

August 10, 2018

Dear Windsor Mayor and Members of Council,

I'm writing regarding the **Sandwich South Secondary Plan Amendment & Hospital Zoning** issue and the once in a lifetime decision that you're tasked with this week. In my view, it's an incredibly exciting one, with great opportunity for Windsor. As a native Windsorite who spent the first 25 years of my life in the city, I had to move away for economic reasons, but with some regret. Regret because Windsor is the place that first taught me what a city was and though I live and work in Toronto today, teaching urban civics and writing about cities, Windsor is the place that I come back to in order to understand the city I now live in, as well as the many cities I visit. Here in Toronto I cofounded the Canadian magazine *Spacing* that explores what makes Canadian cities great and how they can overcome the challenges that face them.

As urban planners like to say, Windsor has "good bones," but it's much more than just bones. Though affected by the downturn in manufacturing as all industrial cities were, unlike many contemporary cities south of the border, Windsor has never hollowed out. People still live and work downtown and throughout the older, urban parts of the city. That's what makes the option of locating a hospital on an urban site, within the city, so lucrative: there's a lot to build on and this would be no "Hail Mary" attempt at revitalization. Windsor has ample, formerly industrial, land that would be ideal for a large hospital. Though you have an abundance of choices, I think immediately of the GM Transmission site as ideal, a company my mother worked at for two decades before it ceased to exist in Windsor. It's close to existing neighbourhoods and main streets and would return many jobs to where others once were.

To get a sense of the economic impact the hospital could make on Windsor's urban fabric, imagine what it would be like to remove the University of Windsor, my alma mater, from where it is now and send it to a farm field. Instead of injecting many hundreds of well-paid workers into a dense part of the city where they might shop before or after their shifts, or go for lunch at nearby restaurants, they would be sent off to a self-contained campus. On top of those workers, all the visitors to the hospital may linger in the neighbourhoods before and after visiting loved ones. One of the great benefits of attending U of W was precisely that it was connected to and apart of existing urban neighbourhoods rather than isolated as some Ontario Universities like Trent and Brock are.

Locating the hospital within the city would be, to use a medical term, a massive injection of life and economic prosperity into Windsor just as the university is. Windsor is a city that was built with an incredible amount of resources. The opportunity here is to not let all that work – all the sweat-equity previous generations put into creating the city – go to waste.

Windsor and Essex County is also blessed with some of the best farmland in Canada, and I've always appreciated the proximity of that farmland – the countryside – to the city. It's

a critical link that many cities don't have, and here in Toronto we have lost that immediate connection due to the sprawl of the city that has made getting to that countryside, where much of our food comes from, an hours-long trip. In Toronto we're now lucky that the Greenbelt prevents further farmland development and has encouraged reinvestment in the urban core with great success. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, Dianne Saxe, has said, "land use planning is Ontario's oil sands". Locating a hospital on good farmland while there are excellent sites ripe for redevelopment within the city, is the kind of decision making she's talking about.

Toronto has a great many continually expanding urban hospitals, including St. Michael's downtown and the string of hospitals that are part of the University Health Network, but its newest is the Humber River Hospital that has a number of parallels to Windsor. A mega-hospital to be sure, its location along Highway 401 is on what was underused land owned by the Province of Ontario but surrounded by established neighbourhoods and two main streets.

Unlike downtown, where the constantly growing skyline gives the impression the entire city is prosperous, many areas of Toronto could use the economic stimulus a hospital brings and Humber River, along with the new Ontario Coroner's building next door, has brought thousands of new and needed jobs to this part of Toronto. When I visited last year the spin off effects were already evident in both sidewalk vibrancy and planned developments in the area.

Though the clean slate of farmland can be appealing, if you encourage Windsor's new hospital to locate within the city, it will create an economic, architectural and human legacy you'll be proud of, but also one you'll long be remembered for.

Thank you for reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Micallef". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shawn" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Micallef".

Shawn Micallef

Cofounder and editor: Spacing Magazine

Columnist: The Toronto Star

Instructor: University of Toronto

Author: Frontier City: Toronto on the Verge of Greatness