



The Regional Municipality of Halton

**Submission to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Finance
2019 Pre-Budget Consultation**

August 2018

- **Recommendation 1:** That the federal government ensure long-term sustainable infrastructure funding
- **Recommendation 2:** That the federal government provide supports to Halton businesses to access international markets including the United States and to diversify into new export markets
- **Recommendation 3:** That the federal government develop a national agricultural strategy and ensure universal access to broadband internet

Introduction

Halton Region is a vibrant and growing community with more than 570,000 residents and four distinct communities – Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. It is one of the fastest growing regions in Canada. Known for its high quality of life and close proximity to Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment, Halton Region is committed to ensuring that its future is strong and stable while continuing to be a great place to live.

Halton Region welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance pre-budget consultations. Halton Region shares the federal government's priorities aimed at economic growth, ensuring Canada's competitiveness and encouraging Canadians and businesses to prosper in an evolving economic landscape.

Halton's prosperous business community helps to build and support a strong Canada. Multinational companies such as Amazon, Lowes and Siemens have chosen to call Halton home. However, in order to maintain a strong regional economy, a number of critical supports are required from the federal government

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government ensure long-term sustainable infrastructure funding

Halton is committed to creating complete communities to ensure a productive and competitive economy. Investments in infrastructure make for a strong economy and a desirable place to live and do business. Making significant investments in the region's infrastructure is a priority for Regional Council. Halton's 10-year capital infrastructure program is budgeted at \$4.2 billion of which \$0.2 billion is derived from the Gas Tax. By ensuring that Halton's hard infrastructure is maintained and sustainable we are investing in the future of residents and the business community.

Halton is requesting the federal government's support and long-term sustainable investments to assist municipalities in delivering reliable and resilient infrastructure. Investing in municipal infrastructure will support the federal government's goals of building a stronger economy for tomorrow and the foundations needed to create high quality jobs.

Recommendation 2: That the federal government provide supports to Halton businesses to access international markets including the United States and to diversify into new export markets

Halton is an economic hotspot and a location of choice within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Businesses are choosing to locate here because of our competitive taxes, strong financial position, proximity to highways, a skilled workforce and high quality of life, all of which contribute to a stronger Canada. Investing in and supporting our business sectors to create high quality jobs, allows for a stronger economic position for the region, province and country.

Federal support for the Halton Global Business Centre will assist Halton-based small and medium-sized enterprises to obtain the programs and services they need to enter the international marketplace. This is a priority for our Economic Development Plan. Federal support is also required to ensure cross border competitiveness and that access to the United States' markets is maintained.

With the evolving United States trade landscape, it is important that our local companies maintain their competitive edge to stay successful and the Region is committed to helping local businesses achieve this. Halton Region is requesting federal support for Halton businesses to access international markets, including the United States and to diversify into new export markets.

Recommendation 3: That the federal government develop a national agricultural strategy and ensure universal access to broadband internet

Halton's agriculture community is an integral part of the Regional landscape. Agriculture contributes significantly to the regional economy. Strong rural businesses anchor healthy rural communities and productive agricultural operations support the large agri-food sector that is based in the Golden Horseshoe.

In order to ensure the protection of the Region's agricultural and rural community, Halton Regional Council endorsed a Regional Rural Agricultural Strategy (RAS). To support our efforts, Halton Region requests that the federal government develop a national agricultural strategy. This would enhance the viability of our rural and agricultural community and recognize the importance of agriculture and agricultural land to economic development.

In December 2016, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission declared broadband internet a basic telecommunications service. Access to broadband internet is essential for working and effectively competing in a digital world. However, high-speed internet access it is not available in many rural communities.

While the urbanized areas of Halton Region have access to high-speed internet connectivity, rural areas remain underserved with limited access to broadband internet which is critical to their businesses and residents. This is becoming an increasing deterrent to business development in Halton's rural areas. Improved broadband connectivity will encourage investment and business growth.

Federal funding programs announced in 2017 such as "Connect to Innovate" are not applicable to Halton Region since, by program definition, Halton's underserved areas are not considered rural or remote. As universal access to broadband internet is integral to the prosperity of the region, Halton requests that a more equitable funding opportunity be created and made available.

Conclusion

Halton Region is a strong and fiscally responsible municipality that is advocating for support in the form of long-term predictable funding and legislative and policy changes. These changes will ensure a strong regional and national economy and encourage Canadians and their businesses to grow and remain competitive.

Halton Region is committed to working with the federal government to ensure a continued investment in our residents and businesses and to support the creation of a prosperous and competitive environment for our local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the development of the 2019 federal budget. If you would like more information on Halton's advocacy priorities, please visit Halton.ca/advocacy.