

July 6, 2021

Mayor Dave Ryan
City of Pickering
VIA EMAIL

RE: Biennial Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade Government Relations Survey Finds Members are Facing Pandemic Pains and Labour Challenges

Dear Mayor Ryan,

I am writing on behalf of the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade (APBOT) to share that we have recently completed our Biennial Government Relations Survey. A total of 95 businesses and organizations responded to the 31-question survey earlier this spring, representing 40 diverse types of businesses across Ajax and Pickering. Members weighed in on COVID-19, their 2021/2022 economic outlook, barriers to growth, and their advocacy needs.

75% of responding members said they suffered negative financial impacts because of the pandemic, while 22% of owners spent their own savings or sought personal loans to support their business this past year.

Members shared that restrictions and guidance for business has often been confusing or hard to find. However, they felt confident in their own pandemic preparedness. The vast majority said they understand important obligations like preparing and implementing a COVID-19 safe work policy and reporting COVID-19 in the workplace.

Problems that existed within the community prior to the pandemic seem to have been amplified. 42% of respondents shared that a shortage of skilled labour is posing a tremendous challenge to the industry, while 14% struggle to hire general labour. This issue, which also topped the list of barriers to growth in 2017 and 2019, seems to be exacerbated by federal pandemic programs, like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. Other employers noted that they are pressed to match compensation packages from neighbouring Toronto.

Other notable barriers to growth include access to highspeed internet, provincial red tape, and access to capital.

Despite challenges, more than half of respondents expect their business to increase over the next 12 months, and 39% expect their capital expenditures will go up.

We hope to arrange a virtual meeting in the near future to provide a more in-depth look at the survey results and the needs of the Ajax/Pickering business community. In the meantime, please enjoy your enclosed copy of [the report](#).



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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nicole Gibson
Executive Director
Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade

CC:

Mark Guinto, Manager, Public Affairs & Corporate Communications, City of Pickering
Marisa Carpino, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Pickering
Analiese St. Aubin, 2021 President, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade
Joan Wideman, Government Relations Committee Chair, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade