

For Immediate Release

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WELLAND COUNCIL REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR INCENTIVES TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT

Welland, ON - Welland City Council has reaffirmed its support for the financial incentive programs that have helped to attract almost 1 million sq. ft. of new industrial development to the City since 2015 with an estimated 250,000 sq. ft. of new industrial development projects planned for 2020. These programs have created 440 jobs, retained 159 jobs, and generated \$143 million in construction value and an estimated \$141 million in new MPAC assessment. Welland's Mayor and Council have consistently maintained their strong support for these programs and have expressed concerns about the program review currently underway at Niagara Region. City staff prepared a report for the December 3rd Council meeting that provided an update on the overwhelming success of the programs to contrast a recent KPMG presentation at the Region that questioned the benefits of these programs, claiming there has been no impact on assessment.

The City offers a variety of Community Improvement Plan (CIP) programs and financial incentives, such as Tax Incentive Grants (TIGs) to attract investment through its Brownfield CIP; Downtown and Health and Wellness Cluster CIP; Gateway Economic Zone CIP; and Development Charge Reduction Program. Many of these programs are funded jointly by the City of Welland and the Region of Niagara.

The success of the programs, along with the knowledge and experience of City staff in administering and promoting the programs, is getting noticed. The City was recently contacted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing who are researching municipal best practices regarding CIP programs and want to learn more from City staff.

"We work with and listen to investors and developers every day. Many of them wouldn't have located in Welland and Niagara if it wasn't for the City/Region incentive programs, these are often the deal clinchers in our business attraction negotiations," said Dan Degazio, the City's General Manager of Economic Development, Recreation, and Culture. "We expect to sell out our 5th industrial park within the next 6-12 months and the economic spinoffs and new jobs created will benefit the entire Region, and eventually increase assessment which generates increased tax revenue for infrastructure investments and public services."

"Welland Council will continue to support funding for these programs because the redevelopment, transformation, diversification and economic activity in our community is obvious," said Welland Mayor Frank Campion. "We're hopeful that Niagara Region Council will follow suit, maintain these programs, and partner with us to provide clarity and certainty to those looking to make business and investment decisions in Niagara."

"Other cities and regions with diversified economies such as Hamilton and Waterloo Region, are maintaining and updating their programs and incentives, not eliminating them, and they continue to experience strong growth within a highly competitive global economy," said Gary Long, Welland's Chief Administrative Officer. "The recent investment by Empire Communities in Welland can be attributed to the City/Region Brownfield CIP programs and we look forward to working with Empire to realize a new vision for 623 acres of former industrial lands."

Empire Communities, one of Canada's largest housing development companies, have purchased land in Welland and were attracted to the City because of its Brownfield CIPs that will help the company remediate and redevelop former industrial lands into residential subdivisions. Empire recently presented their multi-phased concept plan to Council that proposes 4,300 new homes along with commercial development, parks, pedestrian trails and waterfront paths, and connections to the downtown core.

The programs and incentives are continuing to have a huge impact in Welland in 2019 with many residential, commercial, and industrial developments in process and under construction. Also, based on data from the City's Planning and Building Divisions, the City is on track to reach 500 new housing units by year end, compared to 400 units in 2018, and 197 units in 2017.

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