



Mayor Brown and Members of Council
City of Brampton,
City Hall
2 Wellington Street,
L6Y 1M8

December 13, 2022

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council:

As our local economy continues recovery from a global pandemic that has touched every facet of our lives and business operations, it is imperative that City Council adopt a laser-focused approach to growing our economy. As is tradition, at the beginning of each term of Council, the Brampton Board of Trade provides City Council with private sector perspective and guidance on priorities for the term ahead.

Brampton needs jobs. Brampton needs investment. Fortunately, Brampton is in the unique position of having many city-defining projects at various stages of progress. Council's ability to bring them to completion is paramount.

In that regard, you can count on the Brampton Board of Trade as a partner committed to Brampton's continued prosperity. Now operating in its 135th year, the Board of Trade's 1900 members represent businesses of all sizes and sectors, from solo entrepreneurs to multinational corporations. Together members of the Brampton Board of Trade employ more than 61,000 in our city. In addition to providing more than 40% of all jobs in Brampton, Board of Trade members volunteer their time to support a variety of economic development initiatives. This includes mentorship of young start-ups, advice on municipal budgets, creation of meetings and forums that connect our business community, active advocacy for Brampton at senior government levels and collaborations with businesses world-wide.

The Business Community's Vision for Brampton

The Brampton Board of Trade's vision for our city is very clear. It is a city poised for greatness. A city that leverages its proximity to Toronto and position in Canada's Innovation Corridor, optimizes its critical infrastructure, and one that provides a business environment that instills pride, confidence, and renewed investment.

Employees will find good jobs close to home. They will find first-class educational and skill development opportunities. Specifically, job-ready training will be available in emerging technologies and in-demand sectors, including cyber-security, electric vehicle manufacturing, logistics and healthcare. Employees will have options to travel to work on well-maintained roads or convenient local and regional transit infrastructure and will benefit from a host of lifestyle amenities including a vibrant downtown, commercial districts, trails and parks to enjoy.

In order to achieve this vision, progress is needed in the following areas:

Competitive Advantage

Issue: Business investors and job-creators have choices. Council must be acutely aware not only of what businesses need to create jobs but also what else is being offered by other competing municipalities. Currently Brampton ranks fourth among GTA municipalities for development approval times. On average, it takes over a year (13 months) for development approvals. Time is money and a keen source of competitive advantage.

Action: City Council must ensure that the Planning department has the personnel, leadership, systems and resources to reduce development and building-permit approval times. A concerted effort to reduce duplication, stabilize taxes, reduce unnecessary expenditures will be required.

As well, Council must consistently monitor delivery times and conduct benchmarking with other municipalities. This is very important for the city to more often become the first choice for business investment.

Hurontario LRT Extension (Main Street Corridor) and Other Transit Priorities

Issue: Early in its term, Council will be required to decide among two format choices (surface or surface with tunnel portion) for a Transit Project Assessment Project (TPAP) for the mission-critical Main Street LRT Extension. Council expressed its preference in the previous term and we understand further information will be provided by City staff early this term prior to the TPAP decision.

The reality is that Brampton is in an intense competition with many other regions for finite infrastructure dollars from senior orders of government, and it is reasonable to assume that advocating for the alignment with the strongest business case will offer the best opportunity at securing capital funding. A strong business case also includes consideration for the needs of transit riders.

Additionally, other projects with significant opportunities for transit connectivity are at critical stages and require this Council's focus and advocacy. Seven day, all day, two-way GO train service will unlock great potential for residents, employees and businesses in Brampton. Council, in collaboration with the Province and Metrolinx, must also ensure that the Queen Street – Highway Seven Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) between Brampton and Vaughan moves forward as the next major regional spine. Council also needs to focus on supporting the rapid and Canada-leading ridership growth of Brampton Transit. That means funding sufficient service hours and continuing to expand the Züm bus network.

Action: In arriving at a decision on the LRT and advocating to senior governments, Council must take into consideration the business case for each option and the advice of City staff. Given the capital cost and construction method differences between the two options (based on the both current information and information understood to be forthcoming) Council must pursue every competitive advantage in securing funding from the federal and provincial governments. If it chooses a more expensive tunneled option, it must clearly articulate the property tax impact to businesses. Further, Council should continue its advocacy on relocating the Hurontario LRT Brampton Gateway Station to the northside of Steeles Avenue and plan to mitigate the impact should it remain on the south side.

Municipal Budget Process

Issue: The Brampton Board of Trade has been a consistent voice throughout many years of municipal budgeting. Our open letters, public delegations and small group meetings with business members, elected officials and senior city staff have shaped both process and policy outcomes. Significant concern remains regarding transparency with the 2022 budget process. Councillors received information last-minute. Forecasts were incomplete and tens of millions of dollars of capital projects were re-allocated or cancelled without sufficient detail provided to Council. Healthcare for example, was not given adequate consideration before passing the budget, requiring a re-opening and decision to add a 1% hospital levy to the property tax rate several months later.

Action: The Board of Trade will again offer its advice as part of the city's pre-budget consultation. We encourage council to ensure that a transparent approach becomes a normal part of city budget approval operations.

Further, as families and businesses face on-going pressure from inflation and rising interest rates, stability and predictability in property tax rates is both responsible and fair. We encourage Council to keep tax increases low by effectively advocating for senior government funding partners and making strategic choices to ensure that the most badly needed capital projects can move forward. It is our expectation that future municipal budgets offer credible and transparent forecasts for future rates, offering all residents and businesspeople the ability to plan.

Specific Land and Building Projects

As this council considers the budgets brought before it over the next term, they should look for evidence of progress in several specific areas:

Centre For Innovation (CFI): This proposed lynchpin of Brampton's Innovation District needs to be brought to completion. According to Brampton Board of Trade analysis, the project remains short a portion of the capital funds required.

Action: Time is of the essence. Private sector space needs are being re-evaluated. Council should ensure that the next municipal budget – and successive ones, if needed – offers full funding and a plan to move forward to secure an anchor tenant for the Centre For Innovation. If Council does not have the expertise or capacity to manage this project, efforts should be made to engage the private sector so that this valuable land can be put to good use.

Third Hospital: A third hospital for Brampton has been a longstanding priority of both the city and the Board of Trade. Adequate access to healthcare is frequently cited by member businesses as a requirement for their future expansion plans in Brampton. As part of last year's budget process council belatedly added a 1% property tax levy to fund the city's portion toward its second full hospital and cancer care centre, an initiative that the Board of Trade supported.

Action: Future budgets must ensure that capital costs for a third hospital are satisfied and presented in a fashion that is transparent and inspires confidence from the provincial government, who will be a major funding partner.

Post-Secondary Opportunities: The next council should be mindful of the significant post-secondary footprint that already exists in Brampton and its potential to act as a catalyst for growth. Supporting our existing post-secondary institutions as they seek to adapt and expand their programming over the life of this council should be a priority.

Heritage Heights

Issue: With the provincial government re-elected with a clear mandate to build the GTA West Corridor (Highway 413), the urgency has only increased for the next council to direct planning staff to develop a viable alternative to the urban boulevard concept that the Ministry of Transportation has deemed incompatible. There are viable alternatives that support both the province's vision of a 400-series highway and the city's vision of a compact urban boulevard.

Action: Progress on the Heritage Heights file must accelerate. Council must direct planning staff to develop a viable alternative to the urban boulevard concept. As one of the largest undeveloped sites remaining in southern Ontario, it offers unparalleled opportunity for a dense, 15-minute community that offers housing, educational and employment opportunities within a tight space. The potential for Brampton is immense and the project must proceed without further delay.

Housing and Childcare

Issue: Brampton Board of Trade members frequently cite an absence of housing and childcare opportunities as barriers to recruiting and retaining employees, and ultimately to growing their businesses. In recent weeks the province has provided clear direction on policy changes that will allow for an increase in density, and revised housing targets show the urgency and scale of the challenge in Brampton.

Action: Council should work with the new provincial framework to identify opportunities to get more housing starts off the ground quickly, and come up with creative planning solutions to increase density as a way of making housing more accessible.

As the federal-provincial agreement on affordable childcare moves toward implementation, the city must stand up at every opportunity to ensure that Brampton receives adequate benefit. Beyond simply increasing overall childcare availability, sensitivity must be had to the need to provide options outside of the traditional 9-5 workday in recognition of Brampton's diverse economy.

Governance and Civic Leadership

Issue: The Brampton Board of Trade applauds the provincial government's decision to appoint a facilitator to review governance in Peel Region. One of the key questions Brampton businesses are asking is whether a separate Corporation of the City of Brampton has become too expensive for taxpayers?

In a recent survey of Business Confidence, Brampton businesses continue to hold little trust in city hall. Only 1 in 4 agree that the municipal government displays a positive external brand image. Only 1 in 5 business respondents agree that the municipal government shares priorities that align with business

needs or is trustworthy. 58% of respondents to the Board of Trade's Business Confidence survey see amalgamating into a single-tier City of Peel as the best way forward.

Successive changes in senior city leadership during the last term suggested instability at a time of concurrent global uncertainty. The next council must offer an example of civic leadership that inspires pride and confidence among businesses and residents alike. The process to select a permanent Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), for example, seemed rushed, limited in scope and absent of public input. Disappointment in the hiring processes at city hall continues.

Actions: Council should keep an open mind that governance reform resulting in a City of Peel may be the best outcome for Brampton residents and businesses. City of Brampton should fully cooperate with the provincial facilitator to bring the best solution and result for taxpayers.

As well, hirings at city hall must occur with professionalism and transparency, and city staff must be trusted to be non-political and accountable to residents and the whole of council, as opposed to a Mayor or individual councillor.

Finally, council must hold themselves to the highest standards personally and professionally. This is especially important when representing the city on external marketing opportunities, such as international trade missions.

In Conclusion

As Council embarks on this term of Council, please know that members of the Brampton Board of Trade look forward to working with Mayor Brown and Council and city staff on tangible steps to attract talent, investment and jobs to Brampton. The Brampton Board of Trade will continue to advocate at senior levels of government to ensure we have the transportation, transit and health infrastructure our community requires. Working together with city council, the Brampton Board of Trade continues to be a reliable partner for prosperity. We look forward to overcoming challenges and capturing opportunities that continue to move our city forward.

Sincerely,



Todd Letts, MBA, CCE
Chief Executive Officer



Donna Fagon-Pascal
Chair, Brampton Board of Trade