



December 10, 2018
Mayor Brown and Members of Council
Corporation of the City of Brampton
2 Wellington Street
Brampton, ON L6Y 4R2

Re: Guiding Principles and Priorities for Brampton’s Economy

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

Congratulations on your election to the 2018-22 Council. The Brampton Board of Trade looks forward to working with you toward the goal of enhancing our city’s prosperity and quality of life.

Building prosperity in our city for more than 130 years, the Brampton Board of Trade is Brampton’s largest and most representative business association. This note is both a welcome to your new responsibilities and is intended to provide guidance from the business community as you embark upon the next four years.

We understand that economic development will be a primary focus for this term of Brampton Council. We support this focus and wish to elaborate on how we can best assist with this objective – building Brampton Advantage.

The Brampton Board of Trade has a long history of working closely with the City’s Economic Development Department. Current initiatives together include collaborations in entrepreneurship, innovation and trade. In fact, the five pillars of the Board of Trade’s Prosperity Agenda complement the core themes of the City’s Economic Development Master Plan and Mayor Brown’s priorities. In that regard, we offer the following comments:

1) Competitiveness

Brampton competes on a global basis with other major cities around the world. Recent tax reform and trade policy in the United States have made business investment in U.S. cities more attractive for Brampton business people. U.S. representatives visit Brampton businesses often, offering a wide variety of incentives to relocate. Nearer to home, recent investments in higher-order transit in Waterloo and Hamilton have sparked new business investment in these cities. Brampton businesses also have tangible opportunities to invest internationally with new trade agreements and connections worldwide. Competition for investment is fierce. As such, Brampton must always be conscious of the competitive environment and proactive in its marketing efforts.

Specifically, we encourage Council to work with the Board of Trade to:

1. **Clearly articulate comparative advantage:** We recommend a series of steps to fully leverage Brampton's advantage for job-creation and investment attraction. Update the comparative cost of doing business analysis; ensure the property tax rate is competitive; showcase sites online with one click, providing convenient information for investors; and leverage Board of Trade ambassadors by providing them with the key messaging and marketing collateral to encourage new investment.
2. **Reduce friction:** Be the most convenient and welcoming city in which to do business, remaining agile and using common sense. Business investment favours jurisdictions that respect that time is money; and ones that structure human resources, systems and processes at the Planning and Economic Development Departments to optimize customer experience. Recently, the Economic Development Department established an expeditor. This is a positive step. However, some businesses still believe that customer service still needs to be improved, especially in comparison with other jurisdictions. Council should consider how service training and measurement of customer experience can be better tracked and communicated to the business community to demonstrate commitment to both customer-focus and improvement in customer experience over time.
3. **Proudly Market:** Ensure marketing plans include outreach and ongoing relationship-building with site locators; visits to growing businesses and clearly communicated initiatives to move Vision 2040 forward in a timely way. With respect to international trade and foreign direct investment, the Brampton Board of Trade looks forward to leveraging our contacts and expertise to bring new jobs to Brampton.

2) Infrastructure Game-changers

The Economic Development Master Plan confirms the importance of a number of 'game-changers' – infrastructure and initiatives that facilitate a quantum leap in Brampton's attractiveness for investment and business competitiveness.

The plan includes the need for higher-order transit; greater regional connectivity; and downtown development, including acceleration of important flood mitigation strategies and development of the Riverwalk.

Specifically, we encourage Council to work with the Brampton Board of Trade to:

1. **Strongly advocate:** for two-way all day GO train service across all of Brampton's stations and the entire Kitchener Corridor by encouraging Metrolinx to make a decision on the freight bypass or alternatives, and for the provincial government to return this project to its current capital spending plans in order for the promised 2024 in-service target to be reached.

2. **Fully explore:** innovative governance such as Superlinx, which would relieve municipalities in the GTA from transit costs by uploading and accelerating decisions to get projects built, including higher order transit in Brampton and better connectivity throughout the region.

3. **Ensure timely communication and project-scheduling for the Downtown Reimagined project:** Even though the Downtown Reimagined project has been approved, business people express concern that too many projects seem "up in the air", including the path forward on a Ryerson building; Hurontario LRT; Queen Street BRT; downtown mobility hub and flood mitigation/Riverwalk. It is incumbent upon Council to be sensitive to the market realities of local businesses and their ability to serve customers during a prolonged construction period. To be less than clear on the timing, the path forward and co-ordination of these projects within a coordinated downtown redevelopment plan risks business failure, job loss and waste of tax dollars. A coordinated plan that considers impacts on parking, loading and unloading, customer communications, public awareness and tax-relief should be completed before construction begins. To protect their livelihoods, downtown businesses need clarity and certainty. Businesses need time to have important, time-specific conversations with landlords, staff and bankers. That's why a comprehensive response from Council that provides clarity in these four areas would be helpful:
 - a) A report that recommends relief measures available to businesses impacted by construction. Plans to support the financial viability of businesses during construction should be clearly communicated.

- b) A report outlining commitment of resources for communications. Communication plans directed at customers, to support businesses during construction will be key.
- c) A report outlining loading/unloading and delivery feasibility. The streetscape plan doesn't allow this on Queen and Main. Potential locations have been identified behind stores and in laneways. Clear loading/unloading/delivery plans during and after construction are very important to downtown restaurants, stores and services; and
- d) A comprehensive plan that aligns streetscape work in light of other development plans in the area (e.g., LRT-routing, Ryerson, Centre For Innovation, new condos, new library etc.) and ensures that the Downtown Reimagined is consistent with other important master plans including Living The Mosaic; the Economic Development Master Plan and Culture Plan, to ensure that future developments do not require disruption/disturbance of the streetscape once completed.

3) Talent

Brampton is fortunate to have the youngest work force in Canada, significant investments from post-secondary institutions such as Sheridan and Algoma and new opportunities with Ryerson University. These assets are ones that can be fully-leveraged to better attract, retain and develop talent in Brampton.

Specifically, we encourage Council to work with the Brampton Board of Trade to:

1. **Understand that Talent Attraction and Transit are linked:** Higher-order transit is linked to Brampton's quality of life including our ability to attract, retain and develop talented young people and business investment. The deterioration in ease of getting around town for those living and doing business in Brampton is having a direct impact on investment and job-creation.
2. **Welcome Innovation:** Encourage a larger post-secondary footprint in downtown Brampton. This would include promotion of Ryerson's continuing education programs in 2019 and the ongoing advocacy for more investment from this university. Move forward on innovative projects such as the downtown incubator to encourage more collaboration among young innovators. Continue to encourage better access to capital through active advice to groups such as CBA Catalysts.

3. **Invest in lifestyle amenities:** such as festivals, arts and culture and the priorities outlined in the Culture Master Plan. Attracting talented people and keeping them in Brampton is directly linked to the quality of life they can enjoy. By employing a collaborative approach to creating space, funding and promoting creative initiatives in our city, Brampton strengthens its civic pride, international brand and attractiveness for investment and talent.

4) Civic Leadership

Citizens want to feel proud of their city. How Council operates and its commitment to integrity is core to civic pride. Brampton citizens expect genuine consultations, collaboration, alignment and accountability.

Specifically, we encourage Council to work with the Brampton Board of Trade to ensure:

1. **Accountable committees:** Brampton City Council has been perceived, in the past, as beholden to developers and self-appointed special interest groups. Building upon the large-scale Living the Mosaic consultations conducted by Larry Beasley, the business community encourages genuine consultations to occur in the coming term. Inclusion of knowledgeable citizens on advisory committees would add to the quality of decision-making and advice provided to Council. We encourage Council to consider appropriate representation on these committees and to resist the temptation to over-represent with elected officials, who have the opportunity for input at Council meetings.
2. **Respect for taxpayers** by minimizing the property tax burden, giving consideration to more efficient delivery and uploading of services. As well, tax rate predictability is an important precursor to business investment. Longer term targets that respect the ability of businesses and residents to pay would be welcome. For the last 6 years, taxes have increased an average of 4.25%, more than twice the rate of inflation. The current Financial Master Plan assumes that increasing taxes every year for the next decade is reasonable. Businesses do not find this sustainable. Specifically, Council should require staff to:
 - Identify efficiencies that result in a decrease in taxes of at least 1%.
 - Reduce the capital replacement reserve contribution to 1% this year due to the strong financial position of the City.
 - Fund service improvements in higher-priority areas by balanced service reductions in lower priority areas.

If these recommendations are followed, the net effect should be a tax increase of about inflation or 2%. It can be lowered if the City completes a service level and delivery review, using third party assistance, which the Brampton Board of Trade also recommends.

3. **Better collaborations** with senior levels of government. With the new Mayor and Council in place, the business community expects strong collaborations with regional, provincial, federal governments to meet important development, healthcare and transportation needs. The Brampton Board of Trade has helped create important alliances of business communities throughout Ontario and Canada, such as the Canadian Global Cities Council and Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council. The Brampton Board of Trade looks forward to leveraging our research, advocacy and government relations efforts in support of these important outcomes for Brampton.

Throughout its history, the Brampton Board of Trade has been a willing partner to the City, our Mayor, Council and city staff as we collaborate to achieve our common goals of supporting our business community, growing our economy and strengthening our community. We look forward to continuing this tradition with you.

Sincerely,



Heather Strati
2018 Chair, Brampton Board of Trade



Manpreet Mann
2019 Chair, Brampton Board of Trade