

2.34.13 Mayor Dilkens:

Today is a bigger step forward for better healthcare for everyone in Windsor and Essex. This has been something, I was here in that building in 2012, when Dave Cooke and others came to talk about what they're going to do, how they're going to move forward. And I have kept abreast of the process, been informed of the process and I know that it has taken years. And I know that the process has been very transparent. I know that there were 67 public consultations. 67. 67 different public consultations with respect to the location of the hospital. But I also recognize as Mayor of the City that not everyone is in agreement with the decision to locate the hospital at that location.

Tonight was an opportunity to hear the feedback, hear ideas, hear the concerns, and they're not new concerns. I read the tweets, I read the emails that come in from Camp and others sharing ideas and thoughts. I've engaged with people in the past on different issues when they send them in. and what I was really looking forward to tonight, because this is a very technical matter, 522 pages, plus Camps report, plus several submissions from other people and organizations is really trying to tease out someone who could share the other side and make me feel like okay you're a planner, give me the other side so I can weigh what's in front of me from the hospital's experts and from other experts. And I didn't find, and I respect that the architect association came, but I know they're not planners, they're architects. They're people who are passionate about planning, but they may not have the credentials or qualifications, just a feeling inside and I was waiting to get some real information that would help me counter the reports that were in front of us. And I really don't feel like I got anything but opinion from people. And so I'm left to listen to the questions and answers and I thought they were very good. Very good questions that came out and I thought the answers were spectacular. I thought the answers provided by the planners, I thought they did a great job answering the concerns that were raised. And having read the material, and having been around here for 12 years, and having sat on PAC and gone through a number of different zoning matters, I felt very comfortable with the responses and the material that was presented.

I do want to say that it would be, notwithstanding the material that's here, lets go back just a few years ago when my predecessor was sitting in this chair and many of us were around the table, we know that the city, as a city we offered the land, directly across the street to compete in the process that the hospital went through. We offered the land right across the street folks on Airport property. And so that was put out there because we believe that that would've been a good option at the time, the group that was around the table, that that was a viable option to submit to the hospital steering committee. And they didn't choose that option. They went through their process and chose the place across the street, which brings us here today. And again back to 2003 brings us here today because that's when we annexed the 6500 acres from the town of Tecumseh and at some point, some council was going to be sitting around the table saying okay we've got to do a secondary plan to activate land, we have to do a number of things to move this process forward. And so I don't believe that this is going to hollow out the core, that this is going to harm the city that this is going to be a problem in any way. I really don't believe that and I think (a delegate) said if you aren't 100% behind this, vote no, and thought that's a good idea. And then I listened and I am 100% behind this. I think it's the right move, I think it's the right location, and I think as a city, we're going to be the beneficiaries of the development that happens in that area.

And I do believe to the extent that there are business owners or physicians who own buildings who decide to buy land closer to the hospital and open up a shop there, their places that are downtown or elsewhere in the city will be repurposed. And there have been some scare tactics put out there. Folks have tried to make it look like this is going to decimate the city. I think one of the councilors said 42 or nowhere else. That's never been part of the conversation. Never has it been just the talk about a single site acute care hospital. It has always been about "what will be downtown?" Will it be an urgent care center on the Grace Site? Or will it be the refurbishment of the Hotel Dieu site? And that is what the government has asked the folks at WRH to submit. Give us the numbers and show us why it's better to make the investment at Grace, which I argue is downtown, or make a reinvestment at the Hotel Dieu site. And so having one hospital on County Rd. 42 has never been part of the equation. There will always be a presence in the downtown of this city. Always. And if that wasn't part of the plan, I don't think Dave Musyj would have called several years ago. It was always part of the plan that they would have a presence downtown.

So anyone who leaves here this morning, anyone who's reading the paper tomorrow or watching the news or listening to the radio, this has never been about one hospital on County Rd. 42. A regional hospital that if you put it downtown, you would not have had the support from the county to move the project forward. It wouldn't happen. So you really are talking about a regional hospital in a place that we can both agree to or no hospital at all. Those are the two options in front of you. So, I want a \$2 billion investment in my community. I want that. I think that people in this community deserve better healthcare, because guess what? If we pass, and we say we don't care, it's not in the right place we're going to move on...if we take a pass on that, it's going to go to another community and all of us are going to pay for it. You're all going to be paying provincial tax and were all going to be paying for a hospital somewhere else. So tonight, is a big step forward for better healthcare for everyone in Windsor and Essex and I'm happy to raise my hand to support that.