



City of Guelph Budget

Delegation Night

Wednesday November 22, 2017

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. 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. It is our Mission to set the national standard for building community prosperity.

Tonight's presentation has been informed not only by that Mission but by the Chamber's research and consultation with businesses of all sizes and business professionals with backgrounds in finance, accounting and business management. In addition, it has been informed by the robust commentary from our Economic Leadership Forums, Roundtables and input we heard at the Guelph Economic Summit earlier this year.

As noted each year, the community driven budget process embraced by City staff and members of Council demonstrates on-going commitment to support meaningful stakeholder engagement and further solidifies our brand as a community that conducts robust engagement and implements stakeholder recommendations.

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

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 decision-making. Given the budget pressure the transit budget has faced, the Chamber is recommending a route 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 and technologies are considered including private sector solutions.

Lastly this review should take into full consideration the on-going advocacy efforts by both the City and Chamber for all-day-two-way GO Transit and how optimizing local transit and connectivity can further strengthen that case.

For us to continue to be Canada's Jobs Powerhouse we must respond effectively to the needs of businesses and their ability to get their teams to work.

2. Governments at all levels are re-doubling their efforts to provide relief for small-and-medium sized enterprise. As a City, it is important to ensure this momentum is not stifled by passing a budget that would raise property taxes higher than the rate of inflation. While successive City budgets have not been able to remain within the rate of inflation due to one-time policy changes like the infrastructure tax – it is important now to examine closely the overall cost of doing business in Guelph and the city’s role in ensuring Guelph remain a competitive place to do business vis-a-vis property taxes.

There are a number of policy tools available to this Council to ensure that this year’s budget is an inflation budget, these include:

- **Monies made available via increased assessment**
- **Monies made available via a policy decision on the vacant property rebate program**
- **Monies made available via savings from conducted service reviews.**

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.