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*Submitted by Juan Gomez*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Toronto Region Board of Trade's 2015 City of Toronto Budget Deputation**

**Toronto, ON, February 2, 2015** – The following is a copy of a deputation from Juan Gomez, Vice President, Policy & Government Relations, Toronto Region Board of Trade, in response to the 2015 Tax Supported Operating Budget.

“Hello, my name is Juan Gomez, Vice-President of Policy and Government Relations at Toronto Region Board of Trade. I am here on behalf of our 12,000 member firms representing over 250,000 business professionals and employees in the Toronto region.

Today I'd like to discuss the opportunity before us to drive real change. We have a newly elected mayor who is fostering a strong sense of cooperation and enjoying strong public support. And we have a council with a clear mandate to get things moving.

In a recent speech, Mayor Tory invited the public to contribute ideas that help the city find more savings and efficiencies. We are here today to support that effort. As Mayor Tory said, business as usual won't cut it.

So first, the challenge before us. The City continues to have an operating pressure that must be resolved. Some have asked if we should gut services or raise taxes. Our members believe there is a better way. We are here today to provide studied ideas to help council make up the shortfall in the short term, while helping to transform city services for long term sustainability.

While fixing the operating budget is an important and immediate need, we must also think long-term and earnestly tackle our staggering infrastructure backlog. The City's infrastructure maintenance deficit alone is \$7-Billion. This doesn't even count the billions more needed for infrastructure development to meet the needs of our City's current population demands, let alone projected future growth.

What these ongoing pressures show is an inability to effectively think and plan long-term. For example over the past two decades the growth in demand for roads and transit has more than doubled the growth in supply. Assets like the Gardiner are coming to the end of their useful life but there is no plan in place to fund the needed renewal of these assets.



New service delivery models can free up public dollars which can help us balance the budget and fund our capital investment needs. These are big investments that go beyond the four-year electoral cycle. This budget is the best opportunity to address the challenges before us.

If not now, then when? Otherwise we will continue transferring these problems to the next generation.

Which leads me to three recommendations.

**First, the City's budget should become multi-year** to allow the City to make better long-term plans and gives businesses certainty about long-term costs and investment opportunities.

**Second is the need to truly modernize City services.** With so many pressing funding requirements facing the city, the status quo is no longer meeting the needs of Toronto's citizens.

**This means transforming front line service delivery through e-government.** Last year candidates talked about the challenges they heard from residents and businesses concerning limited ability to access services online. We can apply best practices from jurisdictions like Australia, South Korea and Singapore where citizens enjoy enhanced access and engagement with city governments.

**This means consolidating shared services.** It's no longer necessary for government ABCs to maintain individual procurement, HR and IT functions. Consolidating these internal processes will lead to reduced costs and improved efficiency.

**This also means moving away from outdated and rigid staffing models.** We've seen success with respect to garbage service, but there are opportunities for technology and job reclassification to further modernize government services. 91% of the growth in net expenditures since 2005 is due to police, fire, EMS & TTC services. Without compromising safety and service delivery standards we need to know what opportunities exist in other parts of the City.

**Third, we need to realise more value from public assets to generate revenue for the city.** We're leaving hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue opportunity on the table by not aggressively selling the air rights above city properties like subway stations, and the leasing of space for retail advertising and other uses. These revenues can be earmarked for critical infrastructure investment projects or to reinvest in the operations and maintenance of existing assets.



With a clear mandate to move forward and with so many pressing needs, these are indeed big challenges. As Mayor Tory said, solutions must come from the public and private sectors.

The Board and our members look forward to working with Council and staff to ensure our City's fiscal future.

Thank you."

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**About the Toronto Region Board of Trade ([www.bot.com](http://www.bot.com))**

Founded in 1845, Toronto Region Board of Trade is the chamber of commerce for Canada's largest urban centre, connecting more than 12,000 members and 250,000 business professionals and influencers throughout the Toronto region. The Board fuels the economic, social and cultural vitality of the entire Toronto region by fostering powerful collaborations among business, government, thought leaders, and community builders. Toronto Region Board of Trade plays a vital role in elevating the quality of life and global competitiveness of Canada's largest urban centre.

Learn more at [www.bot.com](http://www.bot.com) and follow us at [@TorontoRBOT](https://twitter.com/TorontoRBOT).

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