

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 17, 2025

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS 2025 – EARLY 2026
ACTIVITIES

FROM:

Michael Genova, Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To support the local economy through trade diversification, foreign direct investment, and expanded cultural networks, staff are seeking approval to undertake a series of international activities through the remainder of the Council term.

Report Highlights

- Current trade relations between Canada and the United States underscore the need for market diversification and the development of relationships with international gateway economies to support local economic development efforts.
- Participation in international economic missions represents a significant opportunity to raise the profile of Vaughan's economy among global audiences, generate trade and investment opportunities for Vaughan's key sectors, and expand cultural networks.
- Economic Development staff recommend that the City undertake a series of missions, in addition to previously approved activities, to continue foreign direct investment and trade development activities in relation to the Council-approved Economic Development Strategy.
- The Economic Development department continues to leverage a more than \$90,000 grant from the Federal government's CanExport fund to support the advancement of the City's international economic mission efforts.

Report Highlights continued

- Given the ongoing, unpredictable, uncertain and inconsistent levying of American-imposed tariffs, which are causing a global economic downturn, all government levels are being more responsive by increasing their international relations efforts on short notice with in-person meetings with critical stakeholders, attending conferences, and enhancing network efforts and business development leads to combat the fallout of tariffs resulting in unemployment, declining sales and work stoppages.

Recommendations

1. THAT Council approve a cultural mission to advance international relations in Sora, Delia, and Lanciano, Italy, in September 2025, consisting of:
 - a. The Mayor (or designate as identified by the Mayor under delegated authority from Council), no later than July 15, 2025;
 - b. Up to two Councillors as identified by the Mayor under delegated authority from Council, no later than July 15, 2025;
 - c. Up to three City staff from the Strategic Initiatives Portfolio as identified by the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives (or designate), no later than July 15, 2025, under delegated authority from Council; and
 - d. Mayor and Council support staff as needed and identified by the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives (or designate) no later than July 15, 2025, under delegated authority from Council;
2. THAT Council approve an economic mission to advance international relations at the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Conference and in Northern Italy in October 2025, consisting of:
 - a. The Mayor (or designate as identified by the Mayor under delegated authority from Council), no later than July 15, 2025;
 - b. Up to two Councillors as identified by the Mayor under delegated authority from Council, no later than July 15, 2025;
 - c. Up to three City staff from the Strategic Initiatives Portfolio as identified by the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives (or designate), no later than July 15, 2025, under delegated authority from Council; and
 - d. Mayor and Council support staff as needed and identified by the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives (or designate) no later than July 15, 2025, under delegated authority from Council;
3. THAT Council approve an economic and cultural mission to advance international relations in Israel in October 2025, consisting of:
 - a. The Mayor (or designate as identified by the Mayor under delegated authority from Council), no later than July 15, 2025;

- b. Up to two Councillors as identified by the Mayor under delegated authority from Council, no later than July 15, 2025;
 - c. Up to three City staff from the Strategic Initiatives Portfolio as identified by the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives (or designate), no later than July 15, 2025, under delegated authority from Council; and
 - d. Mayor and Council support staff as needed and identified by the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives (or designate) no later than July 15, 2025, under delegated authority from Council;
4. THAT Council approves participation for up to two staff members from Economic Development in the Global Affairs Canada Trade Commissioner-led Investment Roadshow to London, United Kingdom, and Switzerland in November 2025;
 5. THAT Council delegate authority to the Mayor and one Mayor's support staff to undertake international missions for the remainder of this Term of Council; and
 6. THAT staff report the results of international economic missions to a future Committee of the Whole.

Background

Current trade relations between Canada and the United States underscore the need for market diversification and developing relationships with international gateway economies to support local economic development efforts.

The recent imposition of tariffs by the Trump Administration threatens to affect Canada's economy severely. Canada and the United States share one of the most integrated and beneficial trade relationships globally – annual two-way trade amounts to more than \$1.3 trillion, supporting millions of jobs on both sides of the border.¹ To date, the United States government has imposed a series of tariffs on Canadian goods. These include:

- Twenty-five per cent on non-Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement eligible goods.
- Twenty-five per cent steel and aluminum products.
- Ten per cent on energy products and potash not covered under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement.

Participation in international economic missions represents a significant opportunity to raise the profile of Vaughan's economy among global audiences, generate trade and investment opportunities for Vaughan's key sectors, and expand cultural networks.

¹ Canadian Chamber of Commerce, [The Cost of Canada-U.S. Trade Disruption on Full Display with New Trade Tracker](#).

International economic missions were identified as a key action in Economic Development's Council-approved Action Plan for 2023-2027. They represent a significant opportunity to raise the profile of Vaughan's economy among global audiences, generate trade and investment opportunities for Vaughan's key sectors, and expand cultural networks.

Since 2022, Economic Development has undertaken a series of international economic missions to gateway economies in Europe, the United States, and Asia. These missions have resulted in more than 25 site selection packages delivered to investors and an investment pipeline with over 70 leads.

Economic Development works to achieve three primary goals when undertaking international economic missions:

1. Identify trade and foreign direct investment opportunities.
2. Established and emerging cluster development.
3. Advance the City of Vaughan through best practice research.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report, Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2025.

[Investment Canada Roadshow 2024 Final report and proposed 2025 Federal Trade and Investment Opportunities](#), Committee of the Whole (1) Report, Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025.

[International Economic Relations – Italy 2024 – Summary and Next Steps](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report, Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2024.

[2024-2027 Vaughan Economic Development Action Plan](#), Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report, April 10, 2024.

[Indo-Pacific International Economic Development Mission – Q1 2025](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report, June 18, 2024.

[Inbound and Outbound Delegations](#), Corporate Policy 02.C.02, Jan. 31, 2024

[Cultural and Economic Partnerships](#), Corporate Policy 02.C.01, Jan. 31, 2024

[2023 Germany and Italy Mission Final Report and 2024 Economic Relations Look Ahead](#), Committee of the Whole (1) Report, Jan. 23, 2024

[Health Innovation Ecosystem Development in Chicago](#), Committee of the Whole (1) Report, Jan. 23, 2024

[Council Member Expense Policy](#), Corporate Policy 06.C.02, Nov. 14, 2023

[Web Summit 2022 and International Economic Relations Program – 2023](#), Committee of the Whole (2) Report, Dec. 12, 2022

Analysis and Options

Economic Development staff recommend that the City undertake a series of missions, in addition to previously approved activities, to continue foreign direct investment and trade development activities in relation to the Council-approved Economic Development Strategy.

For the remainder of 2025 and 2026, Vaughan Economic Development staff recommend that the City undertake the following international missions to diversify Vaughan's economy, establish or grow relationships with gateway economies, and expand cultural networks:

1. Sora, Delia, Lanciano, Italy (September 2025)

Vaughan has longstanding relationships with three communities in Italy: Sora, Delia, and Lanciano. A cultural mission to Italy in 2025 will allow the City to strengthen its relationships further and enhance cultural collaboration for knowledge sharing and resident attraction.

The City has formally signed friendship agreements with Sora (1992), Delia (1998), and Lanciano (2002). Vaughan's engaged and dedicated community groups maintain and strengthen these social and cultural partnerships. A unique opportunity exists to strengthen these relationships through a cultural mission to Italy in early September 2025.

The City has taken a number of steps to strengthen its partnership with Sora, Italy. Most recently, Vaughan received a delegation of 17 representatives from Sora in June 2023. The Mayors of Vaughan and Sora reaffirmed their ongoing friendship and committed to ongoing discussions about modernizing the bilateral relationship. Similar activities with Delia and Lanciano continue to enhance cultural collaboration and resident attraction efforts. To reciprocate, the City visited Sora as part of its mission to Italy in July 2024.

2. Milan and Northern Italy (October 2025)

Italy is a vital foreign direct investment, trade and recruitment zone for Vaughan. Vaughan boasts a strong value proposition for Italian investors with an Italian-Canadian population of more than 80,000 residents. To advance opportunities for Italian investment, the City has undertaken two missions and recently participated in a Global Affairs Canada Trade Commissioner Investment Roadshow since 2023.

To continue to advance those leads and generate new ones focused on the agri-food processing, automotive parts, and creative sectors, Vaughan will conduct a mission in early October 2025. Like past missions, this will be in partnership with the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario and the Canadian Consulate in Milan.

The 2025 mission to Milan and Northern Italy will be centred around the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact annual conference. The City joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact in 2025. Cities with more than 100,000 residents can join the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. Canadian Cities participating in the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact include Montreal, Toronto, Guelph, and Vancouver.

3. Israel (October 2025)

The City has a long-standing record of maintaining and fostering economic and cultural relations between Vaughan and Israel through international missions to foster shared opportunities. During a 2019 City-led business mission to Israel, Vaughan renewed an economic and cultural partnership with the City of Ramla, Israel, first signed in 1993. In addition, the mission advanced economic opportunities in health, research, and advanced manufacturing.

A mission to Israel in 2025 will further strengthen Vaughan's relationship with Israel and open new opportunities for cross-border commerce.

4. Global Affairs Canada Trade Commissioner Service Investment Roadshow – London, U.K. and Switzerland (November 2025)

Economic Development staff work closely with Federal Trade Commissioners' staff to identify investment and trade opportunities for Vaughan. Each year, Global Affairs Canada hosts two investment roadshows in target markets around the world. Staff have previously taken part in two investment roadshows, one hosted in Milan, Italy, in 2024 and recently in May 2025 in Taiwan and Singapore.

Investment roadshows represent significant opportunities for staff to further develop the City's international investment pipeline. The Trade Commissioners Service provides logistical support and covers expenses for lead-generation services.

Given the ongoing, unpredictable, uncertain and inconsistent levying of American-imposed tariffs, which are causing a global economic downturn, all government levels are being more responsive by increasing their international relations efforts on short notice with in-person meetings with critical stakeholders, attending conferences, and enhancing network efforts and business development leads to combat the fallout of tariffs resulting in unemployment, declining sales and work stoppages.

The global economic uncertainty is leading to increased international activations by government representatives. It is not uncommon for Vaughan's Head of Council to receive invitations or be notified of international opportunities on short notice. In keeping with the Council-approved May 9, 2023, Strategic Intergovernmental Relations Framework and section 226.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001, it is recommended that the Head of Council and one Mayor's Office support staff be given delegated authority from now until the end of the Council term to undertake commitments that would require international travel. Of note, Section 226.1 reads:

Head of council as chief executive officer

226.1 As chief executive officer of a municipality, the head of council shall,

- a) uphold and promote the purposes of the municipality;
- b) promote public involvement in the municipality's activities;
- c) act as the representative of the municipality both within and outside the municipality, and promote the municipality locally, nationally and internationally; and
- d) participate in and foster activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the municipality and its residents. 2006, c. 32, Sched. A, s. 101.

Furthermore, the City's Cultural and Economic Partnerships policy grants the Head of Council delegated authority to enter memoranda of understanding with prospective municipalities. Given that cultural and economic synergies are critical to attracting and retaining investment opportunities, Economic Development will continue to align these two essential pillars for international missions.

Economic Development Staff is actively working with the City of Grand Rapids to solidify a cross-border economic partnership with an American jurisdiction. This is part of a

broader strategy to help anchor the City's international economic relations in the North-Eastern United States, focusing on investment attraction and trade development opportunities. An Economic partnership will support ongoing intergovernmental relations.

Financial Impact

The proposed missions have no new financial impact. Funds will be drawn from the Council-approved Economic Prosperity fund and the term of the Council International Economic Relations fund.

The Economic Development department continues to leverage a more than \$90,000 grant from the federal government's CanExport fund to support the advancement of the City's international economic mission efforts.

The budget is supplemented by a more than \$90,000 grant from the federal government's CanExport fund.

All expenses incurred due to the participation of Council support staff will be paid from the appropriate Council office budget. Further, if additional Council members wish to join any international mission, the expenses for their participation will be drawn from their Council office budget.

Any travel and activities undertaken by delegation members beyond those needed to execute the City's mission will be coordinated by the delegation member. In such instances, delegation members will be reimbursed the lower amount between the economy fare booked by staff and the fare booked by the individual, consistent with the Council member's expense policy.

Proposed budgets for 2025 - 2026 international economic missions:

Italy (September 2025)

Item	Description	Cost
Airline	Round-trip airfare between Toronto, Canada and Rome, Italy for up to six people (\$3,000 per person), and round-trip regional flights from Rome to Delia.	\$18,000
Accommodation	Six rooms, up to seven nights (\$250 per person/night).	\$10,500

Engagement Materials	Sector Profiles, dignitary items, etc.	\$3,000
Ground Travel	Charters, taxis, etc.	\$8,000
Per Diem	Food and incidentals	\$6,000
Total		\$45,500

Italy (October 2025)

Item	Description	Cost
Airline	Round-trip airfare between Toronto, Canada and Milan, Italy for up to six people (\$3,000 per person).	\$18,000
Accommodation	Six rooms, up to nine nights (\$350 per person/night).	\$18,900
Engagement Materials	Sector Profiles, dignitary items, etc.	\$3,000
MUFPP Conference Registration	Up to four people.	\$4,000
Ground Travel	Charters, taxis, etc.	\$8,000
Per Diem	Food and incidentals.	\$6,000
Total		\$57,900

Israel (October 2025)

Item	Description	Cost
Airline	Round-trip airfare between Toronto, Canada and Tel Aviv, Israel six people (\$2,500 per person)	\$15,000
Accommodation	Six rooms, up to ten nights (\$350 per person/night)	\$21,000
Engagement Materials	Sector Profiles, dignitary items, etc.	\$2,000
Ground Travel	Charters, taxis, etc.	\$4,000
Per Diem	Food and incidentals	\$5,000
Total		\$47,000

Trade Commissioners Roadshow – London, UK and Switzerland (November 2025)

Item	Description	Cost
Airline	Round-trip airfare between Toronto, Canada, London, UK, and Zurich, Switzerland and Toronto for up to two people (\$3,000 per person)	\$6,000

Accommodation	Two rooms, up to seven nights (\$350 per person/night)	\$4,900
Engagement Materials	Sector Profiles, dignitary items, etc.	\$2,000
Ground Travel	Charters, taxis, etc.	\$2,000
Per Diem	Food and incidentals	\$2,000
Total		\$16,900

Operational Impact

No operational impact.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Outbound Delegations are within the mandate of Economic Development's Business Plan as a vehicle for promoting Vaughan's advantages, strategic projects, market opportunities and local businesses in global centers.

Vaughan will continue to work in collaboration with regional partners such as York Region, Toronto Global, the Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service to position itself as a destination of choice within York Region, the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario, and internationally, as well as to focus on making valuable connections abroad to enhance trade opportunities for the local business community.

Conclusion

To support the local economy through trade diversification, foreign direct investment, and expanded cultural networks, staff are seeking approval to undertake a series of international activities through the remainder of 2025 and the first part of 2026.

For the remainder of 2025 and early 2026, Vaughan Economic Development staff recommend that the City undertake the following international economic missions to diversify Vaughan's economy, establish gateway economies, and strengthen cultural ties with global jurisdictions.

Upon approval, Economic Development will begin finalizing mission itineraries, including logistical requirements and travel-related bookings for identified delegation members, in conformity with applicable policies.

For more information, please contact: Raphael Costa, Director, Economic Development, ext. 8891.

Attachments

N/A

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