ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES: DRIVING REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Issue: The cities and towns that universities call home are feeling the effects of local demographic shifts brought about by aging populations and new technologies, while small businesses and local industry continue to navigate the disruption caused by the pandemic. Investments in social and economic infrastructure across Ontario is now more critical than ever to ensure the pathway to the future prosperity for the province.

Background

- As Ontario’s communities look to rebuild and thrive, they will need spaces and institutions that fuel the local workforce and stimulate local economies through employment opportunities, innovation and spending activities.

- Building, maintaining and modernizing strong physical and knowledge infrastructure, such as universities, schools and libraries, within Ontario’s communities helps create jobs in construction, maintenance and more, employing members of the local workforce and fueling associated supply chains.

- University infrastructure is often at the very heart of Ontario’s regions. The type of spaces found on campuses, such as community centres, gyms, pools, theatres and stadiums, bring people together, enrich the everyday experience for many Ontarians and help them live healthier lives.

How Universities Are Supporting Ontario

As major employers and large purchasers, Ontario’s universities are often one of the top five employers in the region. They collectively employed more than 138,600 Ontarians in 2020 and purchase approximately $5 billion in goods and services each year.

- As the pandemic continues to impact our local economies, communities and social well-being, Ontario’s universities remain committed to helping build the social, economic and physical infrastructure of the province’s communities, while acting as strong economic drivers in local communities.

- Many small businesses and community members also access innovative facilities and spaces where they can test ideas and scale operations, providing communities and local industry with necessary resources to recover from the pandemic.

- Technology-enhanced learning environments and cutting-edge facilities also increase a region’s competitiveness by supporting the development of a highly skilled workforce and conducting ground-breaking innovation.

- The activities that take place at these facilities not only improve the lives of Ontarians, but also attract the talent and investment communities need to create new business opportunities and jobs.

Partnering to Rebuild Ontario

Vibrant universities will continue to develop adaptable talent, help rebuild our health-care system, as well as drive innovation and regional economic development.

It is why in order to fully unleash this potential, Ontario’s universities are asking that the government – through increases to university revenue sources, such as expanding spaces in high-demand programs – make critical investments in the sector today to rebuild a better Ontario for tomorrow.

By working together, we can navigate through this pandemic, safeguard Ontario’s health and economy and build a brighter future – not just for the students we teach and the communities we serve, but for Ontario’s future and all who live here.