



October 22, 2024

Submission to the City of Toronto Economic and Community Development Committee

Re: Ten Year Action Plan for Toronto's Economy

From: Larry Whatmore, President, Scarborough Community Renewal Organization

Councillor Bravo and members of the Economic and Community Development Committee:

Thank you for launching this initiative, to create the conditions needed to incentivize economic growth in Toronto, as a priority for City Council. We all want Toronto to be a successful city that provides a wide range of jobs for our growing population. Creating an environment that enables our businesses to thrive and which is inviting for new businesses to locate here is a fundamental component of a winning economic development strategy.

The Scarborough Community Renewal Organization strongly supports the objectives of this plan.

We would like to bring a Scarborough perspective to this discussion.

The backbone of Scarborough's economy today is our thousands of small businesses: in manufacturing, construction, logistics, services, and retail. They don't have the same public profile as our large downtown employers but, collectively, they have become the new powerhouse of Scarborough's economy and important employment launching points for many Scarborough newcomers, helping them and their families to integrate into the Scarborough community.

These businesses need to be nurtured and supported through public policy, so they can prosper. To this end, the City's economic action plan needs to be tailored to address the differing needs of our component parts. One size doesn't fit all. A strategy to help Bay Street prosper is bound to look different from a strategy to help Scarborough's business parks prosper. Each has different strengths and opportunities to be cultivated and different weaknesses and threats to be mitigated. If your ten year plan is to be successful, we need to develop action plans for our local economy that are tailored to these distinctions.

The most important thing we can do is to **maintain and enhance our employment lands** and the thousands of jobs they provide for Scarborough (and Toronto) residents. We are pleased to see this as Action Item # 24 in the "Sidewalks to Skylines" report.

This is important. Our business parks are at risk of being converted to housing, one conversion request at a time. While we all understand the need for more housing, we're not going to create a prosperous Scarborough if we solve one problem (housing) by creating another one (fewer jobs for more people).

This goes beyond our business parks. Scarborough needs more office and professional jobs too. We have some, of course: in our anchor institutions (Scarborough Health Network, U of T Scarborough, Centennial College, and the Toronto Zoo) and in our business parks. We have some prestigious private sector employers too, including Toyota, CTV, and in the office towers of the Consilium.

But we need to do better, especially at the Consilium, where we have an opportunity to create a commercial "node" that spreads economic prosperity beyond the financial district. The Scarborough subway extension, coming soon, is the key to enabling the original vision of the Consilium to finally be achieved.

Creating an economic action plan that enables Scarborough businesses to prosper will do more than simply spread the wealth. It'll help City planners achieve another important goal: advancing the notion of "fifteen minute neighbourhoods" in a suburban context, where you can access many of life's amenities closer to home, including employment. Imagine the possibilities for Scarborough: less congestion on our roads, shorter commutes, and an improved quality of Scarborough life.

We look forward to the day where we see a mix of Scarborough businesses, small, medium and large, across a broad range of industries, supported by public policy and a planning framework that enables them to thrive and provide a broad range of employment opportunities for hundreds of thousands of Scarborough workers.

We need an economic action plan that will take us there over time and the political commitment to see it through. The action plan before you is an ambitious road map to take us there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry Whatmore', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Larry Whatmore
President
Scarborough Community Renewal Organization
Larry.Whatmore@rogers.com
(416) 562-2101