

**Deputation to Committee of Council
Brampton Board of Trade
May 10, 2023
Re: Light Rail Transit (LRT) Extension Study Update**

Good morning, your Worship Mayor Brown and members of Council. My name is Todd Letts, CEO of the Brampton Board of Trade. The Brampton Board of Trade is an independent, non-profit association of business leaders comprised of over 1900 business owners and company representatives that employ 61,000 in Brampton.

The LRT extension is an important investment in infrastructure for our city and, today, we encourage Council to approve the recommendations contained in staff's update report.

For more than a decade, The Brampton Board of Trade has been a consistently strong advocate for the Main Street LRT extension to Brampton GO and eventually to the Caledon border. Our volunteers – business people from all sectors and from all commercial and industrial neighbourhoods in Brampton have put the time in to analyse reports, interview experts, and discuss the path to LRT extension success with elected officials at relevant ministries and Metrolinx. Being mindful of the cost and disruption to businesses, the Board of Trade has consistently encouraged Council to put its best business case forward to attract senior-level funding.

From the business community's perspective, there are three key messages we offer to assist you in your approach to completing the extension:

1) Brampton's business community wants the LRT built because it will significantly improve Brampton's quality of life and economic prosperity for its citizens.

- The LRT will improve property values along Main Street. In addition, the LRT will attract significant investment, both commercial and residential, to the corridor and downtown.
- In anticipation of the LRT extension, Brampton has already seen many downtown development plans proposed by Greenwin, ROGERS and other job-creating public and private sector organizations.
- And not just downtown, we know that there are substantial benefits for employers and employees throughout the city. Having a north/south rail spine connecting Steeles to Brampton GO, enables the re-deployment of busses to east/west routes making getting to work, and life in general, a lot easier for

those in our commercial and industrial neighbourhoods east and west of downtown.

Because of the many LRT benefits, we encourage Council to take an approach that makes it easy for the provincial and federal governments to say “yes”.

In that regard, we offer a second and gentle cautionary message to Council concerning risk.

2) There is a real risk, that, in the time it takes Council to present its best business case, the windows of current funding opportunity will close.

The message Brampton’s business community wants to emphasize today is urgency – there is a big cost and a big risk of failure – by not presenting a plan that can be realistically-funded.

In its report, staff recommend:

- further dialogue with Metrolinx and the province to inform which preferred alignment will be brought to the TPAP process, reporting back in approximately six months.
- Further, staff seeks Council’s direction to explore and discuss funding options with the provincial and federal governments.

This is good. Our question is **to what end? What is the end objective of these six more months of discussion?**

The Brampton Board of Trade recommends going a step further. In your discussions with senior level governments, please make successful negotiation of a funding commitment, a **prerequisite**, before Council chooses to move forward on a preferred option. Let’s be clear, if there is no written commitment from the senior level governments **to spend three times more than necessary**, Council should resist the temptation to pursue the partially-tunnelled option.

Why are we recommending this? At our recent municipal issues forum, we discussed a timeline and the optimal funding window available given upcoming federal and provincial elections in 2025 and 26. What we demonstrated is that there’s a real risk that if Council chooses to bring an alignment through TPAP without a credible commitment to funding, that the process could be set back by years, risking that money allocated for Brampton would go to another community, again – and requiring the alternate, more financially-viable route to be taken through the same process.....again.

For the sake of the jobs, investment and growth that the success of this project brings, Brampton's business community asks that you please select a preferred alignment with a full-funding commitment attached.

And lastly,

- 3) The Board of Trade encourages Council and staff to be balanced in their assessments of the two options. Both benefit Brampton.

The staff report correctly notes that both options are feasible, but then includes a chart that uses colour-coding to make the surface option appear significantly inferior. That's not the case. Many members of this council have indicated that they "won't say No" to either option – and we welcome this open-minded approach.

So, as such, in reviewing options, it can't be portrayed as though only the most expensive option is a 'win' for Brampton residents and businesses. Either option would be a huge success – and the biggest 'win' would be the one that is actually deliveredsooner rather than later.

In closing, I want to thank Mayor Brown, members of Council and staff for their hard work on this file – it remains one of the largest opportunities Council will see, this term, to enable economic growth and job-creation. This Council has an important task in front of it. The Brampton Board of Trade is here to help guide you in these important decisions. Let's finish the job.