

1 **Direct Testimony of**

2 **James J. DeGennaro**

3 **On Behalf of The City of Haines City**

4 **Before the Florida Public Service Commission**

5 **February 21, 1997**

6

7 **Q. Please state your name, business name, address and title.**

8 **A. James DeGennaro, 600 N. Broadway, Suite 300, Bartow, Florida, Senior Vice**
9 **President Central Florida Development Council.**

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11 **Q. Please describe your educational background and your business**
12 **experience.**

13 **A. I attended the University of South Florida and graduated from the Economic**
14 **Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. I have been an**
15 **Economic Development Professional for 13 years and have been with the**
16 **Central Florida Development Council since its inception in 1985. In 1995, the**
17 **Florida Economic Development Council recognized me as its "Professional of**
18 **the Year".**

19

20 **Q. Please describe your role as a community leader in Haines City.**

21 **A. I have worked directly with the City of Haines City for 15 years in both**
22 **community and economic development. As the former Administrative Manager**
23 **of the Polk County Community Development Block Grant Program, I was**
24 **responsible for working with City Government to make comprehensive housing**
25 **and neighborhood infrastructure improvements to the community. These**

1 projects were valued at more than \$5 million. As the chief business recruiter
2 and manager of a county wide business retention program, I have worked
3 extensively with Haines City in the expansion of existing businesses as well as
4 in the attraction of new companies to the fast growing community. A recent
5 example would be in my close working association with City officials to attract
6 the \$35 million Ytong Florida, Inc. project to Haines City. Ytong will open its
7 lightweight concrete products plant this spring and will employ 120 persons.

8 **Q. Why is it appropriate that the Florida Public Service Commission be**
9 **concerned with the provision of countywide extended area service for**
10 **Haines City?**

11 **A. Long distance telephone tolls create an economic impediment as Haines City**
12 **develops along with several of Polk County's municipalities. As Lakeland and**
13 **Winter Haven have become the hubs for economic activity in Polk, it is**
14 **imperative that the citizens of Haines City have easy and economical access in**
15 **order to enjoy the same business climate growth. Furthermore, long distance**
16 **tolls create a cost of doing business and living in Haines City that creates a**
17 **competitive disadvantage for business in that community.**

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19 **Q. In what ways will the implementation of countywide extended area service**
20 **impact your business and community interest?**

21 **A. One of the primary objectives of the Central Florida Development Council - a**
22 **public/private partnership between the Board of County Commissioners and all**
23 **area Chambers of Commerce - is to market the assets of Polk County as a**
24 **whole throughout the United States and the world. Haines City brings valuable**
25 **assets to our marketing effort. However, the office of the Central Florida**

1 Development Council is located in Bartow, the county seat. To call Haines City
2 requires long distance telephone calls and vice versa to our office.

3

4 **Q. In what ways do you foresee the implementation of countywide extended**
5 **area service impacting the economy of Haines City?**

6 **A. As the U.S. Highway 27 corridor (Frostproof through Haines City) and the 17-92,**
7 **highway 60, and interstate 4 corridors, continue to develop as a business and**
8 **residential location, Haines City will interact more and more with established**
9 **business communities in Polk County. It is imperative that extended area**
10 **service be available to promote countywide development. If EAS is**
11 **implemented, Haines City's market area is increased. The West Polk County**
12 **area holds a potential market for larger than the Haines City and extreme**
13 **Eastern area of the County. When tolls are lifted, that market can be cost**
14 **effectively targeted by Haines City business.**

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16 **Q. Describe what you see as Haines City's growth potential with the extended**
17 **area service for local telephone usage.**

18 **A. With extended area service in place, Haines City can mature as one of the**
19 **fastest growing residential and service areas in Polk County.**

20

21 **Q. Please describe any additional factors which you believe the Florida Public**
22 **Service Commission should consider with regard to Haines City's**
23 **application.**

24 **A. As it now stands, Haines City is the only community in Polk County where**
25 **residents and business owners are penalized by long distance telephone tolls**

1 to their friends and business contacts in other parts of the county. Haines City
2 is not an island, but a key player in Polk's future growth.

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