

THRIVING COMMUNITIES TODAY, FUTURE-READY TOMORROW

Accelerating Economic Recovery in Canada

*Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in advance
of the upcoming Federal Budget*

Submitted by:

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Thriving Communities Today, Future-Ready Tomorrow: Accelerating Economic Recovery in Canada

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government accelerate economic recovery, and continue to support post-secondary students by adopting the recommendations submitted by *Universities Canada*.

Recommendation 2: That the federal government support economic recovery and the revitalization of downtown Brantford through the City of Brantford and Laurier's One Market project.

Recommendation 3: That the federal government support a new premier regional recreation and wellness facility in Waterloo Region that will support student athletics and wellness, as well as increase regional, national, and international sports tourism.

Recommendation 4: That the federal government support Laurier's expansion to Milton, creating a community-driven post-secondary education campus that will drive economic recovery in one of Canada's fastest growing communities.

Recommendation 5: That the federal government support the creation of a new Community Arts & Culture Hub in Waterloo increasing access to indigenous and culturally diverse programming.



Table of Contents

Recommendations.....2

Why Laurier?4

Recommendation 1: Accelerating Economic Recovery and Supporting Students4

Recommendation 2: Laurier’s One Market - Revitalizing Downtown Brantford.....5

Recommendation 3: Creating a Premier Regional Recreation & Wellness Facility in Waterloo7

Recommendation 4: Creating a Regional Incubator and Exploring Planetary Health Solutions in Milton9

Recommendation 5: Increasing Access to Indigenous and Culturally Diverse Music 11

Why Laurier?

Wilfrid Laurier University is a leading multi-campus university known for academic excellence and a culture that inspires lives of leadership and purpose.

Focused on **building thriving communities and future readiness**, Laurier has a distinct commitment to teaching, research, experiential learning, sustainability and scholarship, which combine to address critical challenges in society, business, the economy and the environment - globally and in the communities it serves.

With campuses in Brantford and Waterloo, and programming delivered in Milton, Kitchener and Toronto, Laurier excels at developing and retaining top Canadian talent – with **90% of Alumni living and or working in Ontario**.

Laurier is working closely with partners in its host communities on initiatives to support economic recovery and growth – with **short-term impacts to help residents today, and long-term benefits** through innovation and entrepreneurship, urban revitalization, arts and culture diversification, regional tourism strategies, and strong community partnerships.

Recommendation 1: Accelerating Economic Recovery and Supporting Students

As the number one post-secondary institution in Canada for student experience (comprehensive), Laurier remains committed to delivering high-quality education in a mostly virtual and online format until it is safe to resume in-person classes.

Laurier supports recommendations made by *Universities Canada* to accelerate economic recovery by supporting post-secondary students, and indirectly the thousands of businesses that rely on them. These include recommendations to:

- Support the safe arrival of international students;
- Invest in green, digital, and accessible infrastructure;
- Expand investments in research, innovation, and knowledge mobilization;
- Support expanded online-learning, re-skilling, and up-skilling workers for the new economy.

Recommendation 2: Laurier's One Market - Revitalizing Downtown Brantford



Laurier's vision for the new One-Market will attract visitors to the downtown core, kick-starting Brantford's economic recovery and future development.

In 2014, Laurier purchased the Market Square shopping mall as a key step in the campus' growth and the continued revitalization of downtown Brantford. Now named 'One Market,' Laurier's goal for the 300,000 square foot facility is to transform it into a new academic, cultural, and retail space that serves its students as well as the Brantford community. Particular emphasis is on projects—both within One Market and beyond—that support economic renewal and recovery for Brantford's downtown, post-pandemic.

This project is a unique solution to a challenge facing many municipalities across Canada – what to do with vacant, older shopping malls in downtown cores?

Laurier has worked closely with the City of Brantford and local residents to establish a vision for the new space that includes identifiable zones for education and research, community/student entrepreneurship and small business support, experienced-based retail/entertainment and performance spaces. The development will stimulate the economy in the short-term by providing

(a) supports for new business ventures, and a place to test new products; (b) leasing opportunities within One Market capitalizing on student foot traffic; (c) more reasons for the community to come downtown, which will help support the long-term economic growth and success of the whole of downtown. One Market is poised to support the local community in its *Brantford Together* COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts and ultimately create a one-of-a-kind space for residents to live, work, learn, and play.

“Improving access to training and education is fundamental to building a great city and a more promising future for our citizens. The City views Laurier Brantford not as buildings or infrastructure, but rather, as a community partner that is integrated into our city. As one of the fastest growing university campuses in Ontario, Laurier Brantford has helped transform Brantford’s downtown into one that is more creative, vibrant and visionary. This much needed expansion is vital to meet the demands of a growing student and urban population, while further revitalizing the city’s core and contributing to our community’s intellectual and inclusive spirit.”

– City of Brantford Mayor Kevin Davis

Government of Canada Investment: Structural enhancements to the OneMarket space are needed to allow for the next phase of development to attract tenants and build a destination-marketing approach for downtown Brantford. These include: a lobby refresh, entrance renovations, streetscape façades, the first-phase of the OneMarket library, and the development of an adjacent building to create a ‘gateway to One Market’. Laurier is seeking \$23 million in infrastructure funding to support the \$47.5 million project.

Recommendation 3: Creating a Premier Regional Recreation & Wellness Facility in Waterloo



Laurier's new recreation & wellness facility is designed for 70 percent community-use, welcoming athletes of all ages and abilities onto campus.

Wilfrid Laurier University has developed a vision that will transform its University Stadium, built in the 1950's, into a premier regional recreation and wellness facility. The multi-use facility would be a first of its kind in Waterloo Region, building a state-of-the-art integrated health and wellness centre with a focus on Indigenous health and wellness, and a year-round, FIFA regulation size multi-purpose sports field.

The new facility will better position the Region and province to host international and professional sports – including soccer, rugby, and football. With a bubble cover, the facility will be available year-round and will expand its use by 23 times current levels.

The facility will also include a state-of-the art tournament space for eSport, which had a captive audience for its championships larger than that of the 15.1 million that watched the NBA Finals in 2019. This is a growing field in high-demand, especially given the impacts on sports due to the current global COVID-19 pandemic.

“The redevelopment of WLU’s stadium will increase our community’s ability to attract major sporting events and tourism to Waterloo Region, which benefits Uptown businesses, sports in Ontario as well as the local community and Waterloo residents. This 52-year-old, community structure is desperately in need of restoration.”

- **Tracy Van Kalsbeek, Executive Director, Uptown Waterloo BIA**

Government of Canada Opportunity: Bringing this facility to life, and realizing the economic and health benefits, will require significant investment. The City of Waterloo has already committed \$2.5 million. Laurier expects to secure a \$20 million contribution from its students through referenda, and is seeking \$33.6 million in infrastructure funding support from the federal and provincial governments.

Recommendation 4: Creating a Regional Incubator and Exploring Planetary Health Solutions in Milton



State of the art technology will result in a deep green building with a zero carbon footprint at minimum. The fully integrated, multi-purpose building(s) will include dedicated Laurier spaces as well as Laurier's Innovation Centre, environmental research labs and industry partners who offer co-op jobs to Laurier students.

Located in one of Canada's fastest-growing communities and centered in the Waterloo-Toronto Innovation Corridor, Wilfrid Laurier University's campus in the Milton Education Village will kick-start the transformation of Milton into a hub for sustainable, eco-focused innovation and entrepreneurship.

With a strong focus on engineering, computer science and planetary health, Laurier Milton will accelerate economic recovery by combining Laurier's strong reputation for academic excellence, experiential learning and transformational research with Conestoga College's high-quality applied-learning and research programs to create a first-of-its-kind, community-driven post-secondary education campus.

Construction of the net-positive Laurier One building, the first building envisioned as part of Laurier's Milton campus, would become the home for a new regional incubator for Halton Region,

establishing an entrepreneurial pipeline that creates and capitalizes on solutions to the most pressing global challenges of our time.

The Milton campus has been more than ten years in the making, is community-driven, will exist on land provided by the Town of Milton, and will bring post-secondary education, businesses, researchers, and start-up and scale-up support programs together – acting as an incubator and accelerator in the growing region. This will provide short-term economic benefits through the creation of the campus, and long-term benefits through focus on entrepreneurship, innovation, and talent attraction and retention. The project is shovel-ready, with P3 partner The Cora Group, ready to go.

“The vision of the MEV is an integral part of Halton Region’s economic recovery and sustainability. Innovation relies on partnerships and that of Laurier and Conestoga will undoubtedly stimulate the economy, promote economic development, and create jobs in Milton, Halton, and throughout Ontario.”

- **Gordon Krantz, Mayor, Town of Milton**

Government of Canada Opportunity: Laurier is seeking federal infrastructure funding to enhance the start of the Laurier Campus in Milton. This will also increase Laurier’s ability to offer reduced operating costs to key innovation partners to kick-start the regional incubator.

Recommendation 5: Increasing Access to Indigenous and Culturally Diverse Music



A welcoming, open, inclusive space – creating a new community arts and culture hub in Waterloo Region.

Music is inseparable from the space in which it is performed, and music with a vision lives most powerfully in a space that reflects that vision. Music at Laurier – a world-class, diverse, inclusive program built on immersive learning, caring relationships, and engagement with the wider community, and supported by state-of-the-art technology – requires a building that welcomes everyone in.

Laurier’s Faculty of Music has been undergoing a transformation over the past decade to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, through changes both physically and programmatically. Laurier’s Community Music program is a global leader in this emerging discipline, integrating diverse learning populations with a focus on accessibility and culturally inclusive music.

While music is central to cultural expression, formal music training has often been far too exclusive. Laurier envisions renovating and expanding its current music building, transforming it

into a vastly-improved space for teaching, practicing, rehearsing and performing. This, combined with a new Community Arts Hub with performance space designed for community-use, will breathe more life into this special learning environment for music, making it an inclusive space for students, faculty, alumni and members of the musical community in Waterloo Region and beyond.

Laurier's unique programs in music therapy and community music, in addition to the performance arts, make academic music programming more accessible to BIPOC learners with a goal of transformative change in music education and development.

"Perhaps now more than ever, music is a social and cultural catalyst for communities worldwide, reminding us of our shared humanity. Laurier's Faculty of Music is a vital partner in the local, national and international musical community. We urgently need to re-design our facility so that it truly reflects and supports the tremendous musical talent at Laurier and beyond."

– Kimberly Barber, Associate Dean, External, Faculty of Music

Government of Canada Opportunity: Laurier has already raised \$9 million towards the project through community and institutional contributions. A \$15 million infrastructure stimulus investment would accelerate the completion of the Community Arts Hub, supporting the growth of Waterloo Region's diverse arts and culture ecosystem. The 800-seat flexible, multi-purpose space would provide a mid-size performance venue, currently a gap in the Region, as recognized by local municipalities and arts and culture organizations.