



COLLABORATING FOR INVESTMENT ATTRACTION IN THE TORONTO REGION

Op-Ed Submitted By the Mayors & Chairs of the Toronto Region

Last month, the Toronto Region received word that it had made Amazon's shortlist of 20 potential candidates to host its second North American headquarters. We are honoured to have been included in this esteemed group of incredible cities – even more so as Canada's representative on the list. This is an unmistakable sign that our region is regarded as one of the best destinations in North America for investment and expansion. The Amazons of the world are taking note, and we believe it's the start of big things to come for our region.

It was a significant step forward for Canada to be included in an international RFP of this magnitude and it took the support of all three levels of government to put together competitive bids from Canadian cities. We are indebted to both the Province of Ontario and Government of Canada for their support throughout this endeavour.

Since we submitted our collective bid, the interest in the Toronto Region as a place to call home and set up shop has never been stronger. And no wonder. With world-class, affordable talent; a booming tech sector; the highest rate of postsecondary graduates in the OECD; and a population of 6.5 million that speaks over 180 languages and dialects; the Toronto Region has all the ingredients needed to make it one of the best cities in the world in which to live and work. By making our bid book public, we invited Amazon and the entire world to take a closer look at all that the Toronto Region has to offer – whether you're a Fortune 500 tech company or an intrepid new grad looking for an exciting place to make your mark.

We knew our best selling point was the diversity of our economy and our people — the combination of a highly stable and globally competitive industrial base with a community of tolerant, talented citizens from all over the world. Our challenge was to make sure that message got delivered — clearly and cohesively.

Our bid was unique in that it was a truly regional effort. It didn't focus on the assets of any one particular jurisdiction but rather showcased the region as a whole. We took this collaborative approach because we knew it was the best way to win.



Global businesses like Amazon don't see municipal boundaries. Rather, they look to assets across an entire region to support their activities. They tap into supply chains made up of firms interspersed throughout the area and recruit people who commute from neighbouring communities. When a foreign company establishes in Markham or Ajax or Burlington, the entire Toronto Region benefits from the creation of jobs and the spinoff effects from having a new, globally connected firm to impart knowledge and goods and services.

A [new study](#) from urban researchers David Wolfe and Richard DiFrancesco at the University of Toronto, entitled *Collaborating for investment attraction in the Toronto Region*, shows definitive proof of this. Looking at nine recent major investment initiatives by large, global firms in the Toronto Region, including IBM, Cisco, General Motors and Thomson Reuters, their research found that not only does every municipality in the Toronto Region see an uptick in economic activity from a new investment project, the regional economy as a whole is transformed by the linkages created through research partnerships and the connections built with companies already here.

Siemens, for example, maintains its Canadian head office at a recently leased facility in Oakville, but this acts as an anchor within a much wider subsidiary and distribution network spread throughout the GTA. The company has numerous partnerships with the region's leading postsecondary institutions – including the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, Sheridan College and Seneca College – and is collaborating with other businesses to promote clean tech innovation in Canada.

The increase in GDP and employment generated by these investments can be measured readily, but it's the intangible people connections and knowledge transfer that can enhance a region's prosperity for years to come.

To attract this kind of investment, city regions need a well-defined brand and a coordinated approach. They need to build a value proposition that hinges on the strength of their entire economic ecosystem. That's why one year ago we created a new agency called Toronto Global to spearhead this effort. Toronto Global played an essential role in delivering the Amazon bid and we are proud of what it's achieved.

But whether the Toronto Region wins HQ2 or not, the Amazon bid has revealed much about what global corporations consider when investing in a location. That insight should not be forgotten. To be an attractive and competitive jurisdiction, we need to continue to build regional connections through infrastructure investments and economic planning. We need to continue to support our talented and growing workforce – a crucial driver for any company looking to expand and thrive.



Our early success with the Amazon bid shows that when we work together, we are of a scale that rivals the most competitive cities in North America – which reinforces the need for us to turn our sights outward in order to compete with these global superpowers.

We've now got the world's attention and proof that when we do work together, everyone wins. Let's continue to showcase all that our region has to offer and work together to make the region even stronger. Collaboration is key to our collective success.

Submitted by Toronto Global on behalf of:

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