



# The Ottawa Region

## **The Region**

The Greater Ottawa region has over one million inhabitants making it the fourth largest region in Canada after Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The Ottawa region continues to grow at a steady pace primarily due to migration and international immigration. It is estimated that Ottawa will grow at a rate of 2.6% annually over the next ten years. As the nation's capital, Ottawa's population is multi-cultural and highly educated. For instance, Ottawa has the highest percentage of residents with a postsecondary education in Canada, a bilingual rate of 44 percent, and more engineers, scientists and PhDs per capita than any other city in the country. Today, the Ottawa region is a global technology centre with more than 1,500 companies involved in the growth sectors of telecommunications, photonics, microelectronics, software and life sciences. The region also has a substantial professional services cluster, a vibrant tourism sector and more than 110,000 government employees.

## **Business-Led Organizations**

The Ottawa region has a significant amount of business-led civic institutions. Among the most influential is The Ottawa Partnership (TOP). TOP is a multi-sector organization that consists of leaders from the academic, business, government and nonprofit sectors. TOP's mission is to provide the City of Ottawa with strategic leadership and advice on actions required to strengthen and grow Ottawa's economy.

The Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) is another organization within the region that has made its presence known. OCRI is a partnership organization that strives to bring people, ideas and resources together. OCRI's mission is to work with the business, education and government sectors to enhance Ottawa's global economy and quality of life. OCRI has been instrumental in developing partnerships between industry and education. In recent years the organization has contributed tremendously to Ottawa's regional economy by attracting investments to the region, supporting technology transfer, increasing regional networking opportunities for business leaders, and providing programs for the community that promote education and entrepreneurship.

The Ottawa Life Sciences Council (OLSC) is another major player among the business-led organizations in the Ottawa region. Primarily a volunteer organization, OLSC works to support the individuals, companies and organizations that operate in the life sciences sector by facilitating access to resources, providing up-to-date information and bringing people together to enhance networks, identify opportunities and build partnerships. OLSC has helped Ottawa and its surrounding area develop a strong life sciences industry which is currently the third largest industry cluster in Canada.

### GREATER OTTAWA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (GOCC)

GOCC is a voluntary, member-driven organization with over 700 members. Although the organization is not as regionally-focused as some of the other business-led organizations within the Ottawa region, it still plays an important role economically. GOCC focuses primarily on small businesses by providing members with networking, professional and business development opportunities as well as benefits and services. It also strives to provide members with a united voice of business representation through research, consultation and liaison with key decision-makers and influencers. GOCC also has a number of task forces including the Transit and Transportation, Municipal Action, and Education Task Forces.

*For more information, see [www.greaterottawachamber.com](http://www.greaterottawachamber.com)*

Finally, the Ottawa Tourism and Convention Authority (OTCA) is a not-for-profit membership-based organization that was founded in 1971. OTCA's mission is to provide industry leadership, strategic direction and destination marketing of Ottawa in cooperation with members and partners. OTCA is active in developing marketing, communications and promotional programs aimed at individual visitors, the convention market, business and incentive travel, and the group tour market.

### Regional Business-Civic Landscape

The business-civic landscape that exists in the Ottawa region today is much different from the one that existed 10 or even five years earlier. The region used to be highly fragmented by municipalities, institutions and organizations that often overlapped with each other in terms of their goals, services and activities. The business-civic and economic development organizations were in constant competition with each other for business membership, regional positioning and funding from the City of Ottawa. However, things have changed: There is a high level of cooperation and coordination between and among the various academic, business, government and nonprofit entities.

According to business leaders in the region, a key reason for the rise in regional collaboration among organizations had to do with the formation of The Ottawa Partnership in 1999 by the City of Ottawa. Since Ottawa is among only a few cities worldwide that have adopted a collaborative model for economic development, TOP was created to play an instrumental role in improving the communication and consensus among academic, business and government organizations/agencies on issues related to economic development. Today, TOP provides the only region-wide forum that brings high-level leaders from multiple sectors together in order to discuss issues affecting Ottawa and its economy, identify funding priorities and develop a coordinated economic development strategy.

In addition to increasing the level of organizational collaboration and communication in the region, TOP has been helpful in coordinating and delineating organizational

roles in the region. In many ways TOP is the “supra” organizational structure within the region. For example, TOP has been able to establish a regional agenda and develop strong partnerships with other prominent business-led organizations in the region such as OCRI, OLSC, OTCA, and GOCC. These organizations are all partners of TOP and have a representative from their organizations serve on TOP’s Board. However, each organization is completely independent of TOP and has its own niche within the Ottawa region.

Another reason why organizational collaboration and coordination is high within Ottawa is because leaders within the region have recognized the importance of working together to improve the region’s economic competitiveness and quality of life. For example Kirk Mandy, Co-Chairman of TOP and Vice Chairman of Zarlink Semiconductor, stated that “collaboration is higher in Ottawa today than in previous years because of TOP and the recognition by leaders in Ottawa that they must work together in order to achieve their goals.” Moreover, since the Ottawa region has only roughly one million residents but is the national capital of Canada, it makes it easier for leaders to connect with each other. This was expressed by Robert Gillett, President of Algonquin College and TOP Board Member: “Cooperation in Ottawa is high mainly because it is a ‘small’ large city, and being in the nation’s capital helps to foster relationships.” Overall, the business community recognizes the importance and benefits of working together and has expressed a strong desire to increase the level of organizational collaboration and coordination well into the future.

### **Business Leadership**

According to the Ottawa business community, leadership today is much stronger than it was five years ago. Business leaders today play an influential role in helping to shape the regional economy. This can be seen in the City of Ottawa’s *2020 Economic Strategy Plan*, to which many organizations contributed. Business leaders have also taken strong positions on issues that directly affect Ottawa’s regional economy. For example, TOP organized a group of leading business, government and academic leaders that worked together to encourage the provincial government of Ontario to generally increase its support of Canadian cities, especially Ottawa.