
The Regional Municipality of Halton

2021 Federal Pre-Budget Consultation Submission to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

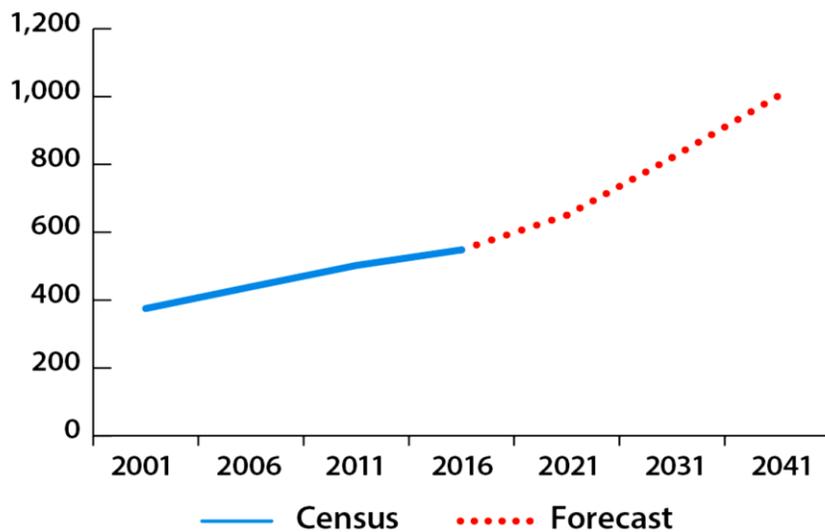
February 19, 2021



Introduction

Halton is home to more than 595,000 residents in four communities. Along with its Local Municipalities (City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, Town of Milton, and Town of Oakville) Halton Region is an effective two-tier government recognized for its strong financial position, safe communities, natural environment, progressive approach to urban development, and citizen-focused reliable services.

Halton Population Forecast (thousands)



Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Halton Region has remained committed to keeping our community safe and healthy through the continued delivery of essential programs and services. Halton Region continues to share the Federal Government's priority of protecting the health and safety of Canadians while working toward a safe and responsible re-opening of the economy. As Halton prepares for future surges and waves of COVID-19, and charts its course towards a strong recovery, further support will be required from the Federal and Provincial Governments. In light of this, Halton is requesting that the Federal Government provide:

- Support for a strong recovery for municipalities and businesses.
- A clear and consistent approach to vaccinations.
- Investments for roads and infrastructure.
- Support for safe, affordable, and accessible government-assisted housing.
- Funding to address climate change and support resilient communities.
- Universal access to broadband internet.

Support for a Strong Recovery for Municipalities and Businesses

Canada's economic recovery will rely on municipalities continuing to deliver essential programs and services including public health and paramedic services, housing and homelessness prevention supports, social services, infrastructure projects, regional roads and transportation, waste management, and wastewater treatment. These critical regional responsibilities will continue to be managed alongside the significant increased long-term care and public health costs in the post-COVID-19 world.

During the first wave of COVID-19, the Region incurred significant costs. While Halton is grateful for the \$12 million in emergency operating funding provided by the Federal and Provincial Governments under the Safe Restart Agreement ultimately, Halton's recovery will rely on the continued collaboration between the Federal and Provincial Governments to address long-term COVID-19 financial pressures for 2021, and beyond.

In addition to municipalities, main street businesses have also been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The survival of the small business sector is essential to Canada's economic recovery. For main street businesses operating during the pandemic, online and digital channels have emerged as a critical means for interacting with customers and generating revenues. The Digital Main Street Program has supported over 550 businesses in Halton and could benefit more, however applications are no longer being accepted.

COVID-19 has also highlighted the crucial need for paid sick time. The lack of paid sick days, financial/income supports, and sick leave protection are known barriers to COVID-19 control measures, including testing and isolation due to the fear of income loss and financial hardship. Income protection and job security must be guaranteed to help mitigate the risk of workplace outbreaks and adequately support low-wage and essential workers who currently lack access to paid sick days.

Halton Requests:

- Deliver relief funding to municipalities for 2021 to support ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.
- Addition funding to allow for the renewal and expansion the Digital Main Street program for 2 additional years to help Halton businesses survive the recovery.
- Deliver longer and better funded sick leave to help address the ongoing spread of COVID-19.

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 which impact the economy. However, there continues to be a lack of clarity regarding priority groups, availability, and timing of vaccine distribution.

The Region is committed to working with the Federal and Provincial Governments as well as our community partners to ensure the quick vaccination of all priority groups, including residents of our Long-Term Care homes. To achieve this, Halton Region requires adequate supply and equitable distribution of vaccines to meet our needs.

Halton Requests:

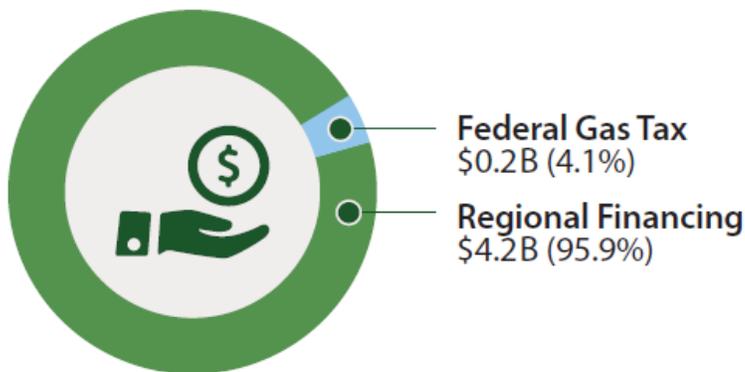
- ❑ The Federal Government procure and distribute a sufficient supply of vaccines to the Provinces to ensure that all Canadians that want to be inoculated against COVID-19 can do so by September 2021

Investing In Roads and Infrastructure

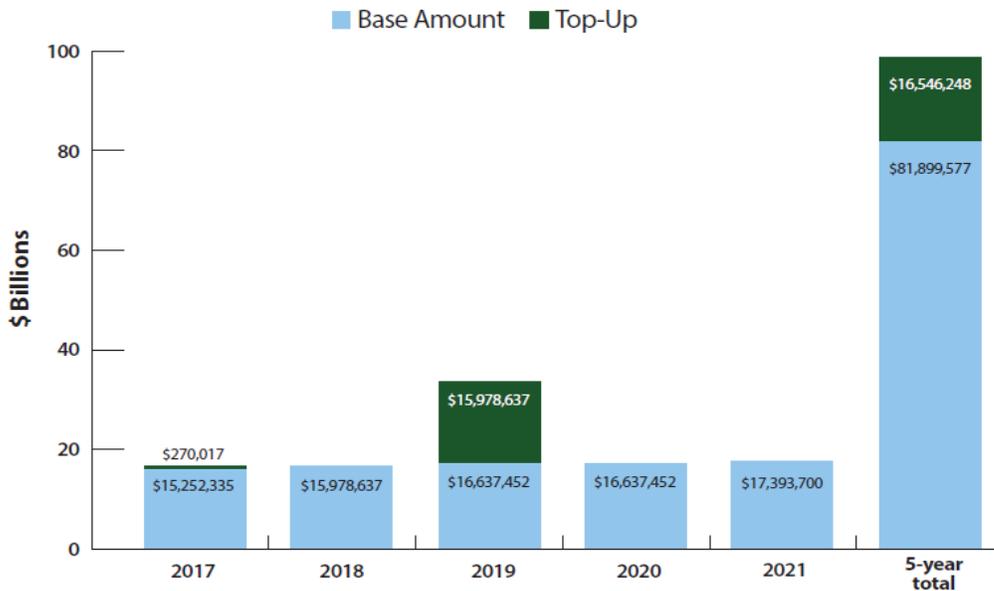
Halton Region is committed to creating complete communities that ensure a high quality of life for residents and a competitive economy. Investments in infrastructure not only support the economy, but they also make Halton a desirable place to live and do business. However, the infrastructure funding tools currently available to municipalities are outdated and do not provide long-term, sustainable funding solutions for our growing community.

While Halton Region is appreciative of the Federal Government’s *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan*, our 2021-2030 capital infrastructure program totals \$4.4 billion, including \$2.1 billion to fund the state of good repair and \$2.3 billion to fund infrastructure to support growth in our community. Of Halton’s 10-year \$4.4 billion capital program, only \$0.2 billion (4.1%) is funded by the Federal Gas Tax.

2021-2030 Capital Financing: \$4.4B



Halton Region Federal Gas Tax Funding



Halton Requests:

- Provide further long-term sustainable infrastructure funding and investments to support the movement of goods and people.

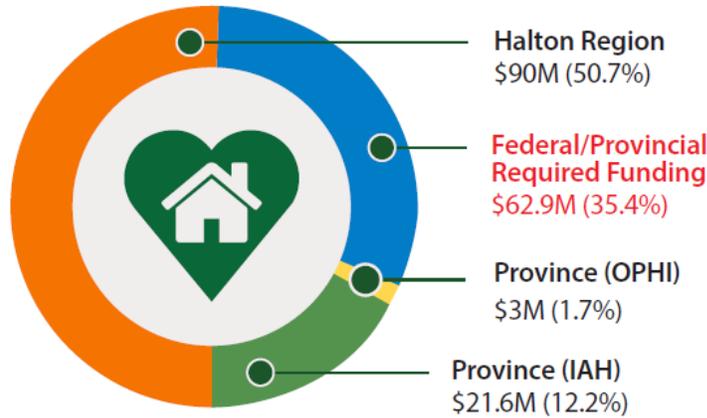
Supporting Safe, Affordable and Accessible Government-Assisted Housing

The provision of safe, affordable, and accessible housing is a critical component of fostering healthy communities. However, housing has outpaced income and become less affordable in both Halton’s ownership and rental markets. Furthermore, the increase in applications for Halton’s centralized wait list signifies that demand for housing within the region has increased exponentially.

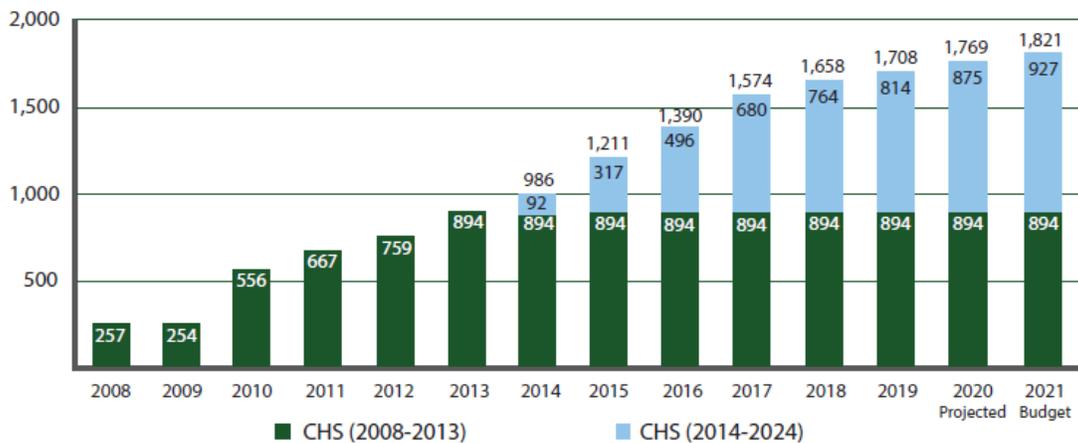
In order to address these challenges, the Region has continued to deliver innovative affordable and assisted housing and homelessness programs and opportunities. Through our 10-year *Comprehensive Housing Strategy (2014-2024)*, Halton Region is investing \$90 million in capital social infrastructure. This Strategy provides government-assisted housing options to low income residents.

Comprehensive Housing Strategy

10 Year Capital Funding Requirements: \$177.5M
(900 opportunities)



Since 2014, Halton has created a total of 875 government-assisted housing opportunities. By the end of 2021, this number is projected to increase to 927.



Halton has demonstrated its ability to deliver affordable housing by leveraging funding provided by the Federal and Provincial Governments. Given the increasing demand for affordable housing within the region, long-term, sustainable funding is needed to deliver housing solutions moving forward.

In 2018, the Federal Government announced Canada's first ever National Housing Strategy. While this 10-year \$55+ billion plan is intended to help increase affordable housing options in Canada, it is unclear when municipalities will receive funding.

Housing is a shared responsibility across all levels of Government, as well as the private and non-profit sectors. Long-term sustainable investments will allow for the planning and delivery of safe, affordable, and accessible housing which improves the lives of residents and strengthens communities.

Halton Requests:

- Deliver increased, predictable and sustainable Federal funding to support the Region's commitment to affordable and assisted housing.

Addressing Climate Change and Supporting Resilient Communities

Halton Region is committed to responding to climate change by reducing adverse environmental impacts, ensuring the resilience of Regional infrastructure and services, and mitigating risks associated with severe weather events. Halton has committed \$85 million to flood mitigation strategies and continues to make this a priority as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

Halton Requests:

- Provide ongoing, sustainable funding and climate change mitigation support to enable municipalities to deliver resilient communities.

Delivering Universal Access to Broadband Internet

Reliable access to broadband internet drives economic investment, job creation and enables small businesses to effectively compete in a digital world. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need for reliable internet connectivity to support on-line learning, mental health resources, family and government support services, and work-from-home capabilities.

Universal access to broadband internet has been a long standing advocacy issue for Halton Region. Currently, significant broadband service limitations exist in west Burlington, north-west Milton, and south Halton Hills.

While Halton appreciates the Federal Government's commitment to connect all Canadians to high-speed Internet by 2030, as evidenced by COVID-19, fast, reliable, and affordable access to broadband is needed now.

Halton Requests:

- Increase the eligibility of rural Halton Region to any and all funding programs.
- Continue to incentivize and encourage investments, partnerships, and innovation for broadband deployment in Halton.
- Coordinate broadband funding and enhancements with the Provincial Government.

Conclusion

Halton Region appreciates the Federal Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and shares its priority of protecting the health and safety of Canadians, while working toward a safe and responsible re-opening of the economy. Strong, collaborative partnerships between all levels of Government remain imperative in the fight against COVID-19 and to move forward to adapting to a new normal. Halton Region remains committed to working with the Federal Government during the pandemic and beyond because, together, we can ensure a strong Halton for a strong Canada.

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