



**BRAMPTON  
BOARD OF TRADE**



# 2022 FEDERAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

**The Brampton Board of Trade**  
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The Brampton Board of Trade's focus is to support business success, which includes both 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 fastest growing, welcoming more than 12,500 people each year.

Our members are business people 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 is located at the centre of Canada's Innovation Corridor, a dense cluster of industry and high tech employment that spans from Waterloo Region to Durham. This unique geographic and strategic positioning informs many of our policy priorities.

The focus of our 2022 federal pre-budget submission is the transition from recovery mode to a pro-growth environment. Up front, we want to acknowledge the federal government's partnership with the business community throughout the past two years. Support measures have, by and large, been proportionate to the unprecedented nature of the situation. Flexibility and responsiveness have been shown to adapt and better tailor programs to the realities on the ground. Recent moves to loosen testing requirements for cross-border travel by fully vaccinated Canadians have been welcomed as we work to ease supply chain pressures and resume normal trade flow and commerce.

## **Labour & Talent**

Developing policies that will help businesses to fill high-skill labour shortages quickly and with minimal disruption to operations is of paramount importance. Immigration is a policy lever that can be used to address labour market shortages. The number of immigrants admitted under particular categories should be determined based, in part, on labour market needs. While an issue that overlaps with provincial jurisdiction, any leadership that the federal government can demonstrate in the area of foreign credential recognition would also be helpful in addressing labour market challenges.

Additionally, measures that improve access to career paths in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) will provide a strong return on investment. All along Canada's Innovation Corridor, but particularly in Brampton, high-tech jobs directly in and adjacent to STEM fields offer some of our greatest potential for economic growth. There are 100 biotechnology firms within a 30-minute drive of Brampton and the health/life sciences sector has seen 50% growth in employment since 2005. Federal initiatives could include incentives for hiring and training in these fields, as well as better connecting post-secondary to employment needs (to the extent jurisdiction allows).

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A further measure that would be welcomed is accelerating efforts to clear the back log of visa permits for the entrepreneur category.

#### **Brampton Board of Trade Recommendations:**

- 1) Tailor immigration programs to meet workforce needs, including ending the processing backlog for the Start-up Visa program
- 2) Improve access to careers in the STEM fields, including through incentivizing hiring and training and better connecting PSE to workforce needs

## **Trade**

International and domestic trade is a core focus of many our members and expanding opportunities to more trading partners should be a focus of the implementation of Budget 2022. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce network has long raised concerns about barriers to interprovincial (domestic) trade. It remains nonsensical that it is sometimes easier for a business to Brampton to trade with a company in South America than British Columbia. The federal government should be supportive of efforts to knock down interprovincial trade barriers, and not perpetuate barriers by delay on this file.

Looking globally, there is work to be done to cement further trade options. It is unfortunate that Canada still does not have a free trade agreement with India, one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world. In Brampton, there is even more untapped potential given the significant diaspora and the cultural and economic ties that many from that population retain to India. Continuing to negotiate a free trade deal with India must remain a priority during the implementation of Budget 2022.

#### **Brampton Board of Trade Recommendations:**

- 1) Seek ways to become an active partner in tearing down domestic trade barriers
- 2) Continue to pursue international free trade agreements, prioritizing one with India in particular

## **Infrastructure**

Brampton's population growth continues to outpace our local and regional infrastructure, an unsustainable trendline for one of the fastest growing cities in the country. The federal government is an essential partner in ensuring that we do not fall further behind and can begin making significant strides in playing catch-up.

The Board of Trade welcomes and appreciates earlier investments in Riverwalk, an important measure to secure the floodplain in downtown Brampton and eventually unlock significant

growth potential that is currently blocked. There remains further work required to finish Riverwalk, and Budget 2022 would be an opportune time for those commitments.

Soon the City of Brampton will be deciding on its preferred route for the Main St LRT Extension and seeking a senior order of government funding partner. Federal participation in this initiative makes success far more likely, and while the Board of Trade continues to closely monitor the cost differential between the options under consideration, our longstanding position on the LRT is simple: just build it.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's decision to Designate the proposed GTA West Corridor (Highway 413) for further review is unfortunate. Every day that this critical piece of infrastructure is delayed is a lost opportunity for Brampton businesses who are searching for sustainable solutions to get goods to market and their employees to work on time. Budget 2022 should resolve to not spend a further minute unnecessarily delaying this project.

### **Brampton Board of Trade Recommendations:**

- 1) Bring forward further commitments to finish Riverwalk, unlocking downtown Brampton's full potential
- 2) Become a funding partner in infrastructure projects that are of local and regional significance, such as the Main St LRT Extension and expansion of the GO rail network
- 3) Resolve to end unnecessary delays and redundant work reviewing the well-vetted GTA West Corridor (Highway 413)

### **Affordability**

While inflationary pressures across the entire economy are hurting businesses, our pre-budget submission will focus on two key areas: childcare and housing.

Ontario remains the only province without an agreement with the federal government to implement affordable childcare. Recognizing that this is a bilateral negotiation, we hope that an agreement can be completed soon to bring relief to families. A lack of access to affordable childcare is frequently cited by employers who cannot get strong candidates to accept job offers.

In a Brampton-specific context, it is worth considering a couple of factors. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has identified Brampton as a "childcare desert" meaning that there is one spot available for every four-to-five eligible children. Additionally, work schedules in the manufacturing and logistics sector mean that creative solutions are needed to provide childcare outside of the traditional 9-5 workday.

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Like childcare, a lack of affordable housing is a factor that often impairs Brampton businesses' ability to attract and retain top talent. Home ownership slips further out of reach for millions with each passing day and month. While a complex and multijurisdictional issue, federal leadership on housing affordable would be warmly received by our membership.

**Brampton Board of Trade Recommendations:**

- 1) Secure a deal to bring affordable childcare to Ontario
- 2) Provide national leadership in finding solutions to the housing affordability crisis