

2023

Halton Region
Economic Review





Message from Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr

On behalf of Regional Council, I am pleased to share the 2023 Economic Review. In this report, you can find valuable information on labour market dynamics, business and development activity, and other key indicators about the regional economy.

Halton continues to be a great place to do business. In 2023, there were 3,300 jobs added to the local economy. Development also continued at a strong pace to accommodate Halton's growing community, with new residential, industrial and commercial spaces being approved for construction.

Here are some of the key economic highlights from 2023:

- Total building permit construction value reached its third-highest building permit value in Halton with \$2.8 billion approved for development.
- The amount of non-residential total floor area (TFA) with building permits issued was 3.1 million square feet, with 2.4 million square feet consisting of industrial development.
- Halton's unemployment rate was 5.3 per cent, down from 5.5 per cent in 2022.
- The labour force participation rate was 68.5 per cent, up from 67.4 per cent in 2022.

By ensuring our community is a place where businesses and people can succeed, we keep Halton a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire. To learn more about doing business in Halton, visit the [Invest Halton page](#) on [halton.ca](#).

Sincerely,

Gary Carr,
Halton Regional Chair

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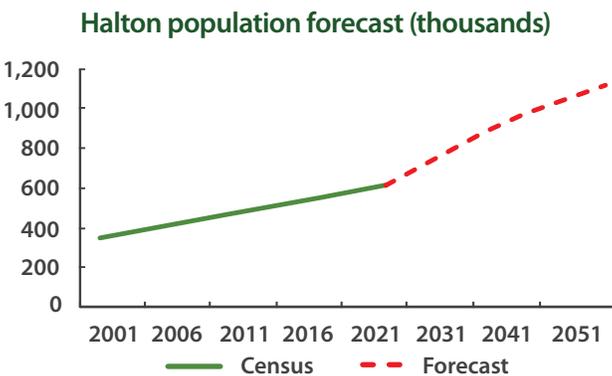
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haltonsbec.wordpress.com

An ideal location for business in Ontario's fast growing region

With a diverse economy, easy access to major markets, an expanding talent pool and a highly educated workforce, Halton is an ideal location for businesses and professionals in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area (GTHA). Halton has four communities: Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. It is one of the most vibrant and desirable communities to live in Canada.



Source: Statistics Canada Census and Places to Grow Plan



 78% Post-secondary attainment ¹	 243,500 Total jobs ³	 \$33.1 B GDP ⁵
 40.2 Average age ¹	 13,810 Number of employers ³	 \$156 B Total Assessment ⁶
 \$156,800 Average household income ¹	 14,142 acres Employment lands	 969 km² Land area
 \$1.2 M Average house price ²	 5.3% Unemployment rate ⁴	 526 km² Green space
 226 Distinct ethnicities ¹	 320,175 Resident labour force ¹	 132 Languages spoken ¹

1 Statistics Canada, 2021 Census.

2 Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB), 2023 average.

3 Halton Region Employment Survey, 2023.

4 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2023 average.

5 Conference Board of Canada, 2023.

6 Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Financial Information Returns, 2022 total current value assessment (CVA).

Halton's economic highlights

Labour market

As the broader economy continues to grapple with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on supply chains, interest rates and inflation, the labour market continued to show strength over the past year. In Halton, the resident labour force is predominantly professional services-based and highly skilled which continues to translate into relatively stable labour market fundamentals, despite economic disruptions. In 2023, Halton's unemployment rate averaged 5.3 per cent, down from 5.5 per cent in 2022 and slightly below the broader Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas (GTHA) and provincial rates. Halton's labour force participation rate also increased marginally in 2023, rising to an average of 68.5 per cent from 67.4 per cent in 2022. Another indication of recovery in Halton's labour market is an 8 per cent decrease in the number of residents collecting employment insurance, which fell from 4,063 people in 2022 to 3,747 in 2023.

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey and Employment Insurance Statistics



Building and development

Development across Halton continued at a strong pace in 2023, with total construction value approved for development reaching nearly \$2.8 billion. This represents the third-highest total building permit value recorded in Halton and exceeds the annual average total building permit value of \$2.2 billion over the past decade. Over 60 per cent of building permit construction value in Halton was attributed to residential development, which amounted to \$1.7 billion (current dollar value unadjusted for inflation). In terms of non-residential construction in Halton, the current dollar construction value reached over \$1.0 billion in 2023 with 3.1 million square feet of non-residential total floor area (TFA) approved for construction. Much of the non-residential TFA was attributed to significant industrial development in Halton's employment areas, which totaled 2.4 million square feet in 2023.

Source: Statistics Canada Building Permit Survey and Halton Region



Business and jobs

Halton is home to a growing business community in a diverse range of industry sectors with clusters in engineering, automotive, technology, financial services, food processing, and logistics distribution. There were 13,810 employers across Halton in 2023, employing 243,500 workers. Market disruptions emerging from the pandemic, however, continue to have impacts on many in Halton's business community. Results from the 2023 Halton Region Business Conditions Survey show that affordability and inflationary pressures are top of mind for Halton business owners. Halton business owners also identified inflation, rising interest rates and debt and real estate costs as challenges for their business operations.

Source: Halton Region Employment Survey and Halton Business Conditions Survey



Halton's economic highlights

Halton Economic Indicators	2019	2022	2023	1-year change	5-year change
Population ¹	596,940	637,054	650,014	2.0%	8.9%
Population density (per square km) ²	616	657	671	2.1%	8.9%
Gross domestic product (GDP) ³	\$30.6 B	\$32.6 B	\$33.1 B	1.6%	8.4%
Unemployment rate ⁴	4.2%	5.5%	5.3%	-0.2 pp	1.1 pp
Participation rate ⁴	68.5%	67.4%	68.5%	1.1 pp	0.0 pp
Employment rate ⁴	65.7%	63.8%	64.9%	1.1 pp	-0.8 pp
El beneficiaries ⁵	3,299	4,063	3,747	-7.8%	13.6%
Ontario Works caseload ⁶	2,108	1,862	2,444	31.3%	15.9%
Number of Jobs ⁷	241,423	240,200	243,500	1.4%	0.9%
Jobs activity rate ^{1&7}	40.4%	37.7%	37.5%	-0.2pp	-2.9pp
Employers ⁷	13,650	13,820	13,810	-0.1%	1.2%
Business bankruptcy ⁸	25	43	42	-2.3%	68.0%
Total construction (current dollar value) ⁹	\$1.7 B	\$3.0 B	\$2.8 B	-6.9%	62.9%
Residential construction	\$991 M	\$2.3 B	\$1.7 B	-24.9%	75.7%
Non-residential construction	\$704 M	\$647 M	\$1.0 B	57.6%	44.9%
Ratio of residential / non-residential construction (current dollar value)	58/42	78/22	63/37	x	x
Residential building permits issued ¹⁰	3,910	4,413	4,733	7.3%	21.0%
Non-residential building permits issued ¹⁰	2,326	1,945	1,764	-9.3%	-24.2%
Non-residential total floor area (ft2) ¹¹	2.9 M	6.4 M	3.1 M	-50.4%	9.8%
Industrial total floor area (ft2)	1.8 M	5.5 M	2.4 M	57.2%	33.1%
Commercial total floor area (ft2)	448,476	329,015	241,716	-26.5%	-46.1%
Office total floor area (ft2)	176,846	45,166	59,360	31.4%	-66.4%
Retail total floor area (ft2)	271,630	283,849	182,356	-35.8%	-32.9%
Industrial availability rate ¹²	3.0%	1.5%	3.2%	1.7 pp	0.2 pp
Office vacancy rate ¹³	15.5%	22.2%	21.1%	-1.1 pp	5.6 pp

Sources:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Halton Region Best Planning Estimates | 8 Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada |
| 2 Based on 969 km2 land area | 9 Statistics Canada, Building Permits Survey |
| 3 Conference Board of Canada | 10 Local Municipal Building Departments |
| 4 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey | 11 Halton Region, Non-Residential DC database |
| 5 Statistics Canada, Employment Insurance Statistics | 12 CBRE. Rates in Halton |
| 6 Halton Region (monthly average) | 13 CBRE. Rates in Burlington and Oakville |
| 7 Halton Region Employment Survey | |

Industrial and commercial development and real estate activity

Halton's development and real estate market

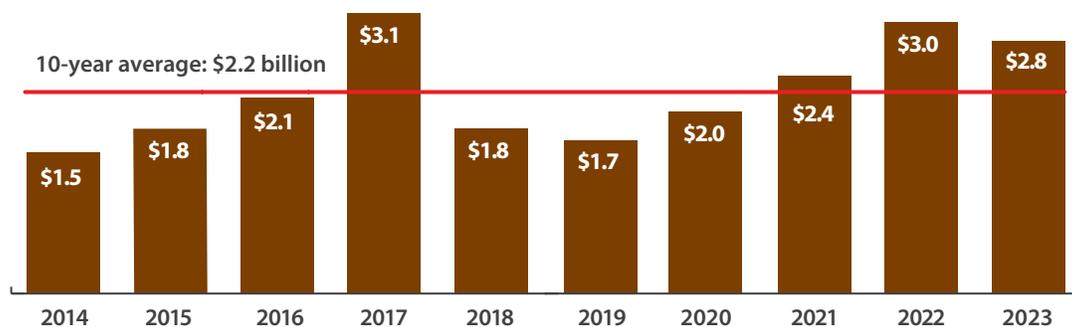
The pace of development across Halton moderated in 2023, as building permit construction value approved for development totaled \$2.8 billion, down from \$3.0 billion in 2022. The decline in 2023 was mainly driven by the decrease in residential development (25 per cent decrease from 2022), whereas industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) construction increased by 58 per cent in 2023. Within the ICI sector, institutional development rose 111 per cent in 2023, followed by industrial development (81 per cent growth) and commercial (33 per cent growth). Non-residential total floor area (TFA) issued in 2023 totaled 3.1 million square feet, representing a 50 per cent decrease over 2022, and below the 10-year average TFA in Halton of 3.5 million square feet per year.

Total construction

\$2.8 B Halton's total building permit **construction value** in 2023.

\$22.1 B Total building permit **construction value** in Halton over past 10 years.

Ten-year trends in total construction value* in Halton (billions)



*current dollars, unadjusted for inflation

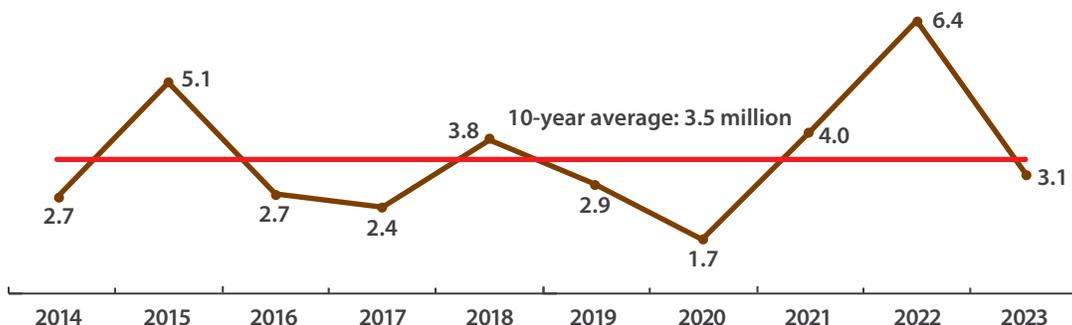
Source: Statistics Canada Building Permit Survey

Total floor area

3.1 M sq. ft. Halton's non-residential **total floor area** built in 2023.

34.8 M sq. ft. Halton's non-residential **total floor area** built over past 10 years.

Ten-year trends in total non-residential floor area approved for construction in Halton (millions sq. ft.)



Source: Halton Region

Industrial and commercial development and real estate activity

Non-residential assessment

Halton Region non-residential assessment declined marginally in 2022 to \$21.12 billion from \$21.14 billion in 2021. Over the past ten years, however, non-residential assessment has grown 33 per cent. Non-residential assessment accounted for 13.6 per cent of total current value assessment in Halton in 2022.



*MPAC Assessment Update in 2016, reflected in 2017 figures. Source: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Financial Information Returns

Notable developments

James Snow Business Park – Four new multi-tenant industrial buildings by Oxford Properties as part of Phase 1 in a multi-phase development within the James Snow Business Park in Milton (\$199.8 million).

Sixteen Mile Sports Complex – Construction of a new sports complex, community centre, park and library branch in Oakville (\$130 million).

Better Life Maple Villa – Five-storey 256-bed long-term care facility in Burlington (\$88 million).

Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital – Expansion of the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (\$70.8 million).

Three Oaks Business Centre – New flex industrial warehouse development in Oakville by Beedie (\$53.3 million).

Carterra – New industrial park on Wyecroft Road in Oakville (\$44.4 million).

Broccolini – New Derry Road Logistics Campus building in Milton (\$33.2 million).

Bronte Station Business Park – New industrial development by First Gulf in Oakville (\$31 million).

3100 Mainway – New warehouse distribution centre by Carterra in Burlington (\$22 million).



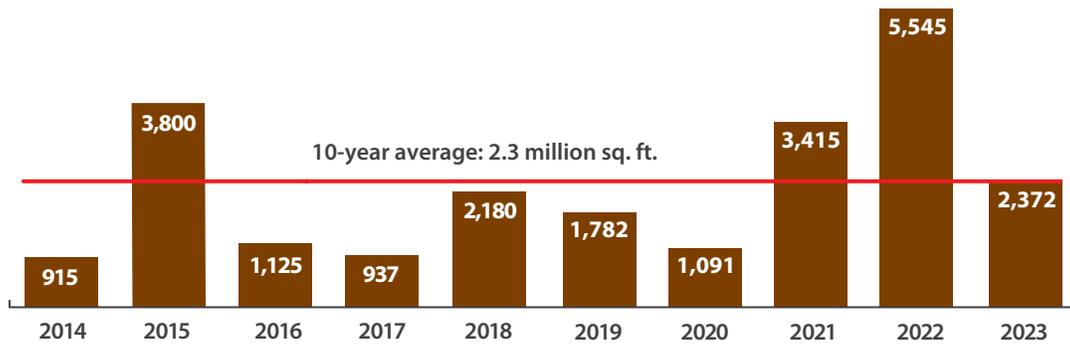
Rendering of the James Snow Business Park

Industrial and commercial development and real estate activity

Industrial development

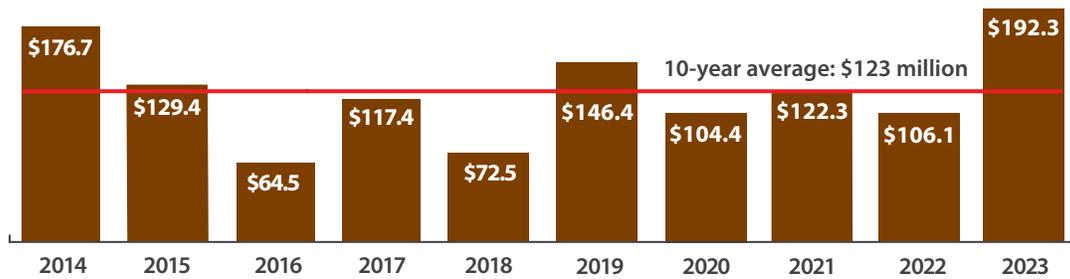
Total industrial floor area approved for construction across Halton in 2023 decreased to 2.4 million square feet. This follows three consecutive annual increases that reached 5.5 million square feet in 2022, which consisted of several large-scale logistics developments initiated during the period. As there can be a lag between initial development approvals data and final building permit issuance data, industrial construction values increased in 2023 as those earlier large logistics facilities were completed. Industrial building permit construction value increased by 81 per cent in 2023 to \$192 million – above the ten-year average of \$123 million.

Ten-year trends in industrial total floor area approved for construction (thousands sq. ft.)



Source: Halton Region

Ten-year trends in industrial construction value* in Halton (millions)



*current dollars, unadjusted for inflation

Source: Statistics Canada Building Permit Survey

Industrial real estate market

\$16.87/sq. ft. Halton industrial **average net rent** in 2023. Lower than GTA: \$18.16/sq. ft.

\$308.75/sq. ft. Halton industrial **average net sale price** in 2023. Lower than GTA: \$381.83/sq. ft.

3.2% Halton industrial **availability rate** in 2023. Higher than GTA: 1.8%

46,702 sq. ft. Halton industrial floor area **absorbed** in 2023.

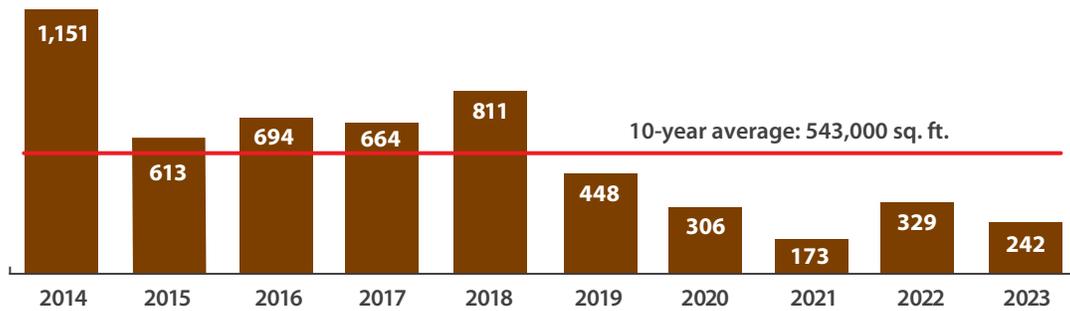
Source: CBRE

Industrial and commercial development and real estate activity

Commercial development

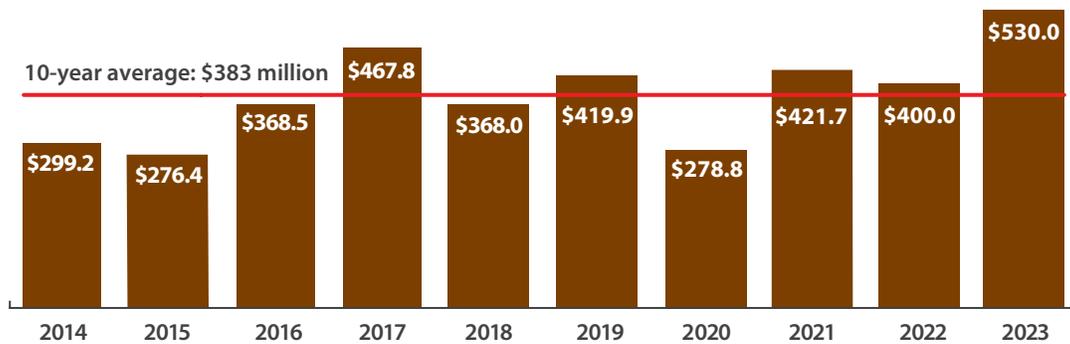
Approved commercial development for construction in Halton in 2023 consisted of 59,360 square feet of office space and 182,356 square feet of retail space. In total, 241,716 square feet of new or expanded commercial real estate was approved for construction in 2023. Compared to the previous year, 87,299 fewer square feet of commercial development was approved for construction in 2022 (-27%) and still below pre-pandemic levels. Overall, commercial building permit construction value totaled just over \$530 million – above Halton’s ten-year average commercial construction value of \$383 million.

Ten-year trends in commercial total floor area approved for construction (thousands sq. ft.)



Source: Halton Region

Ten-year trends in commercial construction value* in Halton (millions)



*current dollars, unadjusted for inflation

Source: Statistics Canada Building Permit Survey

Office real estate market*

\$17.43/sq. ft. Halton office **average net rent** in 2023. Lower than GTA: \$27.17/sq. ft.

21.1% Halton **office vacancy** in 2023. Higher than GTA: 18.0%

146,224 sq. ft. Burlington and Oakville office floor area **absorbed** in 2023.

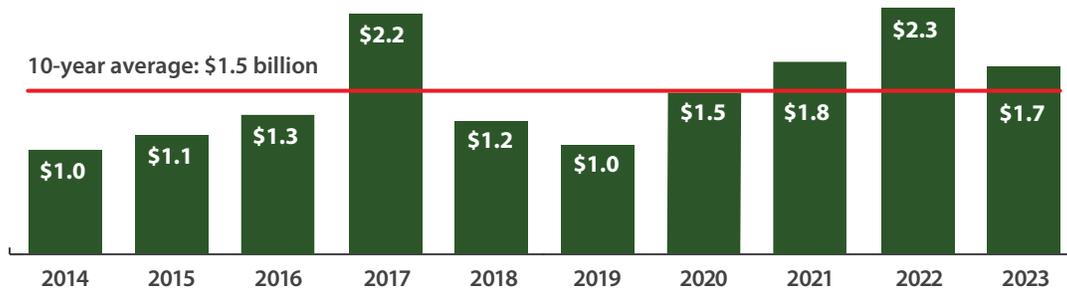
* Based on Burlington and Oakville

Source: CBRE

Residential development

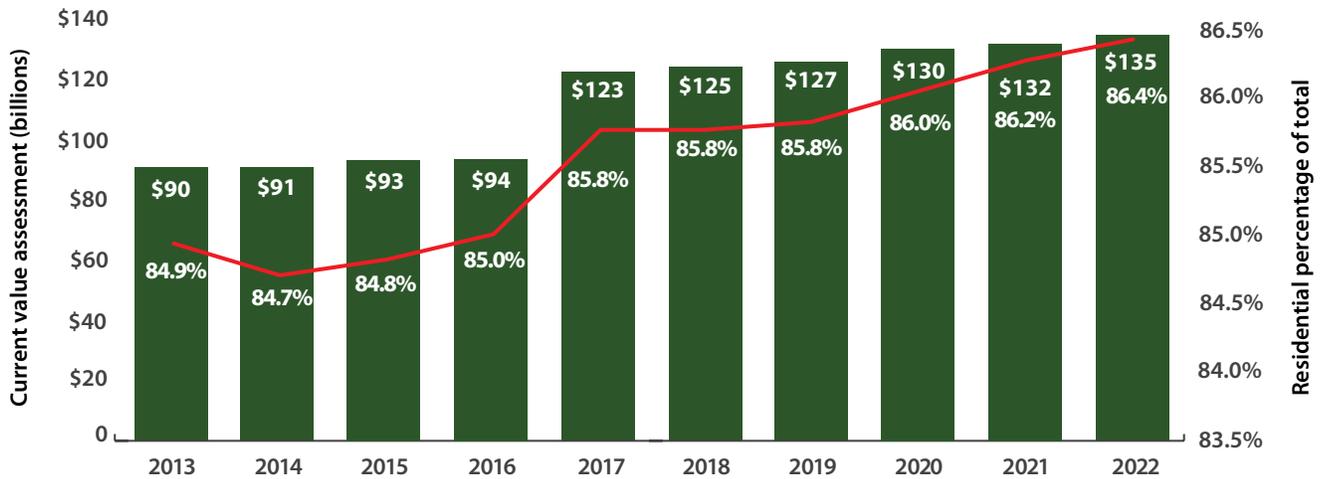
Halton continued to witness strong new residential development in 2023. Residential building permit construction value exceeded \$1.7 billion in 2023 in Halton and represented a mix of low, medium and high density housing. Over the past 10 years, there has been over \$15 billion in residential building permit construction (measured in current dollar value, unadjusted for inflation) approved to be built across Halton, with an annual average building permit value of \$1.5 billion. Since 2013, residential property assessment in Halton has increased by 50 per cent to reach over \$134.6 billion in 2022.

Ten-year trends in residential construction value in Halton (billions)



Source: Statistics Canada Building Permit Survey

Ten-year trends in residential property assessment in Halton (billions)



* MPAC Assessment Update in 2016, reflected in 2017 figures.

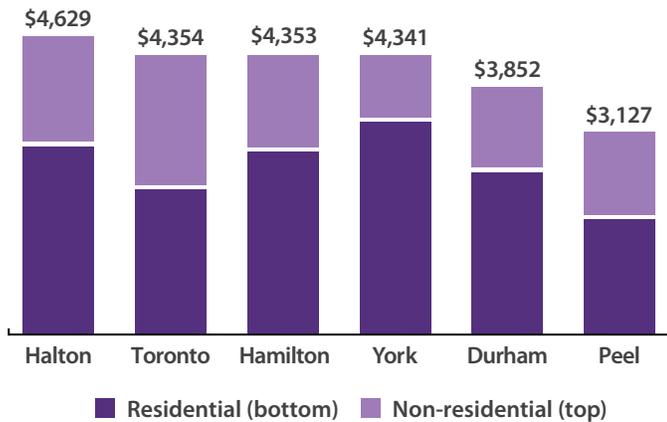
Source: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Financial Information Returns

Halton within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

Development comparison

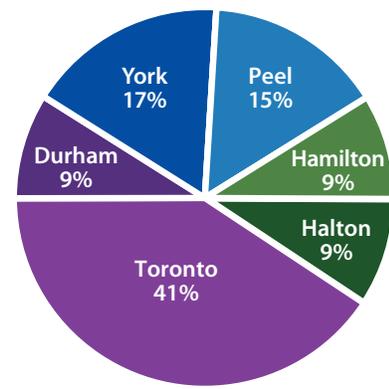
Across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area (GTHA), Halton's market share of the \$29.7 billion in total building permit construction value was 9 per cent in 2023. Halton ranked the highest in total building permit value per capita in the GTHA in 2023, reaching \$4,629 per person. Comparing Halton's total building permit construction value to those of other GTHA municipalities on a per capita basis adds perspective to the scale of development occurring in Halton. In terms of residential construction building permit value per capita, Halton Region was ranked second only to York Region in the GTHA in 2023, with \$2,920 in residential building permit construction value per person.

GTHA comparison of total building permit construction value* 2023 (per capita)



* current dollars, unadjusted for inflation
Source: Statistics Canada, Building Permit Survey

Distribution of total building permit construction value* across the GTHA, 2023



* current dollars, unadjusted for inflation
Source: Statistics Canada, Building Permit Survey



Halton within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

Showcasing Halton municipalities at Collision 2023 in Toronto

In June 2023, Toronto hosted the annual Collision conference of over 36,000 delegates from more than 118 countries, which has been described as one of the world's largest tech conferences. Halton municipalities were showcased during the conference and promoted by Toronto Global, the investment attraction agency for the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

To kick-off the Collision conference, Halton Region partnered with the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade, Burlington and Oakville Economic Development offices and Haltech to host international delegates on a tour of Halton's technology and innovation ecosystem. The tour involved stops at Oakville-based Geotab, a global leader in connected transportation solutions that provides vehicle and asset tracking solutions to over forty thousand customers in 150 countries. Delegates also toured the world-renowned Animation School and Centre for Mobile Innovation at Sheridan College and concluded at TechPlace in Burlington where delegates heard about programs and services provided to international companies looking to locate in Halton.

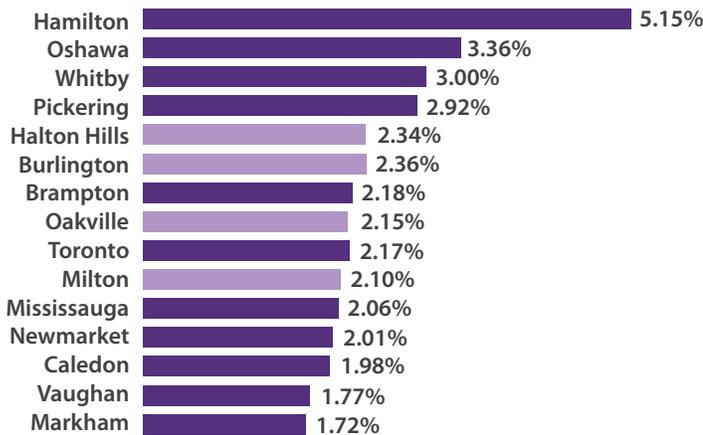


Halton within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

Competitive costs

Halton Region has relatively competitive costs within the context of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Halton's municipalities have among the lowest office property tax rates within the GTHA and Development Charges (DCs), which in Halton Region are differentiated between retail and non-retail, are generally below the GTHA average for non-retail industrial and office development (i.e. industrial Development Charge chart below) and near the GTHA average for retail commercial development.

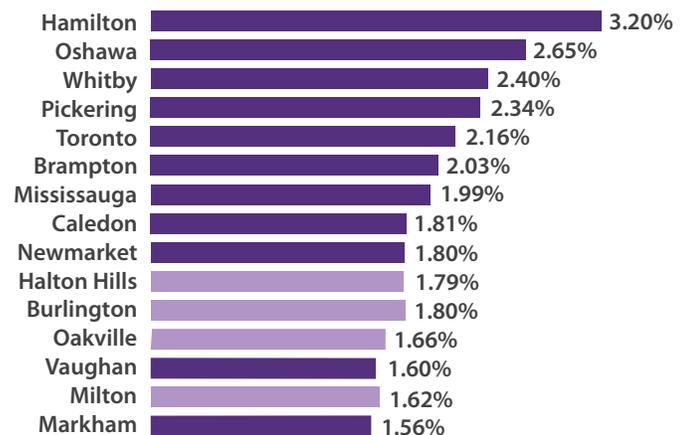
Industrial property tax rates across select GTHA municipalities in 2023



Source: BMA Municipal Study 2023.

Note: Industrial property tax rates are based on large industrial use (greater than 125,000 sq. ft.). Rates include municipal and education.

Office property tax rates across select GTHA municipalities in 2023



Source: BMA Municipal Study 2023.

Note: Office tax rates are based on commercial office building class. Rates include municipal and education.

Industrial development charge rates across select GTHA municipalities in 2023 (\$/sq. ft.)



(GR) Greenfield (BB) Built Boundary

Source: BMA Municipal Study 2023 and Halton Region.

* Applies to non-retail (industrial & commercial office).

** Lower tier applies to non-retail (industrial only).

Commercial development charge rates across select GTHA municipalities in 2023 (\$/sq. ft.)



(GR) Greenfield (BB) Built Boundary

Source: BMA Municipal Study 2023 and Halton Region.

* Applies to commercial retail.

** Lower tier applies to non-industrial (commercial office and retail).

Facilitating growth

Preparing for growth and development

The Ontario government's Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, received Royal Assent on November 28, 2022. The Bill was introduced to support the objective of creating 1.5 million homes in Ontario by 2031. Upon Proclamation, Bill 23 will result in considerable changes to the Ontario Planning system and shift certain responsibilities from Halton Region to the Local Municipalities.

Bill 23 also introduced changes to the *Development Charges Act, 1997*, which will restrict Development Charge (DC) collections and impact the Region's ability to fund capital works. Strategies to address these shortfalls, including the 2023 Allocation Program, are being considered by Halton Region.

Further, to assist the Province in meeting the objective of delivering 1.5 million homes by 2031, the Local Municipalities signed housing pledges in 2023 that represent a significant acceleration of growth in Halton Region. Local Municipal housing pledges total 92,500 units by 2031. Halton Region will play a key role in providing infrastructure in support of Local Municipal housing pledges by proactively planning for, financing and delivering infrastructure.

Infrastructure investment

Halton Region focuses on providing a budget and infrastructure investment strategy that acknowledges the impact that Bill 23 has on the Region's delivery of services and ability to collect Development Charges (DCs).

Accordingly, Halton Region's capital program identifies investments that aim to expand infrastructure to meet the Local Municipal Housing Pledges, ensure continued economic growth and appropriately maintain and replace the Region's existing infrastructure in a state-of-good-repair. The Region's 10-year capital program has a projected cost of \$8.8 billion between 2024 and 2033, \$5.2 billion of which was approved through the 2024 Budget & Business Plan and \$3.6 billion of which is related to the pending 2023 Allocation Program. The 10-year capital program is split between growth infrastructure needs (\$5.5 billion) and to address state-of-good-repair for existing infrastructure (\$3.3 billion).

The \$8.8 billion 10-year capital program includes a \$4.1 billion water and wastewater capital program and a \$4.0 billion transportation capital program.

2024-2033 capital infrastructure highlights include:

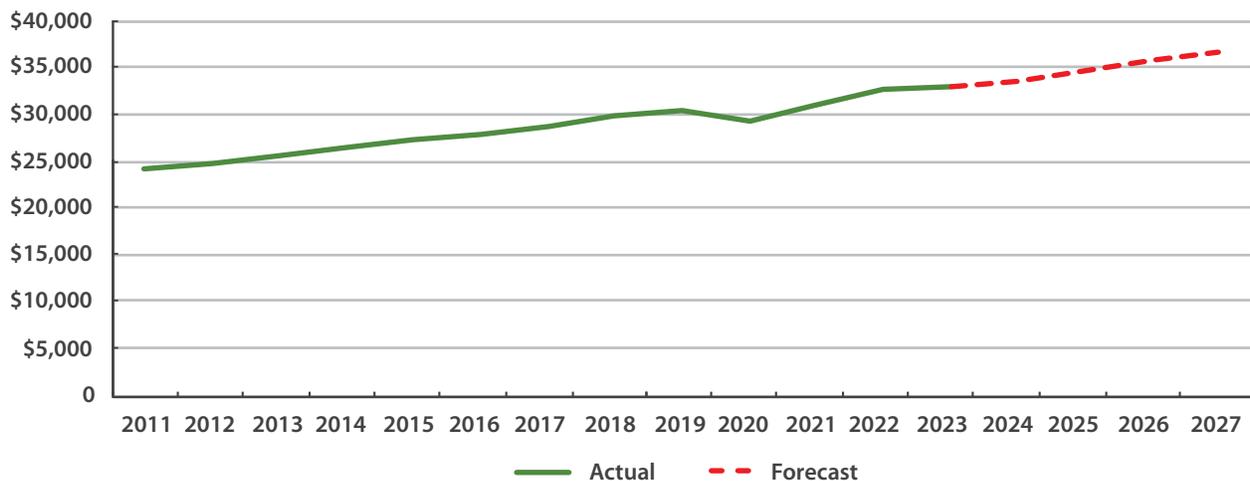
- \$1,146.5 million greenfield-area related water and wastewater
- \$895.0 million for servicing region-wide capacity
- \$176.2 million for servicing built boundary areas related water and wastewater
- \$148.4 million for employment land servicing related infrastructure
- \$351.1 million for Regional Road 25
- \$350.5 million for Trafalgar Road
- \$333.4 million for Steeles Avenue
- \$307.3 million for James Snow Parkway
- \$218.9 million for Tremaine Road
- \$217.1 million for Upper Middle Road
- \$210.9 million for 5 ½ Line
- \$194.0 million for Derry Road



Economic impact

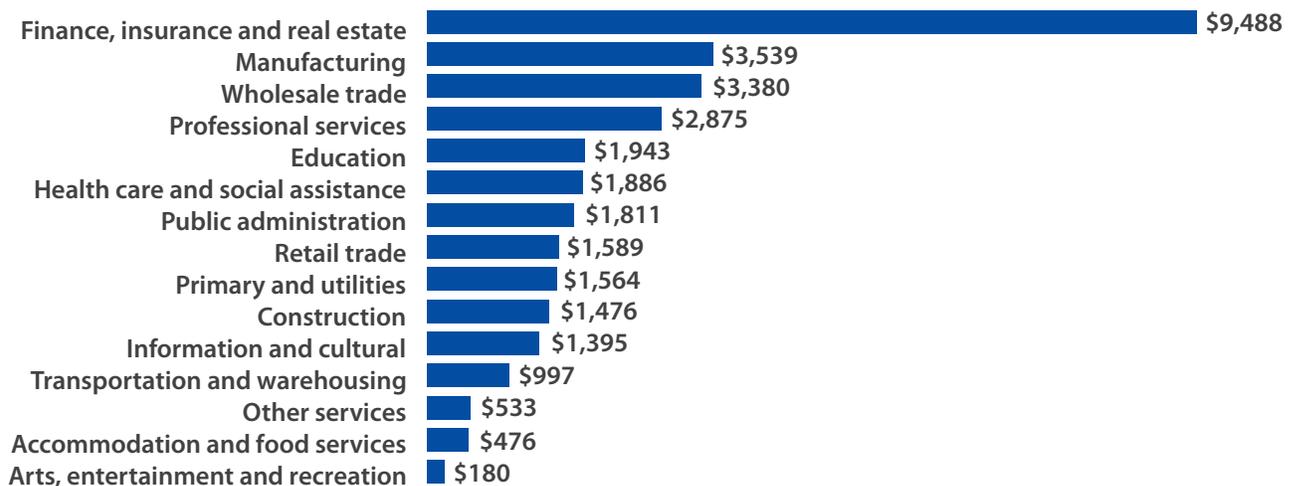
In Halton, a diversified economic base and skilled labour force has long sustained a strong regional economy. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that Halton's gross domestic product (GDP) reached \$33.1 billion in 2023. GDP is forecast to exceed \$36.8 billion in Halton by 2027. The finance, insurance and real estate sector contributed the most to Halton's GDP, representing \$9.5 billion in 2023 or 29 per cent. Halton's manufacturing sector and wholesale trade industry were also significant contributors to GDP, representing \$3.5 billion and \$3.4 billion in 2023, respectively.

Total gross domestic product (GDP) in Halton
(\$ millions, 2012 dollars)



Source: Conference Board of Canada (custom tabulation), 2023

Gross domestic product (GDP) by sector in Halton in 2023
(\$ millions, 2012 dollars)



Source: Conference Board of Canada (custom tabulation), 2023

Halton's business community

Notable private sector employers

Ford Motor Company of Canada – headquarters and automotive assembly plant (4,150 employees).

Collins Aerospace Systems – aerospace parts manufacturing (1,500 employees).

DSV Global Transport and Logistics – distribution logistics (1,050 employees).

Evertz Microsystems – electronics equipment manufacturing (1,045 employees).

Karmax Heavy Stamping (division of Magna) – automotive parts manufacturing (1,035 employees).

Geotab – information technology and telematics (1,000 employees).

Modatek Systems (division of Magna) – automotive parts manufacturing (925 employees).

Gordon Food Service – food distribution (875 employees).

Innomar Strategies – health care services and pharmaceutical (860 employees).

Sofina Foods – food processing and distribution (855 employees).



Halton Business Conditions Survey

In fall 2023, Halton Region, in cooperation with the Halton Local Municipalities, administered an annual survey of business conditions for local, for-profit businesses across the region. Halton business owners were asked about the current business and economic conditions they face, their expectations for growth in the year ahead, and their plans for exporting, innovation, staffing and addressing climate change. Over 300 responses were collected from Halton business owners in the "Halton Business Conditions Survey."

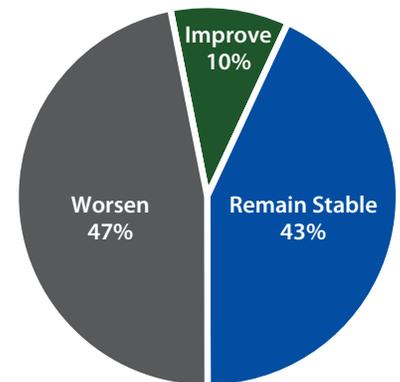
Survey results indicate that Halton businesses are innovative, resilient, and cautiously optimistic about economic conditions over the next year. However, Halton business owners are concerned about inflation, rising wages and the cost of real estate. Many businesses are also continuing to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including supply chain disruptions.



Survey highlights

- 36%** of Halton businesses owned their land and buildings.
- 85%** of Halton businesses have been in operation for more than 5 years.
- 25%** of Halton businesses exported their products or services outside Canada over the past year.
- 24%** of businesses in Halton were currently experiencing global supply chain disruptions.
- 59%** of businesses in Halton stated they were facing inflationary pressures.
- 48%** of businesses in Halton were worried about the impact of interest rates and debt costs on their business.
- 53%** of Halton businesses were concerned about the impact of climate change on their operations over the coming decade.
- 40%** of businesses in Halton are feeling pressure to increase wages for their staff.
- 63%** of Halton business owners were expecting to make some capital expenditure or productivity investments in 2024.

Halton business owners' expectations on economic conditions in 2024



Source: Halton Region, Business Conditions Survey, 2023

Challenges reported by Halton business owners in 2023



Percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents could choose multiple responses.

Source: Halton Region, Business Conditions Survey, 2023

Halton's business community

Summer Company

In July 2023, the Halton Small Business Centre kicked-off its 2023 Summer Company program. The Summer Company program helps enterprising students between the ages of 15 and 29 start and run their own summer business. The program provides hands-on business training and mentoring, and a grant of \$3,000 to help operate their business. In total, \$24,000 of grants were awarded to 8 aspiring young entrepreneurs.



Starter Company Plus

In October 2023, the Halton Small Business Centre launched the fall cohort of its Starter Company Plus (SCP) program. SCP supports aspiring entrepreneurs looking to launch or build their small businesses in Halton. The program provides training, mentoring, and an opportunity to receive a grant to help run their business. SCP participants submitted their business plans for review for a chance to be selected to pitch to a panel of industry expert judges. Of the pitches, five successful entrepreneurs were awarded a grant of \$5000 and five runners up each received a grant of \$500. In 2023, the Halton Small Business Centre awarded over \$50,000 in Starter Company Plus program grants to new and growing small businesses across Halton.



Networking Series

In collaboration with our local partners, the Halton Small Business Centre hosted a series of in-person networking events across Halton in 2023. These events provided a unique opportunity for Halton entrepreneurs and Small Business Centre clients to connect, share ideas, and learn from one another. Each session featured a keynote speaker who provided insights and expertise on a variety of topics relating to entrepreneurship. A new networking series will launch in 2024, in partnership with the City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville.



