited to an International Mayor’s Forum in China last April to represent Niagara Falls on the world stage and to discuss the importance of global tourism with other Mayors from Canada, the U.S. and China.

### **Final thoughts**

With the challenges ahead of us, there is no doubt that we have much work to do. However, with the strong base that we have in Niagara Falls, and continued good news and positive announcements that support our community, we will remain strong through 2009.

One thing we know for sure is that Niagara Falls is the place to be as we move forward and continue to grow.