

June 12, 2023

Re: Council Deputation for Complete Communities, Keele Street Parking

Good evening, Mayor Pellegrini and Members of Council,

Thank you for the opportunity for the King Chamber of Commerce to speak regarding the staff reports titled PW-CAP-2023-005 Council Resolutions for Requested Changes to the Operations of Regional Roads.

Earlier this year, the Chamber of Commerce presented a position paper to the Municipality, outlining our member businesses' support for the goal of creating complete communities, including increasing the commercial tax base through the attraction and retention of businesses in King, and creating an environment where people can live, work, play and prosper. As our member base continues to grow, with over 220 active members, we continue our engagement with them on matters pertaining to a prosperous and complete community.

Within the framework of this vision, we would like to provide feedback on the staff reports presented to Council.

As Council is aware, our local businesses were significantly impacted by the pandemic, including the restaurant and retail businesses located along Keele Street in King City. The recovery of the business sector has been slow, with the challenging economic environment, higher interest rates and labour shortages. We recognize that adding increasing uncertainty to their ability for serving clients with on-street parking adds an additional challenge to their already full plates, and that this issue has caused significant concern with our member businesses.

There is no question that with the planned growth and the increased traffic in the area, changes are required. The staff report notes that the intersection will be at capacity by 2026. While the staff report allows for an additional pedestrian crossing, there is much more that could be included in the plan in order to ease the transition for our small local businesses.

Firstly, given that the capacity level will not be reached until 2026, there is every opportunity for the municipality to develop additional off-street parking and to ensure that these are in place prior to the removal of the on-street parking, ensuring that at a minimum, the number of parking spaces removed is equal to the new capacity provided. We recommend that Township staff investigate the potential to invest in the additional capacity prior to the intersection development and associated impacts to on-street parking, while also looking at long term development plans for the King Community Centre and other planned developments as to not

impact the changes in the near future. This might have the effect of delaying the intersection improvements until 2025, but at least there will have been ample time to ensure adequate capacity for parking with minimal interruption to small businesses.

As a separate observation, we note that the studies referenced in the staff report date from 2009-2018, all of which occurred pre-COVID. We can all acknowledge that the world has significantly changed since then, and there would be merit in revisiting some of the findings of those reports in light of the new realities. A review might highlight other options available, or indicate where additional study might be useful.

Secondly, there have been lessons learned from significant road transformations in the region, including the rapid transit lanes along Davis Drive in Newmarket and others. The impact of those developments to the local small businesses were mitigated with strong investment in signage, wayfinding and a detailed communications plan. We would strongly urge Council to include these essential components as part of an overall transition plan, and potentially request that they be added to the Region's budget, to help both the businesses and the customers navigate the altered parking arrangements. This would be a good investment whether the parking changes are implemented in 2024 or, as we would hope, in 2025.

While Keele is no doubt a regional road, it is also a part of our village centre, and should reflect the welcoming neighbourhood look and feel that is currently in place. We are confident that there are options and approaches that would accommodate the growth while preserving of the village feel, and minimizing the negative impacts to the small businesses at the heart of our village centre.

By taking an integrated approach with a view to ensuring supports are in place for a smooth transition, including potentially waiting to remove on-street parking until alternative capacity, wayfinding, signage and communications plans are in place, Council would signal to the local business community that they will support efforts to help them prosper, as these small businesses are still fighting economic headwinds to recover from the pandemic.

On each of these issues, the King Chamber of Commerce stands ready to collaborate with the Township to engage with member businesses and to support the drive towards realizing the future of King Township, as envisioned in the official plan. The views shared with you today reflect the discussions and concerns of our member businesses, and has been compiled by a Board sub-committee focused on advocacy.

Mayor Pellegrini and Members of Council, thank you for the opportunity to share the viewpoints of the business community with you regarding these two staff reports, and hope that our input will be helpful in your deliberations. We sincerely appreciate your time and attention. I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.