

# ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES: FUELING REGIONAL

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**The Issue:** The cities and towns that universities call home are feeling the impacts of change as they work to address local challenges – ranging from talent retention to helping new businesses adapt to new technologies and ways of working – which have emerged in recent years. Investments in social and economic infrastructure across Ontario are now more critical than ever to ensure the pathway to 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.



\$45 billion

Amount Ontario's universities' activities contribute to the province's GDP ([Conference Board of Canada](#)).

The Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) is one program that provides important funding for university infrastructure through support for deferred maintenance projects, helping campuses maximize efficiencies, operate smarter and renew their facilities. In 2020-21, universities contributed more than \$247 million to FRP-eligible projects that would upgrade classrooms and learning environments and address the existing backlog of deferred maintenance, compared with the \$81 million provided by government.



487,639

Number of jobs created from Ontario's universities' activities, including those stemming from institutions, students, visitors and alumni ([Conference Board of Canada](#)).



\$50.6 billion

Contribution to Ontario's GDP, resulting from the higher human capital development of alumni ([Conference Board of Canada](#)).

## 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.

- 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.



\$4.6 billion

Estimated cost of the backlog of repairs in the postsecondary sector, according to the Facilities Condition Assessment Program, 2021.

## Partnering for a Strong Ontario

A vibrant and healthy university sector is critical to meeting the needs of students, fostering community economic growth, driving research and innovation and developing the highly skilled talent critical to Ontario's economy.

**It is why, in order to fully unleash their potential, Ontario's universities are asking for support – to allow greater flexibility to increase their revenue sources.**

It is now more important than ever for government and universities to continue to work together to allow Ontario's universities to build the better and brighter future for our province that we all want to see.