



BUILDING TOMORROW

Annual Report 2023-2024



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Message from CEO & Chair

2023 marked the beginning of a new economic cycle – for the Toronto Region Board of Trade, for our members, and for the Toronto region.

The largescale disruptions of the past few years have radically changed the operating landscape for businesses here at home and globally: sticky inflation, higher-for-longer interest rates, labour shortages, the rapid advance of game-changing technologies such as generative AI, and of course deeply troubling and disordered geopolitical conflict. More than ever, businesses today need flexibility, resilience, and risk-taking ambition to seize tomorrow's opportunities.

As the business community navigates this turbulence, the Board has been at the forefront of the conversation about our lagging productivity, which has finally become a headline issue for the country, and for the Toronto region—Canada's economic engine. The OECD predicted that Canada will be dead last among our peers in terms of GDP per capita growth, and our response has been unequivocal: dead last is dead wrong.

As a result, 2023 marked the start of a new leg of our organization's journey. We embarked on an action-oriented agenda, first and foremost with the launch of the Business Council of Toronto—bringing leaders of leaders together to demonstrate that an urgently needed turnaround in growing productive capacity and competitiveness is achievable if we choose to set a shared north star. It's a platform for our region's top CEOs to lean in and make a major contribution to our competitiveness and productivity through high-impact, action-oriented advocacy and projects.

Businesses deserve a seat at the table, and the Board has been instrumental in creating opportunities for business leaders and government to collaborate to develop a stronger environment for business to succeed. One of the standout examples this year is our highly publicized Congestion Taskforce, a table

of experts committed to developing solutions to our ongoing congestion crisis.

Alongside our members, the Board also continued its advocacy on our region's key issues. This year the provincial government adopted our long-standing position on fare integration, while the impact of our "Missing Middle" report, which laid the foundation for greater density and the legalization of fourplexes in Toronto, helped to make the region a more livable place.

Since 1845, the Board has remained true to its vision of building a vibrant and prosperous city for people and businesses. This is only possible through the unwavering support of our members, partners, and sponsors. Thank you.

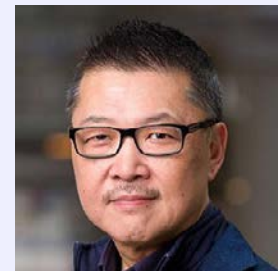
It is time to move from talk to action. As we come to grips with the end of an extended period of relative stability, we will continue to ramp up our policy work, programs, and demonstration projects to drive enhanced productivity and competitiveness for our members and our region.

In the face of a brave new world, our work has taken on a new shape, but we remain true to our course.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Giles Gherson
President & CEO



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Yung Wu
Chair

Who We Are

For 179 years, the Toronto Region Board of Trade has been a catalyst for the region's future and the unflagging voice for the business community. As one of the largest and most influential chambers of commerce in North America, we pursue policy change to drive the competitiveness of the Toronto region, facilitate market opportunities, support business scale-up and trade through our World Trade Centre-Toronto programs, and create new partnerships and connections to help our members succeed – domestically and internationally.



WHO WE ARE



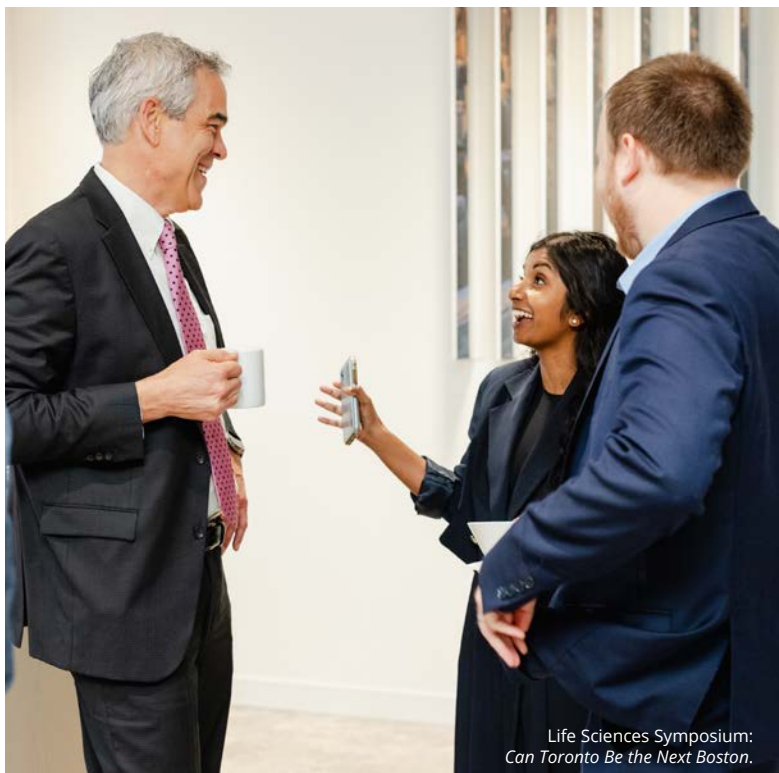
WHAT WE DO

Our Vision

To make Toronto one of the most competitive and sought-after business regions in the world.

Our Mission

To be a catalyst for a vibrant, globally competitive Toronto region business community.



"The Board provides a collective voice and helps advocate for regionally important issues that are critical to the long-term success of the communities in which we operate."

- Sean Menkes, Vice President,
Office/Retail for Menkes
Developments

HOW WE ADD VALUE:

Convene

We unite sharp minds, creative thinkers, and influential leaders across industries to tackle the region's biggest challenges, crafting daring solutions that propel our economic progress.

Connect

We foster growth by linking people and ideas, enhancing regional collaboration, identifying opportunities, and forging partnerships through shared challenges.

Champion

We champion actionable solutions to real business issues, collaborating with all levels of government to craft policies that foster regional growth, productivity and competitiveness.

The Board by the Numbers



Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria,
Ontario's Minister of Transportation

"Being a member of the Board helps keep me on the pulse of commerce and industry in Toronto. As a member, the opportunity to network with other business leaders can lead to collaborative partnerships, market insights, and strategic alliances."

- Gavin Whiteley, Chief Marketing Officer,
Great Canadian Entertainment

Connect

11,500+
Members

108
Events

8,360+
Attendees

7%
Corporate member
growth

15,600+
Twitter followers

21,900+
LinkedIn followers

364,000+
Website visitors



5,500+
Young Professionals
Network participants

207
TAP graduates

17
GDP graduates

18
MAP delegates

240
Executive Certificates
participants



Convene

4

Policy committees

89

Committee members



Champion

40

Statements, releases & position papers

2

Countries visited through trade missions

OUTREACH

6k+

Media citations

1.15M+

Social media impressions



"The Board is an invaluable ally in championing and advocating for the public policies that will support the growth and future prosperity of our community."

- Hersi Hujaleh, Head of Canadian Policy, Instacart





Shakil
Hussein
Director of Traffic
and Planning,
407 ETR

Laura Wilson
Head of Public
Policy and
Communications,
Canada, Uber

Di Felice
AVP, Government
and Community
Relations, CAA

Director of Transit,
City of Mississauga

CONVENE

By bringing leaders from across industries together, we expand the possible and pave the way for a brighter tomorrow.

Throughout the year the Toronto Region Board of Trade brought our members together to tackle the region's most pressing issues – complex challenges that no single sector can tackle alone. From deep-dive discussions at our flagship symposium events to curated roundtable conversations with government, our members engaged to bring forward their solutions to help build a brighter future for our businesses, residents and our economy.

This year, the Board took steps to move beyond our legacy of impactful advocacy to urgent action, convening two new cross-industry initiatives. Together with our partners, we launched the [Business Council of Toronto](#) and the [Congestion Task Force](#), platforms for businesses to lean in to address our region's most challenging problems: our stagnating productivity and debilitating congestion.

“The Board continues to be a strong convener of businesses, bringing together the right people to address some of the city's biggest challenges. We are proud to be a member and to sit on the Congestion Task Force to help get our city moving.”

- Laura Miller, Head of Public Policy and Communications, Uber Canada

Toronto Congestion Task Force

The challenges posed by our region's congestion crisis impact the movement of people, movement of goods and economic opportunities, costing us more than \$11 billion annually in lost productivity. To address this critical issue, the Board has created a [Congestion Task Force](#) comprised of senior business leaders to identify and champion practical, high-impact solutions to get our region's economy unstuck.





Elio Luongo, CEO and Senior Partner, KPMG and Chair of BCT



Mary Ann Wenzler, Vice-President, GTA West, BDC;
Yung Wu, Chair, Toronto Region Board of Trade



The Business Council of Toronto (BCT)

Successfully building up our region for tomorrow is intrinsically linked to one of the biggest economic challenges facing Canada: our growing productivity gap. While the business community and government leaders at all levels took notice, the Board decided to take action by standing up a new productivity-focused, CEO-led initiative: the Business Council of Toronto (BCT). Throughout 2023, the Board recruited top-tier CEOs aimed at bolstering economic vitality in our region and closing our productivity gap to enhance our regional prosperity for generations to come.

In March 2024, we formally launched the BCT at an inaugural dinner for BCT members—the “leaders of leaders” from throughout the region. Comprised of an Executive Table and three issue-focused Partnership Councils, the BCT will take action to stand up high-impact demonstration projects and targeted advocacy initiatives providing data-driven and evidence-based recommendations to unlock our economic and productive potential.

“We want to ensure the Toronto region – an economic powerhouse within Canada – is a thriving and competitive place to do business for decades to come. By working together, we can help our community face the challenges ahead and build up our economy so future generations can call this region home.”

- Blake Hutcheson, President & CEO, OMERS and Founding Member of BCT

Future of Manufacturing Symposium

We held our first manufacturing symposium, which explored the region's manufacturing industry, opportunities in technology adoption, green manufacturing, precision manufacturing, and IP management. The event featured a discussion with Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario on manufacturing investment attraction and global competitiveness.

Amber Batool, Executive Director, Investment Banking, CIBC Capital Markets; John Laughlin, CTO, NGen; Joris Myny, Senior Vice-President, Digital Industries, Siemens Canada Limited; and Hallie Siegel, Co-Chair and Founder, Canadian Robotics Council



Kate Meyrick, Director, Urbis

Building a World Class Waterfront

Senior politicians, business leaders and city-builders came together to explore options to unlock the potential of Toronto's waterfront. Experts discussed how waterfront transformation projects can work harmoniously to create a vibrant and dynamic economic district, and barriers currently standing in the way. Ontario's Premier, the Hon. Doug Ford, and Minister of Infrastructure the Hon. Kinga Surma discussed waterfront revitalization. Experts including Dr. Richard Florida, Joe Berridge, and Jennifer Keesmaat explored the investments, collaboration, and bold decisions required to maximize the opportunities presented by our waterfront. The topics discussed set the foundation for our [Ripple Effect: Unlocking Toronto's Waterfront Potential](#) report.



Carl Lovas, Chairman and CEO, Odgers Berndtson Canada & Brad Beveridge, President, Odgers Berndtson Canada

Annual Dinner – Dare to Lead

The Board hosted our *134th Annual Dinner—Dare to Lead*, presented by Odgers Berndtson. This milestone event convened more than 1,000 leaders and change makers from across the region to celebrate our successes and envision a brighter tomorrow. The evening kicked off with a surprise performance by the Toronto cast of *Jersey Boys*, infusing the room with energy that set the perfect tone.

In his opening address, the Board’s new President and CEO, Giles Gherson shared his vision for Toronto’s business community:

“We are at a pivotal moment to amplify our competitive edge and foster unprecedented productivity. The year 2024 presents us with a unique opportunity to lead, to lean in, and to mold our region into the powerhouse we envision.”



Janet Bannister, Founder & Managing Partner, Staircase Ventures, Carol Wilding, President & CEO, CPA Ontario



Michael McCain, Executive Chairman of Maple Leaf Foods



Giles Gherson, President & CEO, Toronto Region Board of Trade



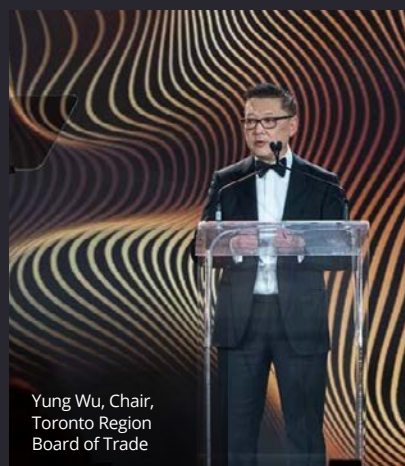
The Hon. Doug Ford, Premier,
Government of Ontario



Claudette McGowan,
CEO, Protexxa



Christian Weedbrook,
Founder, Xanadu



Yung Wu, Chair,
Toronto Region
Board of Trade



Jersey Boys performing
at the Annual Dinner

Guests were treated to a special address by the Hon. **Doug Ford**, Premier of Ontario and a series of inspiring Toronto Talks from three of our region's most inspiring leaders, including:

Claudette McGowan, who is at the vanguard of the cybersecurity wave at Protexxa, and has worked tirelessly for a more diverse and inclusive tech ecosystem.

Christian Weedbrook, who founded tech unicorn Xanadu, a Toronto-based global leader in quantum computing—the next tech frontier.

Michael McCain, who transformed Maple Leaf Foods Inc. into the world's first major carbon neutral food company and shared profound insights on shared value creation.

We also awarded our Toronto Region Builder Award to **Janet Bannister**, the founder of kijiji.ca and Staircase Ventures—whose inspirational contributions to entrepreneurship are leaving indelible marks on our region's tech sector.

This evening was made possible through the generous support of our presenting partner, Odgers Berndtson—and our fantastic partners CPA Ontario, Fengate Asset Management, LiUNA, Destination Toronto, Uber, RBC, Air Canada, Hydro One, Los Cabos Tourism Board, Alstom, Billy Bishop Airport, CN Rail, Dean Davidson, Dream, Fairmont Royal York, George Brown College, hfrtgf, Instacart, The Jim Pattison Group, KPMG, LetkoBrosseau, Medicom, Oliver + Bonacini, Power Corporation of Canada, Relevantz, Richter, TD Bank Group, University of Toronto and Xero.

Can Toronto Be the Next Boston? Life Sciences Symposium

The Board's Life Sciences Symposium, *Can Toronto be the Next Boston?* brought together industry experts to dive deep into the burgeoning life science sector in our region. The Board identified the life sciences sector as a critical driver of long-term economic success and a strategic area of focus. Guest speakers shared insights and forward-thinking strategies to embrace our region's strengths and overcome our primary roadblock on attracting capital. Kenneth L. Custer, President and General Manager of Lilly Canada shared insights on the strengths, weaknesses, and nuances of the local life sciences ecosystem.



Pre-Budget Consultation with the Hon. Anita Anand

The Board welcomed President of the Treasury Board, the Hon. Anita Anand, for a roundtable discussion on a range of cross-sectoral issues with members of the Board's four policy committees ahead of the 2024 federal budget. Minister Anand discussed the government's efforts to build a stronger, more equitable future, with much needed investments in affordable housing and childcare, and discussion of the new legislation on pharmacare – with the blending of social and economic policy as the key to our progress.



CONNECT

*By forging relationships and bridging sectors,
the Board's member-driven business community
lays the groundwork for building tomorrow.*



Eric Huang, Founder & CEO, Advanced Analytics Research Lab, Michelle Gentner, Co-Owner, Unboxed Market, Guy Cormier, President & CEO, Desjardins

The Toronto Region Board of Trade connects our 11,500 members to opportunities that advance their businesses and cultivate fresh partnerships. Through our 100+ events, Young Professionals Network and World Trade Centre Toronto programs, the Board serves as the foundation for the Toronto region's business community to expand their network and contribute to shared economic growth.

Membership

2023 was the year our members operated back at full stride, aggressively pursuing collaboration and expansion. The opportunity to make new connections was found across the Board's industry, networking and business development events. While digital interactions continue to reshape the way we communicate, members consistently tell us that there is no substitute for an in-person conversation.

In addition to our 23 curated and member-led workshops we hosted two *Cocktails & Connections* member networking events in the summer and fall, each attended by 400+ guests. Our Young Professionals Network event *All in for the Future* in September discussed employment and entrepreneurship trends for young Canadians and offered networking opportunities with leadership across a variety of sectors. We also launched the *Meet Our Members* webpages on bot.com featuring spotlights, workshops, marketplace, and content from members.



“The Toronto Region Board of Trade gives us opportunities to connect with influential business leaders that are changing the future of the city.”

-Laura Delemere, Partner, BLG

"We find value in being a member of the Board because of their keen ability to facilitate interactions between key players in industry"

- Jeff Parnell, President, Power Workers' Union



MEMBERSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

12%

year-over-year (YoY) growth in corporate membership accounts

85%

member retention rate

74%+

satisfaction from corporate members

1,600+

attendees for membership events

Young Professionals Network

Our Young Professionals Network (YPN) is a thriving community of over 5,500 energetic and enthusiastic professionals under 40, spanning diverse industries and roles in the Toronto region. To support their career growth, we offer an array of skills development, executive advice, and networking support across a wide range of events, programs, and resources. In the last year YPN membership grew 9%, and YPN members were offered a host of benefits including access to the World Trade Centre Toronto's Executive Certificate program free of charge.



Javier Acevedo, RBC Olympian - Marketing & Citizenship, Greater Toronto Region, RBC



Marek Karwowski (Government of Ontario), Natasha Gagnon (Ontario Aerospace Council), Mary Halloran (Government of Canada), Adam Barratt, Canada's Consul General in Seattle, United States, Noor Harbi (World Trade Centre Toronto) and Phil Arthurs (Downsview Aerospace Innovation and Research) at the 2024 Aerospace & Defense Supplier Summit (A&DSS) in Seattle, Washington.

World Trade Centre Toronto

The World Trade Centre Toronto (WTCT) is the trade services and scale-up arm of the Toronto Region Board of Trade. WTCT offers comprehensive programs and expertise, helping Canadian businesses accelerate their growth and trade while building capacity, experience and partnerships to empower companies to reach their full potential. Initiatives like the Growth Development Program (GDP), Trade Accelerator Program (TAP), Market Activation Program (MAP), and Executive Certificates provide essential tools and connections for successful growth strategies. WTCT works with partners to upskill businesses and bridge the competitiveness gap for Canadian SMEs.

WTCT launched two new initiatives, the Global Growth Series and program support for the Government of Canada's Aerospace Regional Recovery Initiative (ARRI).

Aerospace Regional Recovery Initiative

The World Trade Centre Toronto launched a one-year partnership with the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) and offered 10 uniquely tailored programs for companies in the aerospace sector. These programs helped 89 business leaders in the aerospace sector pursue new export opportunities and create more sustainable operations.

A MAP trade mission to Seattle was also organized for 16 companies from Southern Ontario in partnership with: Ontario Aerospace Council (OAC), The Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) and Downsview Aerospace Innovation and Research (DAIR)

Global Growth Series

The World Trade Centre Toronto, in collaboration with Communitech and MaRS Discovery District, developed an event series designed to help Canadian businesses navigate through the critical challenges facing exporters today. The 4 events covered Latin America, USA, Europe, and Indo-Pacific and received tremendous positive feedback from participants.

Trade Accelerator Program (TAP)

The Trade Accelerator Program (TAP) has been pivotal in assisting Canadian SMEs in overcoming export hurdles and expanding globally. With more than 2,500 entrepreneurs supported in seven years, TAP boasts a 91% satisfaction rate, contributing significantly to the economy by generating revenue, job opportunities, and efficiency gains.

“TAP provided a well-rounded program that covered all the necessary facets of export, and as a result, we were able to come away with a written export plan that had been reviewed by experts. We also made meaningful connections during the program that helped us secure a listing of a premium grocery chain in the UAE and enter the US market with confidence.”

- Jessica Praskey, President, Black River Juice



TAP Clean Tech Cohort Participants

KEY MILESTONES

2,543

TAP graduates from 10 provinces and territories across Canada since 2016

80+

countries to which TAP graduates are now exporting to

91%

overall satisfaction

245

cohorts organized nationally since 2016

8.5

jobs created or maintained per company

62%

growth in revenues two years after participating in the program

73%

of TAP grads export, 42% start after TAP completion

64%

TAP graduates owned or led by an under-represented group



GDP workshop with
Aerospace Cohort Participants

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

6

cohorts organized
since 2022

49

companies have
participated in
the program

45%

companies were owned
or led by an under-
represented group

40%

companies are exporting

MAIN COMPANY

SECTORS OVERALL:

Manufacturing,
Aerospace and
Food & Beverage.

Growth Development Program

The Growth Development Program engages in peer-group discussions, workshops and real-world case studies to broaden perspective, challenge preconceptions and expand knowledge for business participants. The program has organized five cohorts and empowered 49 Ontario-based companies, with 45% of them being owned or led by under-represented groups. This year we also offered an Aerospace-specific cohort and based on this cohort's success, we continued to refine the program, launching a new version that includes a peer network component and is tailored to companies in the 5M+ revenue bracket.

“GDP has been an amazing experience and has allowed us to gain REAL experiences from fellow peers who are in the same or similar business, and who have solved, or continue to solve, the same problems we are facing.”

- Paul Chana, P. Eng, MBA, President, Avion Technologies Inc.

Executive Certificates

The World Trade Centre Toronto's Executive Certificates program offers one-day courses on crucial areas such as international sales and marketing, operational efficiency, talent management and recruitment, e-commerce growth strategies, and ESG best practices, providing in-depth training and mentorship to help businesses grow. The program has doubled in offering since inception in November 2022, with 9 sessions organized in its first year, and 18 organized this past year due to demand. Participation numbers have tripled: with 240 program participants in the last year alone. WTC-T plans to extend its offering over the next year, expanding topic selection to include sessions on artificial intelligence, modern leadership and skills-based hiring.

“Lots of great takeaways. The information presented on each topic was applicable and robust. I especially enjoyed the group interaction, sharing of experiences, and what others did to overcome the hurdles we all encounter as SME’s.”

- Shohreh Sabaghpour, Founder & CEO, Lumesmart Inc.

KEY MILESTONES

27
sessions organized
since 2022

320
companies have
participated in
the program since
2022

97%
score of average
satisfaction



Market Activation Program (MAP)

The Market Activation Program (MAP) helps Ontario businesses expand their reach into international markets. With trade missions to major markets in Europe, Asia and North America, MAP has enabled companies to develop their international selling strategies and build relationships with new customers and partners. In the past year we assembled 2 trade missions to Guadalajara, Mexico and Seattle, USA.

“Being part of a trade mission is a tremendous opportunity. It gives us the ability to present our products and have conversation which catalyze commercialization. The MAP missions open doors that you don’t even know existed.”

-Francois Gand, Founder & CEO, NURO



Team Ontario, 2024 Aerospace & Defense Supplier Summit (A&DSS) in Seattle, Washington.



Jon Worren, Vice President, World Trade Centre Toronto (left) meeting Her Excellency, Zuzana Čaputová President of the Slovak Republic

Hosting the President of Slovak Republic

In February, the Board was delighted to host the President of the Slovak Republic, Her Excellency Zuzana Čaputová, and a delegation of Slovak businesses to foster stronger trade relationships between Slovakia and the Toronto region. With both economies witnessing robust growth in pivotal sectors like automotive, nuclear energy, AI, clean tech, and biotech, the potential for mutually beneficial trade partnerships is at an all-time high.

KEY MILESTONES

30

countries visited through MAP trade missions since 2017

418

companies have participated in the program since 2017

2

MAP trade missions this year

55%

growth in exports within one year of participating in the program

93%

Overall satisfaction from companies that participated

Thank You to Our WTC-T Sponsors



Ministry of
Agriculture, Food &
Rural Affairs

Funded by:
Federal Economic Development
Agency for Southern Ontario

Financé par :
Agence fédérale de
développement économique
pour le Sud de l'Ontario



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada



Innovation, Science and
Economic Development Canada

Innovation, Sciences et
Développement économique Canada

OPERATING PARTNERS

Angel Investors Ontario

Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce (CBCC)

Canadian Food Exporters Association (CFEA)

City of Toronto

Communitech

Custom Manufacturing & Engineering (CME)

Downsview Aerospace Innovation & Research (DAIR)

Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Ottawa

European Union Chamber of Commerce in Canada
(EUCCAN)

Global Affairs Canada

Government of Manitoba

Government of Ontario

Groupe Export Agroalimentaire du Québec

Markham Board of Trade

Markham Economic Development

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs
(OMAFRA)

Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job
Creation and Trade (MEDJCT)

Northern Centre for Advanced Technology (NORCAT)

Ontario Aerospace Council (OAC)

Ontario Investment and Trade Centre

PARO Centre

Province of Alberta

Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency
(SARIO)

Vaughan Chamber of Commerce

Vaughan Economic Development

Unparalleled Events



"The Toronto Region Board of Trade allows us to connect with a diverse and talented group of leaders from across the region—hearing their stories, listening to their challenges, and learning about their needs"

- Amir Abd El Halim, Regional Executive for Ontario and Atlantic Canada, WSP





CHAMPION

By advocating for policies that propel business growth across the Toronto region, the Board ensures that the voices of our members are helping to shape a vibrant, more competitive future.

Advocating for Business

To compete in the global economy for business investment, talent attraction and retention, and growth, the Toronto Region Board of Trade is focused on working with members to build policy solutions and recommendations that enable a stronger and investment-ready business environment.

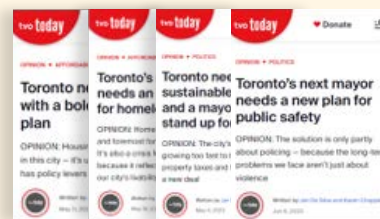
This past year, we strongly advocated for the issues that matter to our members, from housing and land use to transit, talent, energy and innovation adoption.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

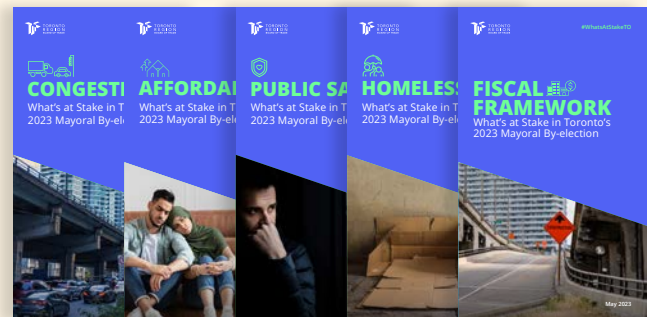
In 2023 the Board released its report *Erasing the Invisible Lines*, which continued our advocacy on fare integration across our public transit network. This year, government took action and instituted the One Fare Program, which allows riders to pay one fare when connecting to and from our region's many transit networks including the TTC and GO Transit.

What's at Stake, Toronto? Spring 2023

Toronto's mayoral by-election was undoubtedly a pivotal moment for the economy of our city. In response the Board launched its *What's at Stake* campaign to bring the city's top economic and livability issues to the forefront. Our award-winning 'What's at Stake?' mayoral by-election campaign, which ran in the spring of 2023, dove deep into the city's most pressing challenges: an unsustainable fiscal framework, affordability, homelessness, public safety, and chronic congestion. The campaign featured five election issues guides, four opinion articles published with TVO, a fiscal framework event, and a live broadcasted mayoral debate with the top six polling candidates. In June 2024, the campaign was awarded the 2024 Canadian Public Relations Society government relations/ public affairs campaign of the year.



Four op-eds on TVO
Election Issues Guides +
Five videos



CAMPAIGN METRICS:

Social impressions:

114,000

Media hits:

34

Engagements:

10,270

Media reach

157 M



Mayoral Debate on May 25, 2023. Steve Paikin, moderator and Host, *TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, mayoral candidates: Olivia Chow, Ana Bailão, Josh Matlow, Mitzie Hunter, Mark Saunders, Brad Bradford.

Mayoral Debate

On May 25, the Board in partnership with TVO hosted the top six polling candidates: Olivia Chow, Ana Bailão, Josh Matlow, Mitzie Hunter, Mark Saunders and Brad Bradford for a mayoral debate. Steve Paikin Host *The Agenda with Steve Paikin* asked the tough questions around the Board's *What's at Stake?* campaign themes: congestion, housing, public safety, and the City's dire fiscal situation. The debate was attended by more than five hundred people and covered by TVO, CBC, CTV, CP24, Global, Toronto Star, and the Globe and Mail.

Annual Policy Priority-Setting Session

On September 22, the Board held its annual *Policy Priority-Setting Session* which gathered the Toronto Region Board of Trade's policy committees to lay the groundwork for policy development and advocacy efforts over the next 12 months. The session also serves as an opportunity for members to share their insights on pressing regional issues. Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow kicked off the day with a frank assessment of the city's core issues – productivity, transit, and housing, and outlined potential solutions to the City's budget shortfall. We also heard Scotiabank's Senior VP and Chief Economist, Jean François Perrault share economic perspectives in a live recording of *The Herle Burly Podcast*.



Her Worship Mayor Olivia Chow, City of Toronto

“As an expert on strategy and leadership for mid-size businesses, I joined the Board to share my knowledge and contribute to policy on issues impacting our clients and hindering productivity.”

-Ali Grovue, Vice President, Ignite Management

Members Drive Our Agenda

Forming the backbone of our ambitious policy efforts are the Board's policy committees. These are comprised of Influencer member businesses leaders across multiple sectors volunteering their expertise to advance high-impact enablers.

“We chose to be a member of The Toronto Region Board of Trade due to the position it puts us in to network with business leaders across the GTA as well as to contribute to policy positions the Board takes with regards to issues affecting the area. On a more personal note, The Toronto Region Board of Trade staff are always very friendly and professional, and the events they put on are always top-notch.”

-Christopher Dixon,
Senior Advisor, Mitacs

Transportation, Infrastructure & Land Use Committee

Driving improvements to the region's physical infrastructure and livability to ensure the region is world class.

Needs Improvement: Getting to World-class Transit – Transit Report Cards

The Board released its [Toronto Region Transit Report Cards](#) to quantitatively and qualitatively understand the strengths and weaknesses of our region's transit networks, understanding that transit is a major area of concern for residents and businesses. By scoring factors such as frequent service coverage, reliability, and base service coverage, the report cards examine the region on a city-by-city basis highlighting the various challenges, and opportunities of each municipality's transit system. These report cards are serving as a framework for discussion and advocacy, demonstrating with data where additional investment is needed and where opportunities await.





Karla Avis-Birch, Chief Planning Officer at Metrolinx

Are We There Yet? Transportation Symposium

The Board hosted its ninth annual Transportation Symposium where top leaders from the transportation and infrastructure industry gathered to gain insights into the challenges, investment imperatives, policy adaptations, and groundbreaking opportunities necessary to keep our vibrant region moving ahead. Among the symposium's highlights was a conversation between Angela Clayton, President, Project Delivery, Infrastructure Ontario and Andy Byford, Senior Vice President for High-Speed Rail at Amtrak, about his experience leading major transit projects worldwide and best practices for developing complex infrastructure projects.



Tackling Toronto's Congestion Crisis

Congestion is a serious barrier to our regional competitiveness, hindering the ability of workers to get to their jobs, customers to get to businesses, and adding to the cost of transporting goods. On June 23, Josh Colle, Partner, EY; Teresa Di Felice, Assistant Vice President, Government and Community Relations, CAA South Central Ontario; and Denzil Minnan-Wong, former Deputy Mayor of Toronto debated the root causes of congestion in Toronto, moderated by Colin D'Mello, Queens Park Bureau Chief, Global News. The event also featured a "solutions showcase" that highlighted possible traffic management solutions for the region, and set the foundation for our [Congestion Task Force](#).

Race for Space

Major employers across the region flagged that upcoming policy changes could threaten our region's already scarce employment lands, putting millions of jobs at risk. In our [Race for Space](#) report we put forward five recommendations to government on how to balance a sufficient inventory of employment lands while also supporting housing goals. The report's findings were covered in the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, CBC News, 640 Radio. Underscoring the importance of this issue, the Board's recommendations were referenced by multiple parties during the Ontario Legislature's Question Period.



Talent Ecosystem Committee

Helping facilitate a diverse, competitive, inclusive and resilient talent ecosystem in the region.



Helen Kontozopoulos, Co-founder and Chief Tech Evangelist, ODAIA Intelligence, Damir Kostic, Partner and Practice Area Leader for Talent Technologies Consulting, IBM Canada, Susan McCahan, Vice-Provost, University of Toronto, Jordan Sheridan, Global Sales Lead – Modern Work, Microsoft Canada



Giles Gherson, President & CEO, Toronto Region Board of Trade, The Hon. David Piccini, Ontario Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

The Talent Transformation Symposium

The Board convened the region's top employers and workforce development experts to discuss the future of hybrid work, the impact of emerging technologies, like generative AI, on transforming job roles, and empowering workers with advanced productivity tools. The Board was joined by the Hon. David Piccini, Ontario's Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, who discussed initiatives the province was taking to encourage jobs in the region.

Workforce Leading Practice Guides

On November 21st, the Board released **six leading practice guides** diving into common workforce challenges and serving as a repository of best practices, case studies, and resources for employers. The Board consulted extensively with members of the Talent Ecosystem committee and convened senior business leaders for a series of roundtables to share lessons-learned, guidance, and resources on critical workforce development challenges and opportunities. These guides are for businesses of all sizes on the following six topics:

- Supporting Employee Soft Skill Development
- Finding the Right Entry-Level Workers
- Tapping into the Immigrant Talent Pool
- Reducing Integration Barriers For Immigrant Workers
- Increasing Work-Integrated Learning Opportunities
- Expanding Mental Health Supports For Younger Workers

“The Council of Ontario Universities’ partnership with the Board has helped bring together business and postsecondary education leaders to address the changing needs of the job market, our communities, and the ground-breaking technology and innovation that is critical to fueling economic growth.”

- Steve Orsini, President & CEO, Council of Ontario Universities



“The Toronto Region Board of Trade offers a wide range of essential benefits to our business and our employees with access to networking opportunities with fellow entrepreneurs, industry experts, policy makers, robust employee insurance programs and educational programming to upskill and keep current with need-to-know economic trends.”

-James Hashmi, CEO & Founder, Vinyl Technologies Corp

Innovation Economy Committee

Catalyzing the region's innovation and technology ecosystem to ensure we are a top destination for tech talent and investment.



The Unleashing Innovation: Industry Showcase

On October 30, we held an industry showcase which featured 25 urban mobility & manufacturing technology companies, 25 innovators, 30 speakers, and more than 350 attendees. Ontario's Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade, the Hon. Vic Fedeli highlighted the importance of the Toronto Region Board of Trade's place in the innovation ecosystem and the potential the province has to be a world-class jurisdiction. The insights shared by our remarkable speakers and innovators heralded a new era in the way we perceive the future of mobility and technology. From AI-driven warehouses and cybersecurity to self-driving vehicles, these enlightening discussions offered a glimpse into a future brimming with endless possibilities. Each exhibit highlighted cutting-edge technologies, ranging from revolutionary strides in robotics, delivery drones, and 3D printing to the transformative impact of smart city solutions and shared mobility.



“WES chose to become a member of the Toronto Region Board of Trade to partner with the business community to address Canada's critical labour shortage through leveraging the skills and experiences of immigrants who can drive regional growth. We must help employers to grow and improve competitiveness by accessing the talent they need, when they need it.”

-David (Daiwei) Yan, Manager, Employer Solutions at World Education Services

Energy & Climate Committee

Empowering the climate economy and maintaining a sustainable, reliable and affordable energy system in the Toronto region.

Electrifying Ontario's Economy Symposium

We convened our region's energy leaders to discuss Electrifying Ontario's Economy. Experts discussed strategic investments in electric vehicle production, battery gigafactories, nuclear energy and creating the conditions for a powerful resurgence in Ontario's manufacturing sector. The Hon. Todd Smith, Ontario's Minister of Energy delivered a vision of Ontario's nuclear energy sector.



The Hon. Todd Smith,
Ontario's Minister
of Energy



Julianne den Decker, Senior Vice-President, Candu Energy; David Harris, President & CEO, Kinectrics;
Tony Morris, President, Niagara Energy Products; Narinder Bains, Vice-President of Sales - Nuclear, ATS
Automation Systems; John MacQuarrie, President, Commercial Operations, BWX Technologies

The Future of Climate & Energy Symposium

The Future of Climate and Energy Symposium convened top players in the energy and climate space to discuss how to build a clean, reliable, and affordable energy future to enhance competitiveness and attract business investment in our region. In a riveting fireside chat, the Hon. Catherine McKenna, Chair, UN High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities, shared the steps needed to build a future powered by clean energy.



Hon. Catherine McKenna, Chair, UN High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities, Giles Gherson, President & CEO, Toronto Region Board of Trade



Rymal Smith, Owner/Partner & CTO, Ch2nge Energy; Crystal Rasa, Fulfillment Sourcing Manager, IKEA Canada; Joey Cycles, RNG Specialist, Enbridge; Carolyn Kim, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, UPS Canada

EV Breakfast Series

Our three-part EV Breakfast series kicked off in May 2023 with one strategic objective: to explore conditions for enabling widespread adoption of EVs. We delved into the critical requirements to enable the adoption of electric vehicles (EV) - investments and infrastructure. We discussed global strategies for EV adoption, the need for robust charging networks, and highlighted the collaborative effort needed to drive EV adoption.

“When assisting the Toronto Region Board of Trade with its real estate, I realized the value it brings to the city through its mission to support Toronto businesses. I want to support that mission by connecting the Toronto Region Board of Trade to CBRE's resources, networks and data so they can better understand the city's commercial real estate players and enact meaningful change.”

-Cathy Bongard, Associate VP, CBRE

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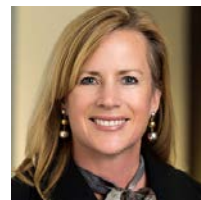
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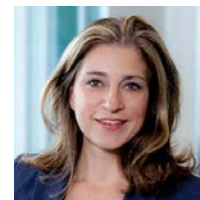


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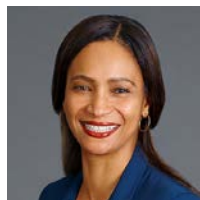
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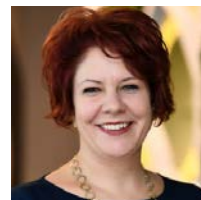
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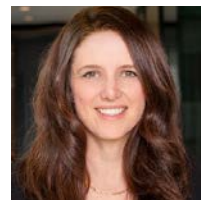
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**Titles correspond to when they spoke at Toronto Region Board of Trade*



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