

# Infrastructure and immigration key to building Ontario



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## Ontario's government must continue investing in infrastructure and the skilled trades labour force

Fulfil investments for new critical infrastructure, fund state-of-good-repair work for existing infrastructure, and reform the immigration system to welcome more skilled trade workers to Ontario. This was the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario's (RCCAO) message to the Government of Ontario as part of the 2023 provincial budget consultations.

Ontario is the most populous province in Canada and main driver of the country's economy. Its infrastructure is the backbone of its prosperity and quality of life for its residents. However, the impacts of the pandemic has created new challenges for critical infrastructure upkeep across the province. To ensure Ontario's continued growth and competitiveness, the government must continue investing in critical infrastructure and boosting the skilled trades labour force through training and immigration.

Realizing the expansion of Ontario's transportation network detailed in Minister Mulroney's Connecting the GGH: A Transportation Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe is crucial to achieving this. Not only will this significantly build on Ontario's transit network, it will also add critically needed highway infrastructure such as the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. In addition to these new builds, investing in state-of-good-repair work to upkeep existing infrastructure is essential.

Investing in critical infrastructure can attract new businesses and support existing ones. Companies rely on infrastructure to transport goods, communicate with customers and suppliers, and access markets. If Ontario's infrastructure is outdated or insufficient, it can deter companies from investing in the province and cause existing ones to move elsewhere. On the other hand, modern and efficient infrastructure increases Ontario's competitiveness and supports economic growth.

To maximize the benefits of infrastructure investment, Ontario needs a skilled and diverse workforce. Unfortunately, there is a growing shortage of skilled tradespeople in the province.

Ontario's workforce is aging. 86,000 people are expected to retire this decade. Studies show the province will need to hire, train and retain almost 100,000

workers to keep pace with demand and maintain the critical infrastructure all Ontarians rely on.

RCCAO commends recent measures by Minister McNaughton to address this. Training is crucial to ensuring that the next generation of skilled tradespeople is equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The government's investments today in apprenticeships, vocational training programs, secondary school, and community colleges to provide training opportunities for young people and workers looking to transition into the skilled trades will help over the long-term.

However, the scale of the issue requires that we also look beyond domestic policies and toward reforming the immigration system to help address Ontario's critical labour shortage. Enacting immigration reforms to at least double the allocations for the NOC-C Pilot will have an immediate impact to expand industry's capacity to meet the needs of the province and get more people working to help build Ontario.

The GTA is among the fastest growing regions in North America and expects to welcome an additional 2.8 million people over the next 25 years, with 58% of that growth destined for York, Halton, and Peel regions. This growth will increase demand for critical infrastructure on everything from water, housing, transit systems, highways and roads.

Investing in critical infrastructure and boosting the skilled trades labour force are two sides of the same coin. Without a skilled and diverse workforce, infrastructure projects will be challenging to complete, and the benefits of investment will be diminished. Similarly, without adequate infrastructure, it will be challenging to attract and retain skilled workers, reducing the province's overall economic competitiveness.

To address these challenges and realize the benefits, investments in Budget 2023 from both the province and federal government are critical. By prioritizing both infrastructure investment and skilled trades labour force development, Ontario can position itself for continued success in the years to come. It will be great for the economy, communities, and industry.