



**BRAMPTON  
BOARD OF TRADE**



# 2022 ONTARIO PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

**The Brampton Board of Trade**  
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The Brampton Board of Trade is a catalyst for enterprise growth and community prosperity. Together, our members employ more than 61,000 in Brampton. Brampton is Ontario's 4<sup>th</sup> largest city and one of the country's fast growing, welcoming more than 16,000 newcomers each year. Brampton is located at the centre of Canada's Innovation Corridor, a dense cluster of industry and high-tech employment that span the Kitchener-Waterloo Region to Durham. This unique geographic and strategic positioning informs many of our policy priorities.

Our members are businesspeople representing all sectors, including logistics and advanced manufacturing, information technology, food processing and a growing post-secondary footprint. 75% of our membership are small businesses employing 10 or fewer people in our restaurants, retail and business service sectors. Brampton's economy plays an outsized role in our region, province and country:

- **Advanced manufacturing** contributes approximately \$4 billion to the national GDP while employing 30,000 across 1,500 different companies
- **Food and beverage** production adds more than \$1.3 billion in national GDP with contributions from iconic international brands and up-and-comers alike
- **Innovation and technology** offers limitless growth opportunity with programs at leading educational institutions and initiatives to support the start-up ecosystem

As context, our members and broader business community are hurting. The cycle of lockdown-and-open up has taken a toll on near-term bottom lines and capacity for long-term business planning. Recognizing that the Government of Ontario has undertaken unprecedented measures to minimize these harms, this pre-budget submission will focus on a framework for and roadmap to recovery. Several core areas of recommendations will be covered:

- 1) **Initiatives to Stimulate Economic Recovery:** This includes measures to help businesses navigate and continue normal operations in an environment where case counts will fluctuate and new variants of concern could emerge
- 2) **Infrastructure Investment:** Our population is simply growing too quickly to accept the status quo when it comes to our city and region's infrastructure
- 3) **Post-Secondary Education Footprint:** Several exciting projects in the works to expand post-secondary education in Brampton represent an unparalleled opportunity
- 4) **Childcare:** Brampton remains a 'childcare desert' and urgent, creative solutions are required
- 5) **Housing Affordability:** Too many Brampton businesses are losing out on top talent because it is impossible to find quality, affordable housing in our city and region

With that overview as a guide, the Brampton Board of Trade calls for the following specific actions and policies to be included in Budget 2022:

### **Initiatives to Stimulate Economic Recovery**

Our businesses are both bewildered and fatigued, 22 months, 5 waves and 4 lockdowns have taken its toll. As a result, we echo the call of chambers of commerce across the province for a longer-term strategy to manage the virus. We must prepare for future waves and variants of COVID and the potential for regional endemics. A strategy that's more targeted than the blunt instrument of business lockdowns is required. Businesses are finding it so difficult to forecast. They know full well how to protect their employees and customers. What they need is more predictability as to when additional restrictions will be introduced and what supports they will receive during those times.

There also needs to be a plan to help businesses better carry the significant debt many have taken on. By way of example, instead of additional lockdowns, alternatives to keep Ontarians safe without further damaging our small business communities include:

- Expanding the capabilities of Verify Ontario - better tracking of the virus, including contact tracing and proof-of-vaccination technology;
- Incent and assist businesses to upgrade their on-site ventilation to bring even more employee safety and customer confidence;
- Because we understand that the trigger to lockdown is directly related to hospital bed and staffing capacity, we recognize this is the best time, to accelerate approval of the credentials for internationally trained healthcare professionals. This would ease the burden on our healthcare system and reduce the likelihood of needing future lockdowns to protect healthcare capacity.

### **Infrastructure Investment**

Infrastructure investment is another urgent priority for Budget 2022. Brampton is one of the country's fastest-growing cities and our infrastructure needs reflect that. Priorities include:

- **LRT Extension:** Soon, the government will receive an ask from the City of Brampton, ranging from \$400m to \$1.7b, for an extension of the Hurontario LRT from Steeles onto Main Street and to the Brampton GO station;
- **Two-Way All Day GO (TWAD-GO):** Regional connectivity remains a critical issue – we welcome recent steps to further advance the goal of two-way all day GO train service along major corridors, and look forward to further investment towards that;

- **Highway 413:** Closely related to infrastructure, the importance of goods movement solutions across Canada’s innovation corridor and beyond comes into sharper focus each and every day.

Thank you for the province’s firm commitment to build the GTA West Corridor, or Highway 413. Our region is simply growing too quickly to further put off this critical piece of infrastructure. We remain concerned about the impacts of supply chain disruptions on our members and their cost of doing business. We would welcome a wide range of measures to ease supply chain pressures, and solutions that will improve connectivity to the Pearson Employment Zone which is a gateway for so many goods into our region.

### **Post-Secondary Education Footprint**

Post-secondary education has potential to be one of the largest catalysts of Brampton’s growth over the coming decade. On-going provincial support for existing institutions including Ryerson University, Algoma University and Sheridan College allow for their continued expansion and ability to create a direct talent pipeline for local businesses. Additionally, the possible re-location of the Guelph-Humber campus to Brampton represents a significant opportunity.

Further, Ryerson University’s proposed School of Medicine in Brampton would unleash local growth and help to address historic underinvestment in the areas of both healthcare and education. Aspiring medical professions would have an opportunity to study and eventually work closer to home, while an institution of that size would unlock many opportunities for neighbouring businesses capable of serving as vendors. Provincial support for this project is a must.

### **Childcare**

The Premier and Minister of Finance may be interested to know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has identified Brampton as a “childcare desert”, which means there is one spot available for every 4 to 5 eligible children and that the city is one of the most expensive communities for childcare.

We hear loud and clear from our members that a lack of available childcare is a major barrier to recruiting and retaining talent. Creativity in delivering childcare is important for our logistics and manufacturing sectors given the fact many parents work shifts outside the traditional 9-5 workday.

### **Housing Affordability**

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Much like childcare, we hear repeatedly that a lack of affordable housing is a major impediment to business growth in Brampton.

While a complex issue, we encourage the province to look at creative solutions that include making it easier to build the “missing middle”, defined as multi-unit complexes in areas that are traditionally single family.

This could include exploring the possibility of restricting the ability of municipalities to block multiplexes in traditional single family home neighbourhoods. There are also other regulatory tools available such as reducing development charges for multi-unit housing and setting province wide standards that make it harder for municipalities to block housing density.

On behalf of our Chair, Board of Directors, staff and, most importantly, our members, we are appreciative of the opportunity to make this submission and look forward to its careful consideration and the implementation of many of these calls to action in Budget 2022. While our businesses are hurting, Brampton’s business community remains resilient and we know that a robust partnership with the provincial government will result in a strong economic recovery for Ontario.