



June 9th, 2022

Mayor Brown & Members of City Council
City of Brampton
2 Wellington Street
Brampton, ON
L6Y 4R2

Mayor Brown and Council:

As the 2018-2022 term of council moves to complete its work and we prepare to enter a campaign period that will elect the 2022-2026 Council, Brampton's business community has asked the Brampton Board of Trade (BBOT) to remind Council and future ward candidates about important economic development choices impacting our city's future prosperity.

There has been a lot of change at city hall since February. There have been several departures and re-assignments in personnel that impact our city's economic development. This letter also serves to re-introduce BBOT to staff in new roles, and to reflect on decisions made during this term that impact Brampton's ability to attract business, encourage expansion and create jobs.

Celebrating 135 years of service, the Brampton Board of Trade advocates on behalf of Brampton's business community. Members represent Brampton's most successful businesses, both small and large, across each of our major industrial sectors. Together, members employ more than 61,000 in our city. The Board of Trade has a long history of providing helpful insight to guide Council decisions. This includes analysis and recommendations for infrastructure investment, comparative industrial advantage and resourcing through the City's annual budget process. Our members appreciate frequent engagements with Council throughout the year, including various deputations and our recent Municipal Issues Forum. This fall, candidates for City Council will be invited to debate municipal issues as part of the Board's 2022 BizVote debates.

There is much promise for Brampton. Recent announcements of the Toronto Metropolitan University Medical School, MDA's relocation, ROGERS proposed relocation to downtown Brampton and the recent \$3.6B investment in Stellantis bode well for the future of our local economy.

Likewise, Brampton's innovation ecosystem continues to grow with the successful launch of B-Hive, relaunch of the Altitude Accelerator and other important initiatives to complement the Rogers Cybersecure Catalyst, TMU Venture Zone, retail programs of the downtown BIA and trade services provided by the Board of Trade.

However, some choices that Council has made have compromised Brampton's economic competitiveness. Indecision or delay in making difficult decisions fuels a lack of business confidence in city hall and has delayed critical work on projects that have the capacity to unlock more of Brampton's economic potential.

While not an exhaustive list, some examples include:

- **LRT Extension:** The decision to not fully-fund Main Street LRT Extension in 2015, forgoing much needed job creation and fueling a protracted debate over the future of the project has prevented Brampton from reaching its full economic potential. Even today, seven years later, Council's indecision (two formats being brought to 30% design) means that Brampton is no closer to securing funding partners. Although this term of Council has decided on a Main Street alignment and it is in the draft Official Plan update, Council was premature in their declaration of a preference for the tunnel option. At a cost as much as \$1.2 billion more than the alternative, fewer stops and a weaker business case, this preference threatens the viability of the extension ever securing adequate funding from senior-level governments. The Board of Trade encourages City Council to decide on a format that has the strongest business case so that provincial and federal funding can be secured and the project started as soon as possible.
- **Heritage Heights Concept Plan:** The failure of Council to direct staff to plan a viable alternative to the urban boulevard design concept in Heritage Heights, despite the Ministry of Transportation's clear communication that it is incompatible with the plan for the GTA West Transit Corridor, jeopardizes job creation. A more responsible approach is recommended. The Board of Trade recommends that Council direct staff to prepare plans for a viable alternative that both brings a compact town centre to Heritage Heights, and also accommodates an essential highway for goods movement, commuter traffic, a hydro corridor and better access to the proposed location of Brampton's third hospital.
- **Centre For Innovation:** The delays in building the proposed Centre For Innovation (CFI), an anchor for future development in the Innovation District and the linchpin in plans to persuade the University of Guelph-Humber (UGH) to relocate to Brampton is concerning. While some capital funding has been allocated for the future CFI, a large portion is still needed and the project has not yet started in earnest. The business community cannot help but notice that this stands in contrast to the more than

\$600,000 spent in consultant fees developing a case for a hypothetical Brampton U. This leads to uncertainty within the business community as to where council's priorities for the city's post-secondary sector stand. The Brampton Board of Trade recommends that Council focus on leveraging investments proposed by UGH, as well as well-established post-secondary institutions such as Sheridan, Algoma and Toronto Metropolitan University for its best return on investment.

In all three examples, delays and indecision by Council have brought significant opportunity cost and impacted business confidence. Our annual Business Confidence Index (BCI) has identified a significant deficit in the business community's confidence in city hall's decision-making in each of the last two years. Unfortunately, this can have the effect of discouraging investment that could serve to unlock new growth opportunities. No doubt, soon, more choices of a similar magnitude will come before this Council and the next. The Brampton Board of Trade calls on Council to take steps to improve business community confidence in decisions made at city hall.

Summary of Recommended Actions

To remedy potential lost economic opportunity as a result of the circumstances outlined above, we recommend the following:

- Prioritize building of the Main St LRT Extension. Give Brampton its best chance of success at securing capital funding by focusing on the strongest and most persuasive business case
- Immediately begin planning for a viable alternative to the Heritage Heights urban boulevard concept and ensure the alternative is compatible with the Ministry of Transportation's GTA West Corridor highway, transitway and hydro corridor.
- Take decisive action to signal to the University of Guelph-Humber that it is welcome in Brampton and that Council will be a collaborative partner in securing its relocation to our Innovation District
- The Brampton Board of Trade calls on Council to take steps to improve business community confidence in decisions made at city hall.

Lastly, we are aware that Council is revisiting and has commissioned a forensic audit on a number of decisions made earlier in this term of Council. As Council names permanent personnel into senior administrative roles at the City, we ask that the city create a transparent selection process from which qualified candidates with the background, education and leadership experience can be chosen to lead Brampton into the future.

The Brampton Board of Trade looks forward to continuing our engagement with the Mayor and Council, facilitating a robust discussion during the fall's municipal election and then working with the 2022-26 Council to advance our city's shared prosperity.

Sincerely,



Donna Fagon-Pascal
Chair, Brampton Board of Trade



Todd Letts, MBA CCE
CEO, Brampton Board of Trade