

2023 Federal Pre-Budget Submission

The Brampton Board of Trade is a catalyst for enterprise growth and community prosperity. Together our 1,900 voting members, made up of business owners and their representatives, employ more than 61,000 in Brampton, or provide about 4-in-10 jobs in our city. Brampton is Canada's 9th largest city and the country's fast growing, welcoming more than 14,000 newcomers each year. 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, our unique geographic and strategic positioning informs many of our policy priorities. We are also partners in national coalitions including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Global Cities Council, which help to shape and amplify our federal-facing advocacy.

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.

Our core message ahead of Budget 2023 is that there must be a laser focus on growth. The federal government must use Budget 2023 and its implementation to relentlessly open doors for more growth, and perhaps equally importantly, remove existing barriers to growth. This includes long-standing pain points such as restrictions on interprovincial trade and more near-term political issues like the unnecessary and duplicative federal review of the GTA West Corridor (Highway 413).

We welcome the opportunity to elaborate on our priorities for Budget 2023.

Summary of BBOT Recommendations:

- a) Continue to clear immigration backlogs, and focus on categories that can help address workforce gaps in the skilled trades, healthcare and STEM.
- b) Offer federal leadership to standardize an approach to international credential recognition and equivalency in credential recognition among provinces.
- c) Act with urgency to secure free trade agreements, including those with rapidly growing economies that can help to strengthen our supply chain resiliency.
- d) Break down interprovincial barriers, a well-documented business pain point and arbitrary limit on growth.
- e) Invest further in our downtown Riverwalk in order to allow the Special Policy Area to be promptly lifted and unlock further growth.
- f) Recognize the importance of the Main Street LRT Extension and be prepared to offer a federal partnership in getting this project build.
- g) Stop the duplicative review of the GTA West Corridor (Highway 413) and adopt a framework for avoiding duplicative and politically-driven impact assessments in the future.
- h) Improve healthcare delivery, a critical need to sustain growth in Brampton.
- i) Partner with institutions and organizations that have the capacity to be a part of the housing supply solution.

1. Labour & Talent

It is clear that one of the largest barriers to even greater economic growth is a shortage of available talent. This is a concern we hear from businesses of every size and sector. The federal government's recently revised immigration targets are a positive first step that demonstrates awareness of the urgency of meeting workforce gaps.

Continuing work to clear immigration backlogs should be a priority area for investment in Budget 2023. Particular attention should be paid to sectors where the labour shortage is especially acute; some examples of this would be in healthcare, the skilled trades and STEM sectors. And while it is largely a provincial issue, federal leadership would be welcome when it comes to developing a standardized approach to international credential recognition as well as equivalency in credential recognition between provinces.

BBOT Recommendations:

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- b) Offer federal leadership to standardize an approach to international credential recognition and equivalency in credential recognition among provinces.

2. Trade

The newly released Indo-Pacific Strategy is a commendable framework and important acknowledgement of the need to deepen economic ties with this region of the world, which is made up of 40 countries and expected to represent 50% of world GDP by 2040. Budget 2023 should look for opportunities to further the Strategy through a lens of strengthening supply chain resiliency. The government should also continue to work in parallel to secure free trade agreements as broadly as possible, including by prioritizing a deal with India and its rapidly expanding economy.

The Brampton Board of Trade has been a longstanding advocate of breaking down interprovincial trade barriers. We have prioritized this issue through our participation in national coalitions, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Global Cities Council. Budget 2023 should re-commit to a systematic approach to breaking down these barriers – while the current approach feels piecemeal, the most important factor is urgency.

BBOT Recommendations:

- a) Act with urgency to secure free trade agreements, including those with rapidly growing economies that can help to strengthen our supply chain resiliency.
- b) Break down interprovincial barriers, a well-documented business pain point and arbitrary limit on growth.

3. Infrastructure

As Brampton remains the fastest growing municipality in the country, it is important that our infrastructure continue to keep pace – not only for the sake of residents’ quality of life, but also because modern infrastructure is growth-enabling. In the year ahead, there are many opportunities for investment in Brampton that Budget 2023 can prioritize. As one example, while past federal contributions to the downtown Riverwalk have been welcome and align with Board of Trade advocacy, more is needed to get the project to a point where the Special Policy Area (SPA) can be lifted. This is especially important given the significant downtown development that will be unlocked once the SPA is lifted.

We expect that a major infrastructure ask from the city in the coming year will be for funding of the Main Street LRT Extension. A federal partner would move this milestone project along. Budget 2023 should contain sufficient infrastructure capital funding that the city’s LRT funding request can be met. The government may wish to consider a commitment based on transit capital funding investments for projects in municipalities in Ontario.

Budget 2023 should also support Ontario’s initiative for Two-Way All Day GO (TWADG) service on the Kitchener Line, targeting 7 days a week service, with specific investments between Bramalea and Georgetown utilizing Trade Corridor Funding which was offered to another GO train line in Peel Region.

Additionally, it is important that the federal government take steps to de-politicize and expeditiously wrap up the impact assessment of the already well-vetted GTA West Corridor (Highway 413). In general, the government should consider a framework for ‘one project, one assessment’ to avoid duplicative work of this nature that delays projects being reviewed by lower orders of government.

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- a) Invest further in our downtown Riverwalk in order to allow the Special Policy Area to be promptly lifted and unlock further growth.
- b) Recognize the importance of the Main Street LRT Extension and be prepared to offer a federal partnership in getting this project build.
- c) Stop the duplicative review of the GTA West Corridor (Highway 413) and adopt a framework for avoiding duplicative and politically-driven impact assessments in the future.

4. Affordability and Livability

We know that the livability of our cities is a significant factor that drives growth, including the ability of employers to recruit and retain top talent. In Brampton healthcare consistently ranks as one of the biggest needs. Budget 2023 should offer a sustained commitment from the federal government to be a partner in more robust healthcare delivery. In Brampton, there are acute needs in on-going operating funding as well as a need for capital to fund a third hospital. Both items should be priorities.

Our 2022 pre-budget submission highlighted the importance of addressing the housing crisis. In the year since, there has been some encouraging signs of all levels of government acting with appropriate

urgency. Budget 2023 should continue to seek new and creative ways that the federal government can be a partner on solutions to this challenge. We know that many institutions and organizations have the land and interest in helping, but need support to finalize their solution.

BBOT Recommendations:

- a) Improve healthcare delivery, a critical need to sustain growth in Brampton.
- b) Partner with institutions and organizations that have the capacity to be a part of the housing supply solution.