

**Mayor Rob Keffer's Keynote Speech**  
Bradford Board of Trade - Breakfast with the Mayor  
May 21, 2015

Good morning everyone, and thank you so much for coming to this breakfast.

I want to thank the Bradford Board of Trade and Nottawasaga Futures for putting this event together, as well as our Town's Office of Economic Development.

Thank you, too, to Deputy Mayor James Leduc for being our master of ceremonies, and my colleagues on Council for joining us.

I think perhaps the most valuable part of this morning is the chance to visit with one another and share ideas around our tables, but I do want give an update on the direction of our Town.

In particular, the advertisement for this event suggested I would speak about "how our community has performed this past year and how we are positioning the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury to be a leader in Simcoe County".

I want to speak about the big picture before talking more locally, because I think we can only talk about BWG in the context of our region.

Let me start by saying that Bradford West Gwillimbury is unique within Simcoe County:

We're the farthest south community, and in some ways we have a lot more in common with York Region communities like East Gwillimbury and Newmarket, as we share GTA problems like traffic congestion, commuting to and from work, and growth.

But we are also a farming community — Canada's carrot capital, but other agriculture too, like wheat and corn, cattle and dairy (like I farm) and various other crops — and we share much of our farming community with King Township, New Tecumseth, and Innisfil.

I think this blend of being somewhat GTA and suburban, as well as a rural, farming community positions Bradford West Gwillimbury uniquely within Simcoe County, and it is an opportunity for us to harness.

A few months ago, The Agenda on TVO did a series on the City of Barrie, which like BWG is unique within the County.

Barrie is also rapidly growing, with hopes to add a university campus, to expand the Royal Victoria Hospital and expand its bus system.

My colleague, Mayor Jeff Lehmann, is the chair of the large Urban Mayors' Caucus, and was recently up in Ottawa to advocate for cities in advance of the federal election.

As well, last month he hosted Premier Wynne to announce a doubling of GO train service to and from Union Station over the next couple of years, which will be a huge help for our traffic problems, but also in getting folks around our region, and even people from the city into town on weekends — there's the potential to boost our tourism there as a 'gateway' to Lake Simcoe...

And just last night I was in Barrie attending a Building Municipal Resiliency Conference, hosted by Mayor Lehman.

Anyway, I wanted to point out what Barrie is doing because, of course, as a city they are in a different sphere than BWG, but their advocacy and connections to other levels of government are something I have tried to emulate and copy as mayor.

For instance, the very first thing I did as mayor was write to the provincial Minister of Transportation about our traffic problems, including ways we can upgrade our GO station, integrate GO transit with our BWG bus service and work towards a link between Hwy 404 and Hwy 400.

I then had the opportunity to meet with the Minister a few weeks later, as well as at a conference with fellow council members this winter in Toronto.

Similarly, I have made a point of reaching out to the chief of staff to the provincial Minister of Economic Development and have met with his parliamentary assistant, an MPP from Ottawa, to discuss how we can attract industry to BWG.

This kind of cooperation and collaboration behind the scenes is very important, to work to get things done.

Our big picture needs can only be addressed by working with the other levels of government, including the county and province.

Of course, there is also a federal election this October, and like I said the big city mayors were in Ottawa to make their case for what municipalities need.

So, I want to just briefly suggest three ways the federal parties could support economic growth and improve the quality of life in Bradford West Gwillimbury.

In this year's federal budget, there was a promise that a few years from now there will be a dedicated fund for transit of \$1 billion.

This is good news — but I think we need to go further and have more details on how that money will help regional transit like GO trains and local buses, but also how the

federal government can work with small towns like ours on the basics, like roads, bridges, sidewalks and bus service.

I think the federal parties should talk to us about how they will work together with municipalities across our region to invest to fix traffic congestion.

We also need the federal government to support affordable housing in a much bigger way, so our seniors can afford to stay in our community when they downsize.

(That may not be directly about economic development, but you know as businesspeople that we need seniors with disposable income so you can run a successful business here in town.)

And finally, I think the federal parties need to share plans on how they can get the big picture right so we can attract industry and get the economy firing on all cylinders.

June 4, I, along with Deputy-mayor Leduc, and Councillors Lamb, Sandhu, and Contois are going to the FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) conference along with the Warden and Deputy-Warden of the County, and Mayor and Deputy-mayor of Innisfil to network, and be heard.

I ran on a plan to unlock industrial land at Cty Rd 88 and Hwy 400, but we need federal and provincial support to attract industry to our town, and the right policies so that companies are looking to expand and hire.

What I have been working on is a real plan and on developing the relationships with the county, province and federal government to put Bradford West Gwillimbury on the map to get that economic development we sorely need.

That is the big picture, and it is an ongoing endeavour that will take time and cooperation and all the levels of government working together, so we can fix our traffic problems for folks who commute or truck their goods to market, so we have a thriving economy to attract new industry, and the quality of life a strong economy provides. What about more locally?

There are plans in the works to get the infrastructure in place to help attract industry and policies to support the industry we already have.

You can see the work proceeding to get sewer and water out to 400. And just on Tues, we had a resolution to send to neighbouring municipalities to show the benefits of the 400/404 Link.

And I am using all members of Council and staff's contacts to further the discussions.

But beyond those plans, I am very proud of the very open, consultative and collaborative approach we have worked together to bring to Town Council, so we are accountable and approachable in solving your problems.

I think our Community Access Network meetings in our wards and our communications have drastically improved transparency and collaboration within our town. I 'm excited about our environmental Forum, our Arts & Culture meetings and our Diversity Forums.

We are using everyone's expertise in town and are open to ideas, suggestions and concerns.

In terms of local jobs, I am really excited by the new businesses I have had the pleasure to cut ribbons for lately, especially here in the downtown.

Slowly but surely, and thanks in part to funding Town Council put in place last term, our downtown is being revitalized and our storefronts beautified.

The downtown still as a ways to go, but I think folks are finally seeing that we're getting there — just look at Evans and Evans, or Skwarchuk's Funeral Home or the storefronts neighbouring us here, with more renovations planned.

Town Council is doing its part too, having resurfaced Holland St and nearby parking lots, and working with local volunteers to put up flower baskets and banners.

When I was talking about the big picture earlier, my focus was on getting the little things like relationships with the cabinet ministers right. The same is true in terms of the local issues as well: we're getting the little things right so you can grow your business and succeed in your goals.

And as a Council, we will use the tools we have at our disposal to move the Town in the direction we want. (We distributed water units to a developer in Town, so we could get badly needed bungalows built, get badly needed road connections finished, and get developing a part of Town that has been sitting vacant for too long.)

We are doing our best to get things right so you can run your business and meet your goals.

So, that is how we are trying to position BWG as a leader in Simcoe County: by putting us on the map with the other levels of government and creating a collaborative, open and responsive Town Council for local issues.

I hope it's helping, and I hope you will let me know how we can improve.

Because it is that two-way street that will really put us on the map as a community that gets things right so we can grow our economy.

Thank you again for joining us this morning.