

TO: MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: Zvi Lifshiz, B.Sc., MBA, Executive Director Invest Barrie (ext. 5417) 

NOTED: Carla Ladd, Chief Administrative Officer 

RE: 2016 Business Plan – Invest Barrie Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer

DATE: January 25, 2016

At the General Committee meeting on Monday, January 18, 2016, following a fair amount of in-depth discussion, members of General Committee voted to approve 1 FTE position for the Invest Barrie Grant Writing and Talent Provision Specialist as part of the budget deliberations.

The position of Grant Writing and Talent Provision Specialist would bring a significant amount of value to Barrie, and would support key functions and strategic initiatives. Examples include:

- Investment Attraction – The position would:
 - Create key areas of differentiation in Barrie's value position relative to other communities. The focus would be to provide high value-add services (both grant writing and talent provision) that are unique and that will resonate with business decision-makers. This not only opens more doors, but also makes Barrie more competitive.
 - Create a match between the City's value proposition and the primary decision-drivers for business in several of Invest Barrie's target industries. Talent retention, for example, is quickly becoming a key success driver and limiting barrier in several industries. Our hypothesis is that with this position, Barrie has real opportunities to help companies alleviate this problem and thereby carve out a unique market position for itself.
- Business Retention & Expansion – The position would:
 - Assist existing employers access grants and other government programs that can help with expansion (hiring and training programs, export funding programs), innovation (R&D programs, commercialization programs), access to technology (process automation programs) and much more.
 - Assist existing employers with their workforce needs by understanding anticipated hiring plans and implementing programs to support those needs (e.g. job fairs, targeted initiatives with the regional school boards).
- Growth of New Industries – The position would:
 - Enable the growth of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) expertise and skills in the community. This is a key component of Invest Barrie's ability to support the growth of new sectors of the economy including Technology, Life Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing, which help diversify the economy. A diversified economy not only provides a greater variety of career options for residents, but also reduces economic risk.

While the position described above is important strategically and will add a significant amount of value to the community (both in terms of employment and in terms of new sources of funding entering the community), the FTE for the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer requested by Invest Barrie is equally as important to the strategy, but actually has a higher priority for 2016 for the following reasons:

- The activities that are planned for this role have already begun, and have made visible progress over the last year. It is anticipated that the momentum that has been established would be reduced if those activities were to stop. The work to date has been performed by an individual that is backfilling for a full time staff member on maternity leave. However, when the full time staff member returns from maternity leave in March, the plan calls for her to begin focusing her efforts on direct lead generation, attraction and business retention/expansion.
- The activities performed by this role form the baseline of the transformational layer of the Invest Barrie strategy, and therefore enable key objectives of the strategy (i.e. diversifying into knowledge-based industries, creating sustainable competitive advantage and resiliency in the economy, developing a vibrant community of high-potential start-ups). A sample of key activities that are already underway, or which will start shortly in 2016, include:
 - Start-up Events – Events are one of the primary ways in which start-up ecosystems develop. Potential entrepreneurs who attend events are not only able to access new skills for start-up development, but are also able to connect with each other, find partners, develop crucial networks, etc. Examples of events held so far include Raizit, Mentor Mash, and Mobile Payment Innovation.
 - Ecosystem Development – A coordinated ecosystem of start-up and entrepreneurship service providers is often cited as a key determinant of success of a start-up community. To date, Invest Barrie has worked with both the Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre at Georgian College and VentureLab (a “Regional Innovation Centre” like MaRS in Toronto) to create a coordinated approach to services such as mentorship, education, acceleration, funding, etc, and to ensure that there are no gaps in the services that are available. That is, the goal is to ensure that every type of start-up, regardless of their stage of growth and commercialization, will have access to the range services that maximize the probability of success.
 - Acceleration Services – Many people have entrepreneurial interests, but often don’t know where to begin. One approach to engaging potential entrepreneurs is to provide a step-by-step process that takes them from idea to commercialization. This can be sector specific (for example, the current entrepreneur program that is currently underway or the foodpreneur program that will launch by mid-2016), or it can be based on the growth potential of the business (for example, both the “BUILD” acceleration program provided by Venturelab and the “Fast Lane” program provided by Innovation Guelph are being explored with a view of bringing it to Barrie in 2016).

- Open Innovation – The open innovation framework allows businesses to innovate with external innovation partners, rather than trying to do all innovation themselves. This is quickly becoming a very popular model for innovation because it greatly reduces risk, cost and timelines associated with innovation. Invest Barrie is working on developing an ecosystem of open innovation firms in 2 sectors of the economy, with the goals of (a) developing a core competitive advantage for Barrie by positioning Barrie as a unique open innovation hub for manufacturing and health innovation, (b) providing an opportunity for our manufacturing base to accelerate innovation and take advantage of industry-specific opportunities. The Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer role is responsible for building the 2 open innovation ecosystems. Important steps to initiate the open innovation ecosystem have started, but the launch of the first open innovation pilots will occur in 2016.
- There are a multitude of additional high-value activities that are currently underway, and which are planned for 2016.
- While the impact of stopping the activities associated with the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer would be felt immediately, as described above, the activities associated with the Grant Writing and Talent Provision Specialist have not yet begun and therefore could be mitigated in the following ways:
 - Grant writing support - The individual in this role would not be writing any grants. Instead, Invest Barrie would partner with a company that has deep grant-writing expertise in order to perform the analysis and write the actual grants. The role of the Grant Writing and Talent Provision Specialist would be to promote this service throughout the business community and to ensure that opportunities for grants are well known and are being leveraged where appropriate. Given that this role will not be writing any of the grants, the function of promoting the program, meeting with businesses to perform an assessment of grant applicability (together with the grant writing partner), and managing the deployment of the program can be shared between the Executive Director of Invest Barrie, the Director of Business Development, and the Business Development Officers. Therefore, the grant writing portion of the position could still be deployed.
 - Talent provision – As mentioned in the analysis above, the role of talent in the growth and diversification of the economy is significant. However, given all of the entrepreneurship and strategic activities that are currently underway (and which would be continued under the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer), there are existing innovative activities taking place that focuses on new sectors, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Therefore, if the talent-driven initiatives were to be delayed into 2017, the impact would be less severe than if the strategy and entrepreneurship projects were to stop.

It is important to clarify that while the two positions do not directly rely upon one another, they are both important elements of a co-ordinated strategy, and therefore deploying them at the same time would be the optimal approach.

However, in light of General Committee's clear direction that progress of the strategy must be balanced against budgetary pressures, it is possible to mitigate the impact of not deploying the roles simultaneously as described above. For these reasons, should Council be willing to maintain the single FTE, the Executive Director believes that the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer position would provide the community with the greatest level of benefit in 2016, and would request that the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Officer position be the one approved by Council.

Should Council wish to alter the General Committee recommendation to permit the Strategy & Entrepreneurship Officer position to proceed, the following amendment would be required:

"That motion 16-G-018 of Section "B" of the General Committee Report dated January 18, 2016 concerning the 2016 Business Plan be amended by deleting 3 c) and 7 d ii) and renumbering the remaining portions of the paragraphs accordingly:

Should Council wish to alter the General Committee recommendation to delete the Grant Writing & Talent Provision Specialist position, the following amendment would be required:

"That motion 16-G-018 of Section "B" of the General Committee Report dated January 18, 2016 concerning the 2016 Business Plan be amended as follows:

a) That the following be added to paragraph 3:

") That Intake Form #1247 regarding the Grant Writing and Talent Provision Specialist representing the addition of 1 permanent position (pages 270-271) be deleted resulting in a net levy reduction of \$68,879."

b) That the following be added to paragraph 7 d):

") Intake Form #1247 - Grant Writing and Talent Provision Specialist representing the addition of 1 permanent position (pages 270-271), representing a reduction of in the funding required from the Tax Capital Reserve of \$9,020