NEWS RELEASE

Chambers and Stakeholders Applaud Toronto Region Board of Trade for Advancing Bold Transit Ideas
Board Releases Second Agenda for Growth Playbook

TORONTO, ON, January 29, 2018—Today, with the release of its second playbook in its Agenda for Growth series, Toronto Region Board of Trade (the Board) and regional stakeholders are calling on Ontario’s political parties to move ahead on recommendations to enhance transit in the region.

For the Toronto-Waterloo region’s economy to succeed, a regional transit network is the price of entry. Limited regional integration, continued political interference and a lack of sufficient and sustainable funding are hampering efforts to keep the region moving, say the Board, its chamber partners and regional transit stakeholders.

“With a provincial election on the horizon and municipal elections taking place in October, now is the time to put forward bold ideas, spark discussion and challenge politicians to outline how they will make our region more economically prosperous and livable,” said Jan De Silva, President & CEO, Toronto Region Board of Trade. “Superlinx reignited the critical conversation about the future of transit in the Toronto-Waterloo region. Our economy, our residents and our visitors require a modern transportation network across the region. We need to get moving.”

This playbook is an update to the Board’s Superlinx concept paper, which was submitted to Metrolinx in November 2017. It incorporates feedback and solutions provided by the proposal’s supporters and critics, identifying solutions to the region’s challenges including:

- Commercialize transit related real estate to develop housing and new revenue sources
- Attract pension fund partners
- Unlock the province’s growth funding and borrowing capacity
- Depoliticize decisions and enhance independence and transparency
- Prioritize projects with evidence-based benefits
- Improve provincial policy coordination
- Integrate fares
- Expand commercial services and smart technologies for riders
- Develop a rider-based funding formula

“A single transportation authority in the Toronto-Waterloo region would be able to operate, implement and develop regional transportation planning infrastructure in a more cohesive, cost-effective and timely manner,” said Todd Letts, CEO, Brampton Board of Trade. “A collective approach to regional transit would allow our cities to have more cohesive planning, better connectivity, eliminate existing barriers to service and create sounder criteria for transit investments.”

“With elections on the horizon, we have a real opportunity to move forward on solutions that will build a transit system that works for the region and its people,” said Sevaun Palvetzian, CEO, CivicAction. “The Board’s Superlinx report has created one conversation and there are many others. The important point is that people are talking, now let’s get them moving.”
“Improved project prioritization and substantive evidence-based planning would ensure that transit investments are targeted based on sound criteria, including return on investment and evidence that the investment will reduce or eliminate existing barriers to service,” said Ian McLean, President & CEO, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. “We encourage a detailed and extensive analysis of the Superlinx proposal.”

“If we are to truly compete with the leading regions around the world for talent and investment, we have a lot of ground to make up in developing a world-class transportation system,” said Keanin Loomis, President & CEO, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. “I applaud Toronto Region Board of Trade for reigniting a necessary conversation. In Hamilton, our current local transit situation is less than ideal, so it’s particularly timely. We also know that a significant portion of our workforce lives and works in different cities, thus necessitating integrated transportation planning through a broader, regional lens.”

“The Toronto Region Board of Trade is to be commended for kick-starting an informed discussion about transit governance,” said Clark Savolaine, Senior Manager, Deal Advisory (Infrastructure), KPMG. “Superlinx is a practical solution to an intractable problem. A major advantage of the proposal is that it proposes to move transit to funding versus the stale debates around moving funding to transit.”

“Transportation is a core component within the GTHA’s economic competitiveness model as it allows the clear movement of people and goods; however, congestion across the GTHA is impacting our economic competitiveness,” said Debra Scott, President & CEO, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce. “Superlinx addresses many of the key areas that we have been unable to move forward on; namely the ability to advance a municipal and region wide transportation platform with a focus on integrating transportation networks across the GTHA-Waterloo region.”

“The OCC and the Board align and share many principles regarding transportation planning in the Province of Ontario. Chief within this is the recognition that transportation is a vital component in the movement of people and goods and thus plays a critical role in the economic competitiveness and development of Ontario,” said Rocco Rossi, President & CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

This report is the second in the Board’s Agenda for Growth, a series of comprehensive policy playbooks that will put forward the Toronto region business community’s perspective on how to elevate the region during the 2018 Provincial Election. In November, the Board released its Energy playbook. Playbooks on Housing and Economic Competitiveness will be released in the coming weeks.

“With the global spotlight on the Toronto region it’s clear we have all the ingredients to be successful,” said De Silva. “Working together we can make Toronto the most competitive and sought after business region in the world and continue to attract more business investment and support the talented people who call our region home.”

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Positioning the Toronto region as a global champion

The Toronto Region Board of Trade is one of the largest and most influential chambers of commerce in North America. Our constant flow of ideas, people and introductions to citybuilders and government officials firmly roots us as connectors for—and with—the business community. Backed by more than 12,000 members, we advocate on behalf of business for policy change to drive the growth and competitiveness of the Toronto region. We act as catalysts to make Toronto one of the most competitive and sought after business regions in the world, which starts with the success of our members. Learn more at bot.com and follow us @TorontoRBOT.
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