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February 26, 2026

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Members of Council
City of Burlington
426 Brant Street
Burlington, ON

RE: Letter of Support TRN-02-26 Burlington Economic Development & Tourism Destination Stewardship Plan

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

On behalf of RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the Burlington Economic Development & Tourism Destination Stewardship Plan outlined in Report TRN-02-26.

RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant is the Regional Tourism Organization serving the geographic area that includes Hamilton, Burlington, Halton, Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. As an independent, industry-led, not-for-profit tourism organization funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, our mandate is to drive tourism growth, economic activity, and job creation through collaborative destination marketing, product development, workforce development, and strategic partnerships across the region's diverse communities. We work closely with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada to leverage destination development and marketing opportunities to support incremental growth in the regional visitor economy.

We strongly support the Destination Stewardship Plan's comprehensive and forward-looking framework for sustainable tourism and destination development in Burlington. This plan not only elevates the city's capacity to welcome visitors responsibly, but it also aligns with the broader regional priorities of promoting sustainable economic impact, enhancing local quality of life, and deepening community collaboration. The emphasis on strong governance, signature neighbourhoods, diversified visitor experiences, placemaking, and a unified destination narrative is consistent with best practices in destination stewardship and regional tourism development.

RTO3 also recognizes Burlington Economic Development & Tourism as Burlington's designated Destination Marketing Organization and a valued partner in regional tourism development.

BEDT's ongoing leadership in destination marketing, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative program delivery contributes to a vibrant visitor economy that supports local businesses and enhances community vitality. Our organizations have worked together on shared priorities such as regional marketing promotion, stakeholder capacity building, and sustainability initiatives. We look forward to continuing and strengthening these partnerships through coordinated implementation of the Destination Stewardship Plan.

In particular, we applaud the Plan's integration of a unified destination brand strategy. A cohesive brand that reflects Burlington's unique attributes will enhance market visibility, support business competitiveness, and strengthen the region's overall tourism positioning. RTO3 values the opportunity to align regional marketing initiatives with local strategies like those articulated within the Destination Stewardship Plan to ensure consistent messaging, broadened reach, and amplified economic impact across visitor segments.

Destination stewardship, defined by intentional growth that balances economic benefit with environmental protection, social well-being, and community integrity, is essential for the long-term resilience of the tourism sector. At the regional level, RTO3's work in destination sustainability, partnership building, and integrated marketing underscores the importance of coordinated action across scales. We believe that the proposed stewardship framework for Burlington will complement ongoing efforts across the Hamilton Halton Brant region and support a more robust, resilient, and equitable visitor economy.

RTO3 Hamilton Halton Brant fully supports the adoption of the Destination Stewardship Plan and encourages Council to advance this initiative as a strategic investment in Burlington's future prosperity.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria V. Fortunato". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Maria V. Fortunato, Executive Director

Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association (RTO 3)