



**GUELPH
CHAMBER**
OF COMMERCE

City of Guelph Budget

Delegation Night

Wednesday March 11, 2015

President & CEO Speech

Good evening Mayor Guthrie, City Councillors, and members of city staff. My name is Kithio Mwanzia and I am the President & CEO of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce. We are pleased to be here today to offer the business voice and to play an active role as a dynamic solutions provider so as to build a stronger more robust economy and community here in Guelph. So to that end we have been following the budget process closely.

The Guelph Chamber of Commerce is a member driven organization with over 900 members representing more than 30,000 employees. We have received the National Accreditation with Distinction and are proud to be the champion of the business community here in Guelph.

Tonight's presentation has been informed by the Chamber's research and consultation with business professionals with backgrounds in finance, accounting and business management as well as the membership-at-large. In addition it has been informed by the robust commentary and input we heard at the Guelph Economic Summit earlier this year.

As we proceed forward it is important to note that both City staff and members of Council have continued to be forthcoming and timely with information related to the budget as the Chamber has developed its positions, demonstrating on-going commitment to support meaningful stakeholder engagement.

The finances of municipal governments play an important role in building a competitive environment that retains and attracts businesses.

A central objective of the Chamber's continued involvement in the municipal budget process is to ensure that the municipal public finance decisions are made

with a lens of sound financial principles that balance a community's range of services and a community's ability to pay and remain competitive as an investment and growth location.

It is with this in mind that the Chamber is recommending the following for consideration:

1. **Workforce mobility plays an important role in the ability for a community to remain competitive and ensure sustained robust growth. Transit therefore is an important part of the eco-system of competitiveness and plays an important role when it comes to business and economic growth. Given the budget pressure the transit budget has faced, the Chamber is recommending a further route & service review be conducted and that there be a greater consideration for the connection of Guelph's industrial and manufacturing areas as part of an evolved and modernized model.**

This review should be conducted with the view to develop an action plan that will establish a responsive and evolved transit system. In addition this review should ensure that all service delivery efficiency options are considered including private sector solutions.

Similarly, this review will draw upon the recommendations from the 2010 *Guelph Transit Growth Strategy and Plan and Mobility Services Review – Final Report*.

Lastly this review should take into full consideration the on-going advocacy efforts by both the City and Chamber for all-day GO Transit

and how optimizing local transit and connectivity can further strengthen that case.

2. As part of the on-going commitment by the City to be *open for business*, there is a need to examine closely the overall cost of doing business in Guelph. Given the proposed budget increase and approved increase to Water and Wastewater, there will be a cumulative 7% increase in the cost of doing business directly related to municipal services. In addition to the approved development charge by-law, the cost to existing and expanding businesses continues to rise. The City will need to take concrete and strategic steps to implement systems that balance the cost of doing business with the on-going municipal budget pressures.

To that end there is a need to move towards utilizing the long-term budgeting more strategically and utilizing new tactics that leverage the private sector to manage the City's capital budget programme. Similarly the City will need to implement strategies to ensure a greater level of predictability such as defining the specific indexing metric as well trend analyses that include previous budget actual.

3. The City of Guelph has been a leader in policy innovation however the City faces much of the same challenges as other municipalities. While the City has operationalized much of the policy innovation on its own, it is still limited by provincial policy on fully realizing its potential in this regard.

We therefore commit ourselves to working with the City to collectively advocate for greater tools for budget pressure management which includes a greater capacity for business attraction incentives.

The decisions made on budget in the coming weeks will play an important role in creating an environment that attracts business investment and fosters a stronger and more prosperous local economy.

Thank you again for providing the Chamber with the opportunity to speak this evening, and I look forward to your questions.