
The Regional Municipality of Halton

2021 Provincial Pre-Budget Consultation Submission to the Minister of Finance

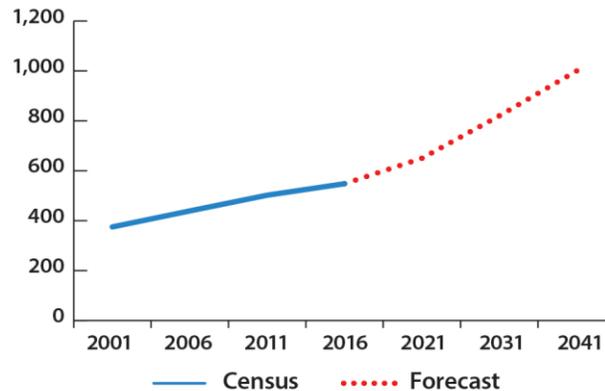
February 12, 2021



Introduction

Halton Region is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. It is home to more than 595,000 residents and, according to expectations in the Provincial Growth Plan, Halton is expected to grow to a population of 1 million by 2041.

Halton Population Forecast (thousands)



Halton has historically experienced provincial funding shortfalls in the areas of public health, long-term care, social services programs, and growth-related infrastructure. This long-standing issue has been significantly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supporting a Strong Recovery for Municipalities and Businesses

Ontario's economic recovery relies on municipalities continuing to deliver economic stimulus, infrastructure projects, child care, public health services, and water and wastewater treatment while addressing increased costs in long-term care and public health in the post-COVID-19 world. Long-term support from the Provincial Government will be needed to ensure that Halton can continue to deliver essential services, make a strong post-pandemic economic recovery, and meet provincial growth expectations.

The rise in workplace transmission of COVID-19 has also highlighted the crucial need for paid sick time. The lack of paid sick days, financial and income supports, and sick leave protection are barriers to COVID-19 control measures, including testing and isolation.

The pandemic has had a negative impact on main street businesses. Survival of the small business sector is essential to recovery efforts. Online and digital channels have emerged as an important method for main street businesses to interact with customers and generate revenues. The Digital Main Street Program has supported over 550 businesses in Halton and more could benefit. However, applications are no longer being accepted.

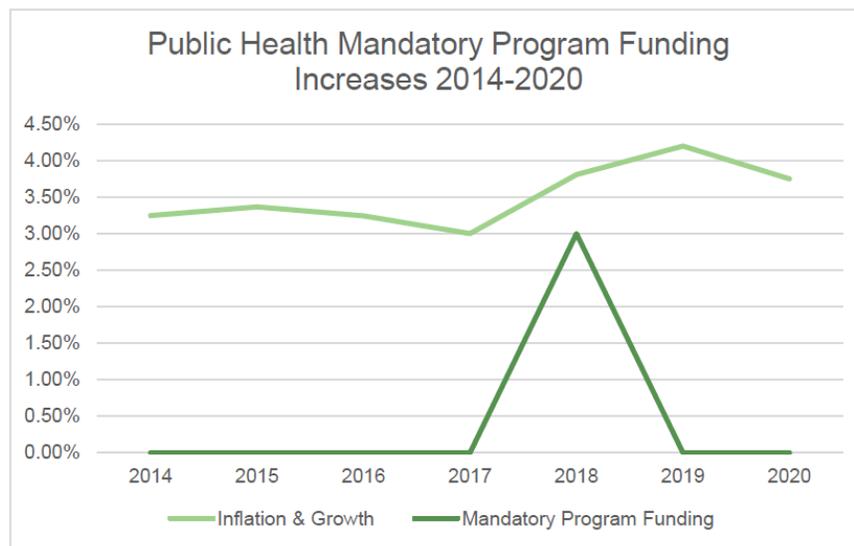
Halton Requests:

- Delivery of relief funding for 2021, to support ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

- Delivery of longer, better funded sick leave to help address the ongoing spread of COVID-19.
- Renew and expand Digital Main Street program for two additional years, to help Halton businesses survive the recovery.
- Expand the Digital Transformation Grant to those businesses outside of Business Improvement Areas.

Resources to support Public Health, Long-Term Care and COVID-19 Response

Halton’s health and long-term care systems have been underfunded for many years. Since 2014, the Provincial Government has only provided an increase in public health funding in one year - 2018. This has resulted in a significant program-funding gap. Additional costs have also been incurred for paramedic services due to similar pressures.



The pandemic has highlighted the critical need for long-term care reform and that there is an insufficient number of long-term care beds to meet the needs of the current population. Care requirements at long-term care homes in Ontario are increasing as per the increasing Case Mix Index (CMI). Halton Region is also experiencing this reality. CMIs at all Halton long-term care homes exceed the current provincial average.

Halton Requests

- Increased investments in public health and paramedic services to meet the needs of Halton’s growing community.
- Assistance and support with ongoing long-term care resourcing including human resources and staffing, personal protective equipment and financial supports.

Clear and Consistent Approach to Vaccinations

COVID-19 vaccinations are a critical component of reducing the spread of the virus, keeping Canadians physically and mentally healthy and avoiding future lockdowns. However, there continues to be a lack of clarity regarding priority groups, and the availability and timing of vaccine distribution.

Uncertainty of supply of vaccinations, including the redirection of vaccinations within the Province results in significant challenges for Halton in providing vaccinations to the community.

Halton Requests:

- Clear and consistent public communication on priority populations to receive COVID-19 vaccinations, and the timing of delivery for each priority population and the general population.

Investments in Essential Infrastructure

Halton has long-term infrastructure plans to ensure municipal infrastructure is available to support planned growth in a responsible way. However, the application of provincial legislation coupled with the absence of a provincial multi-year infrastructure plan, has resulted in obstacles to increasing housing supply and economic growth. Halton and the Local Municipalities experience a combined funding shortfall of over \$80 million per year. Municipalities need appropriate funding tools that allow delivery of planned infrastructure to achieve provincial growth projections, while ensuring that growth pays for itself, which is critical to the long-term recovery of the community.

Reliable access to broadband internet drives economic investment and job creation, and enables small businesses to effectively compete in a digital world. While Halton is appreciative of the recently announced additional funding for the Improving Connectivity in Ontario (ICON) program, the pandemic has heightened the critical need for rural broadband programs and funding to ensure access for all residents and businesses.

Halton Requests:

- A coordinated provincial infrastructure investment plan, connected to the Growth Plan, to support high-growth communities such as Halton Region.
- Provincial investments and municipal funding tools to ensure that growth pays for itself.
- Increased eligibility of rural Halton for all broadband funding programs
- The Province continue to incentivize and encourage investments, partnerships and innovation for broadband deployment in Halton.

Conclusion

Halton Region appreciates the Provincial Government's response to COVID-19. A strong, collaborative partnership is critical to an ongoing strong response to COVID-19 and a successful recovery of our community. Halton Region is committed to continuing to work with the Provincial Government, as a strong Halton ensures a strong Ontario.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the 2021 provincial budget. For more information about Halton's advocacy priorities, please visit **Halton.ca**.