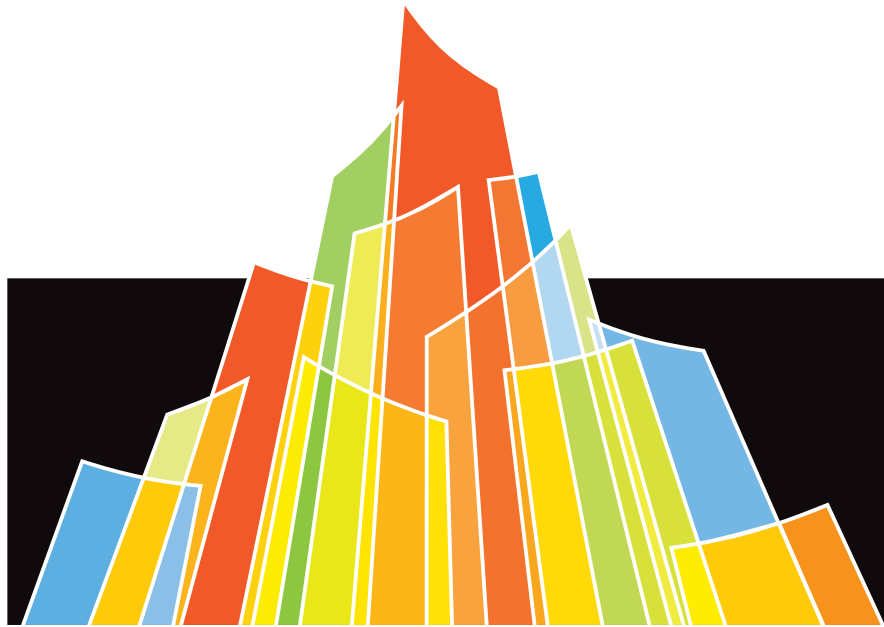


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# emerging leaders

A CITY OF TALENT

# Context of Emerging Leaders Recommendations

## **Introduction**

A budget sends a message about the priorities and values of a municipality; it is the most important annual policy exercise that a City Council undertakes on behalf of the citizens it represents. It is especially important for London in 2013, as we are a community at a crossroads.

The current challenges facing London are the result of global economic forces largely outside of our control. In the wake of these challenges, Londoners have responded with optimism and a sense of shared responsibility for finding local, community-based solutions. As should be expected when a community faces hard choices about priorities, there are differences of opinion on the specific policy options available to address the challenges before us. Ultimately, it is up to Council to listen to the advice provided by the community and the civic administration, to approach deliberations with respect for each other and for the community, to approach policy options with an open mind and willingness to compromise, and to make the difficult choices necessary to chart a path forward. Emerging Leaders has full confidence in the Council and we wish you the very best in your deliberations.

All Londoners – Emerging Leaders included – share a common goal to ensure future prosperity for our community and its citizens. We offer you policy advice in that spirit.

## **About Emerging Leaders**

Emerging Leaders' focus is to attract, retain, and engage 20 to 44 year old talent in and to London. To be specific:

### *Purpose of Organization*

- *Establishing and offering professional development programs for the benefit of persons resident in the City of London, Province of Ontario and primarily directed at persons between the ages of 20 and 44;*
- *Developing and fostering a spirit of community involvement and investment;*
- *Advancing the cultural and social interests of persons resident in the City of London, Province of Ontario and primarily directed at persons between the ages of 20 and 44; and,*
- *Establishing a support network for persons resident in the City of London, Province of Ontario and primarily directed at persons between the ages of 20 and 44 which promotes opportunities for professional and personal relationship building.*

We are fortunate in London to have a vibrant talent pool from which to draw, and, more and more, London is becoming a City of Talent. This is evidenced by the research developed in our post-secondary institutions, our vibrant and growing arts sector, growth in digital businesses,

the food sector, and the wave of engagement in everything from civics to how we contribute our time, energy, and resources to non-profits and charities.

It is with the above in mind that Emerging leaders respectfully submits input to the direction and deliberation of the 2013 City of London Budget.



### **Things we have learned: Work in London**

London is comprised of a diverse workforce and each sector, from transportation to education, has direct and meaningful impact on how our city succeeds. But in thinking about these sectors, and how to grow and engage them, Emerging Leaders sought input from our membership on how they thought of London and what difficulties they faced in finding work here. We followed this up with a symposium where participants could hear how other jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally, have worked on these issues.

### **Work in London: An Emerging Leaders Survey**

Our Work in London Survey discovered some troubling information but also provided a means where by we could begin to think about solutions. In the Survey we found that:

- **63.9%, had a Bachelor's degree or higher**
- **58.4% of them had full time employment**
- **21.6% are unemployed or underemployed**
- **70.6% reported that it was somewhat or very difficult to find employment in the career of their choice in London**



The responses we received and depth of the input was meaningful and further underlined that this demographic was committed and wanted to contribute to London's current and future prosperity.



The participants ranked the following in order of importance as a focus for future success:

1. Employment Prospects
2. Quality of Life
3. Engagement
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Hiring Young Professionals
6. Collaboration

Some of the key recommendations were :

- More internship opportunities for students
- Investment in public transit
- Development needs to be thoughtful
- Develop a city brand with their participation
- The City should partner with Western & Fanshawe to engage students
- More initiatives from Western/Fanshawe to integrate with the London community
- Attraction/Retention collaboration only works if actual resources are in place
- The need to keep and enhance a strong downtown core
- Directly support entrepreneurship and startups

## **An Untapped Resource**

One of the key shifts that has happened in recent years is that the younger demographic we serve has become much more invested in the direction of London and its future success.

Through social media and blogging this younger demographic is expressing itself much more often and is paying much closer attention to our municipal affairs. This has also translated into businesses owned by this demographic not only providing economic benefit but also being involved in donating and volunteering their company time to causes in the city. Sagecom, Simalam Media, Uber Cool, rTraction, Echidna Digital Solutions, Digital Extremes, and Voices.com, have all done this. All of this involvement from individuals/organizations/companies points to a resource that City Council can tap for assistance. This is the benefit of having a city filled with talent that is eager and willing to roll up its sleeves to assist council. We encourage you to use this resource in moving London forward.

## **Budget Recommendations**

Emerging Leaders recommends that the Council keep the following policy principles in mind during the budget process. These principles are adapted from the work of Richard Florida of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto, and through ongoing consultations with Emerging Leaders members. We believe these principles must be at the core of any strategy to retain and attract the talent London will need to thrive in the years ahead.

From Emerging Leaders perspective, the 2013 budget must work to:

- Develop a modern municipal infrastructure in London that allows for a technologically advanced and entrepreneurial culture to thrive.
- Invest in cultural, social, and learning opportunities that make London a vibrant, exciting and healthy place to live and work.
- Foster tolerance in London by embracing diversity and by supporting those who are most disadvantaged in our community to reach their full potential.
- Be fiscally prudent, which requires budget decisions to be rooted in long term strategic planning and a community vision rather than short term goals.

Our overriding recommendation is that Council protect essential community services that help support the above principles. A 0% tax increase is a laudable short-term goal, but we are concerned that the actions required to achieve it in 2013 will put London at a long-term disadvantage in the growing competition to attract and retain an increasingly scarce supply of creative, talented and skilled workers in the 22-44 year old demographic.

To keep London competitive in the attraction and retention of talent, we recommend the following specific actions for the 2013 Budget:

**1. Set a municipal tax rate that protects investments in:**

- Public transit, bike lanes, and making London a more walkable city
- Libraries, arts, culture and heritage
- Services for newcomers, entrepreneurs, and job seekers
- Services for vulnerable populations in the city.

We appreciate the Council's goal to balance service provision with fiscal restraint, but after reading the budget submissions provided by the Civic Administration we are not confident that the services critical to retaining our demographic can be maintained by setting the municipal tax rate at 0%.

- 2. Do not use reserve funds to reduce the tax rate.** Of the \$191 million currently in reserves approximately 68.5% is committed to future projects. Use of these funds could have a negative impact on London's credit rating, reducing our ability to make future investments and placing a greater strain on debt servicing costs.
- 3. Do not sell community assets to achieve a one-time reduction of the tax rate.** Assets such as London Hydro, the Covent Garden Market, and the Convention Centre provide an ongoing source of revenue to the municipality, and also provide elected officials with a measure of influence over their management. We aren't recommending against selling assets in principle, but we believe assets should not be sold unless it is in the community interest and if there is a compelling business case to do so. We do not believe a goal to achieve a 0% tax rate meets these tests.
- 4. Any new capital projects recommended within London's Prosperity Plan must have a sustainable financial plan to afford the increased debt burden without constraining our long-term ability afford essential community services.** The potential return on investment must also be compelling enough for the municipality to take the risk of incurring additional debt, regardless of our ability to afford the financing costs.
- 5. The Council must move to a multi-year approach to creating the municipal budget, setting annual budgets that are meaningfully linked to a long-term strategic and financial plan.** The current year to year approach to budgeting is not conducive to the efficient delivery of municipal services; if recent London history is indicative of the future, it could also lead to dramatic swings in tax growth if rates are not set based on a sustainable, long-term financial plan. This creates uncertainty and can erode confidence in civic leadership, which is not positive for talent retention in the city.

## **Conclusion**

We have provided you with information on how the demographic feels about working in London, some of the recommendations provided at our symposium with a more detailed report to follow, and Emerging leaders recommendations on the current budget. Emerging Leaders recognizes the difficult work Council has before it and knows that you will consider our input in the spirit it was intended. As an organization made of of members that are deeply committed to London's current and future well being.

Scott Courtice - Board Chair

Chantelle Diachina - Vice Chair

Joel Belisle - Secretary

Shauna Forret - Treasurer

Sean Quigley - Executive Director