



Dufferin Business Survey Results

March 2023

Introduction

The Dufferin Board of Trade (DBOT) is a non-profit, community-building organization dedicated to helping local businesses thrive. We focus on connecting businesses, promoting local businesses, saving businesses money, and advocating for business needs.

Much of our advocacy works is shaped by the results learned through our Annual Business Survey. This is the fifth year for our survey and where possible we have provided comparison data from previous years' surveys. Comparisons are also made between our local data and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's (OCC) 2023 Business Confidence Survey report¹.

The Process

The Dufferin Business Issues Survey was conducted using the Survey Monkey platform. The survey was open from January 26th until February 28th, 2023, and 125 responses were collected. The survey was open to all businesses in the area, regardless of membership in DBOT. The survey consisted of 15 questions, followed by the opportunity to provide general comments or concerns, and the option to enter contact information to be used in a draw to win one of three \$50 gift cards.

Survey Results

This report contains a breakdown and graphical representation of survey responses. In instances where data exceeds a total of 100%, respondents were permitted to select more than one answer on the survey. General comments provided are listed in the appendix section of this report.

Business Information

Within the business information section of the Dufferin Business Issues Survey, respondents were asked questions pertaining to their organization's membership status, size, sector, location, years in operation, and position within the company of the person completing the survey. This information was gathered to ensure adequate representation across Dufferin's municipalities, as well as to allow for further segmentation of the data by municipality and industry sector.

Question 1:

Are you currently a Dufferin Board of Trade member?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

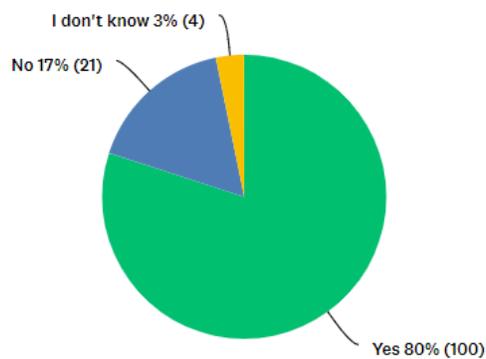


Figure 1: DBOT membership

Of the 125 respondents, 80% were currently members of the Dufferin Board of Trade.

Question 2:

Approximately how many employees does your organization have?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

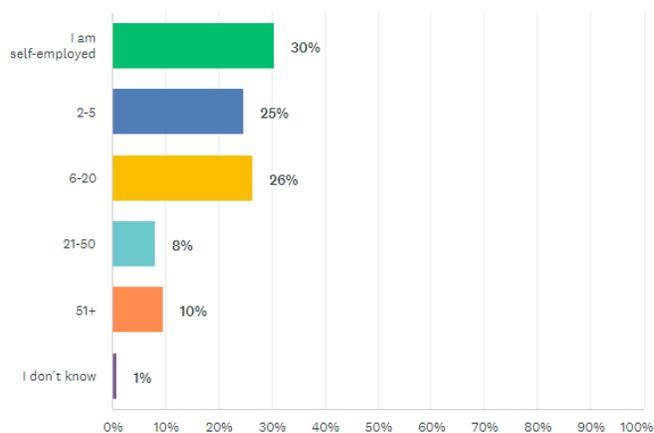


Figure 2: organization size

Survey respondents are primarily self-employed (30%) or leaders in small businesses - 25% have 2-5 employees, 26% have 6-20 employees, and 8% with 21-50 employees. Larger businesses, with 51 or more employees, made up 10% of the survey respondents.

Question 3:

How many years has your current business been in operation?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

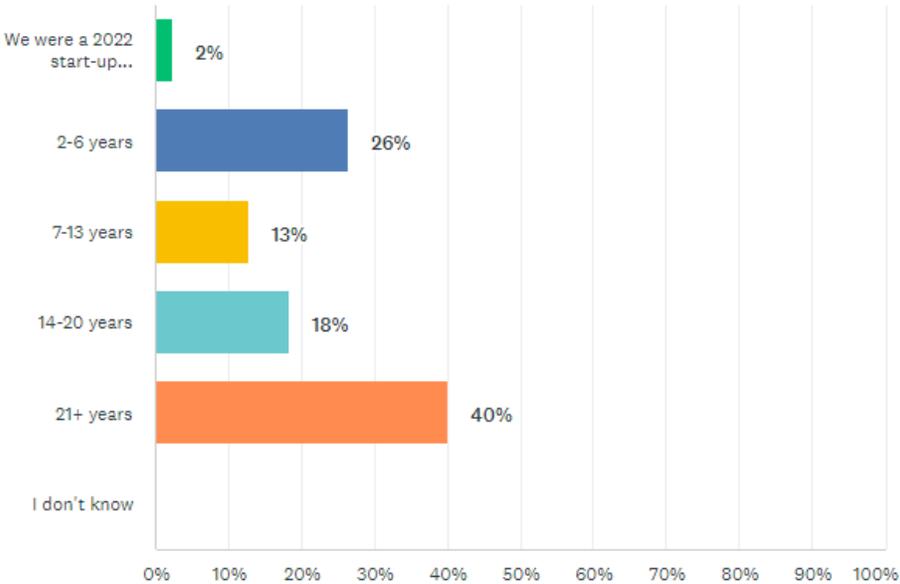


Figure 3: organization age

Business longevity is strong in Dufferin, with 40% of respondents operating their current business for over 20 years. Businesses operating for 14-20 years made up 18% of responses, 7-13 years 13%, 2-6 years 26% and new start ups just 2% of responses.

Question 4:

What industry or sector is your business?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

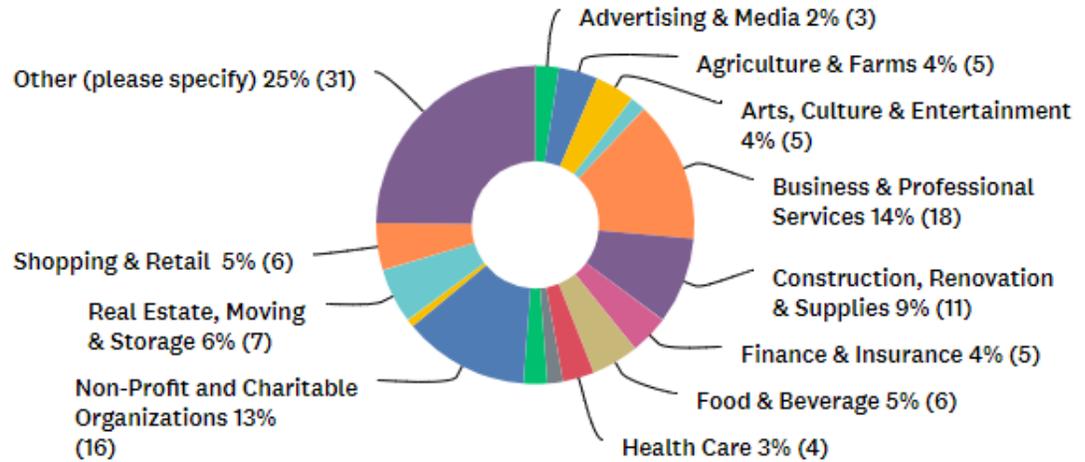


Figure 4: industry sector

A wide range of industries were represented in this survey. Business and professional services (18%), non-profit and charitable organizations (16%), construction, renovation, and supplies (11%), Real Estate, Moving & Storage (6%), Shopping & Retail (5%), Food & Beverage (5%), Finance & Insurance (4%), Arts, Culture & Entertainment (4%), Agriculture & Farms (4%), Health Care (3%), Manufacturing (2%), Advertising & Media (2%), Legal Services (2%), Automotive Sales & Services (2%), Personal & Senior Services (1%). The “other” responses can be found in the attached appendix.

Question 5:

Where is your organization primarily located

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

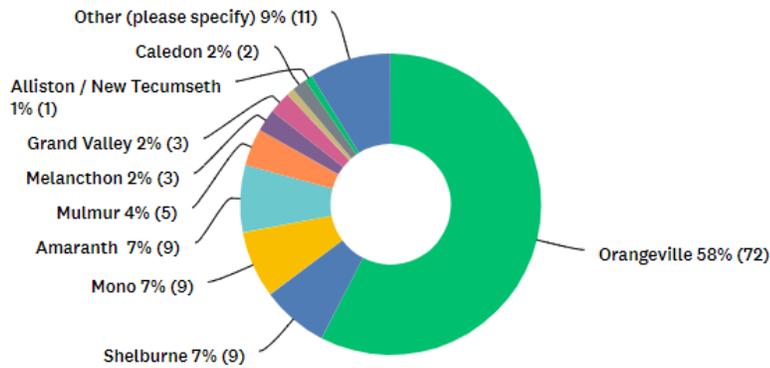


Figure 5: Location

The majority of respondents are located in the most populated municipality, Orangeville (58%). The remaining respondents were from Shelburne (7%), Mono (7%), Amaranth (7%), Mulmur (4%), Melancthon (2%), Grand Valley (2%), East Garafraxa (1%), and outside of Dufferin, including Caledon (2%) and Alliston/New Tecumseth (1%). “Other” responses are located in the appendix.

Question 6:

What position do you hold in your organization

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

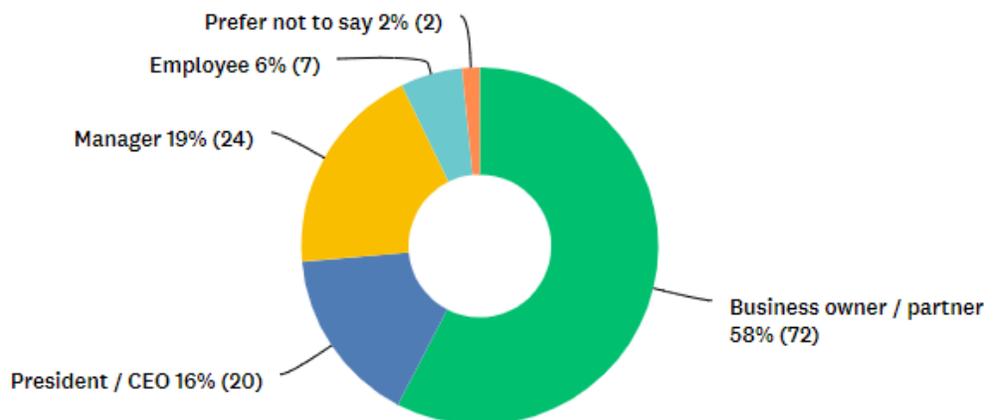


Figure 6: Respondent's position in company

The majority (58%) of respondents were the business owner or partner, 19% a manager, 16% the president/CEO, 6% an employee, and 2% preferred not to say what position they held within their organization.

Business Confidence

The next questions asked businesses to compare look at their performance, priorities, areas of concern and employment levels.

Question 7:

How did your business perform in 2022 compared with 2021

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

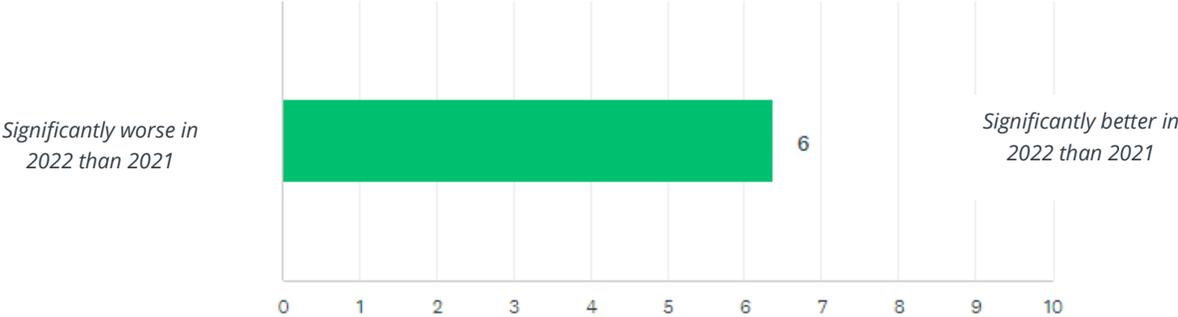


Figure 7: business performance – last year

On a sliding scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being “significantly worse in 2022 than 2021” and 10 being “significantly better in 2022 than 2021”, businesses averaged a 6 in their responses. In the 2022 survey, businesses had a similar feeling comparing their 2021 performance with 2020.

Question 8:

How do you think your business will perform in 2023 compared with 2022

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

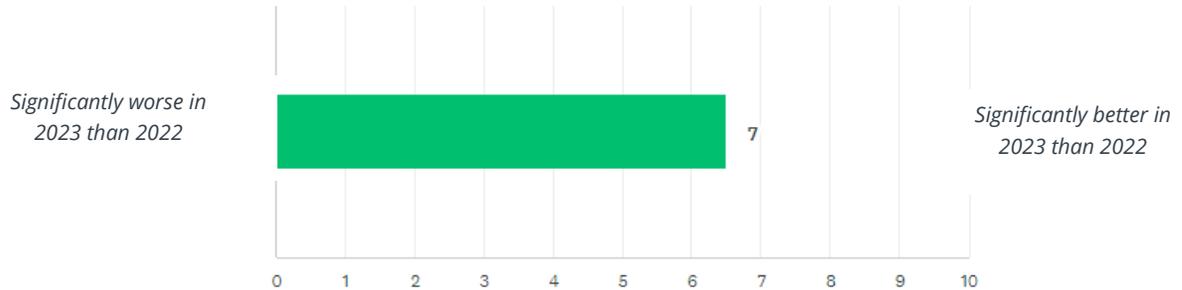


Figure 8: business performance – this year

On a sliding scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being “significantly worse in 2023 than 2022” and 10 being “significantly better in 2023 than 2022”, businesses averaged a 7 in their responses. In the 2022 survey, businesses had a slightly less optimistic outlook for the following year. On the provincial level, the OCC reports that 53 percent of businesses are optimistic about the outlook and growth prospects of their own organizations. (Source: OCC Business Confidence Survey¹)

Question 9:

What are the top priorities your company will focus on in 2023? (please select 1-3)

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

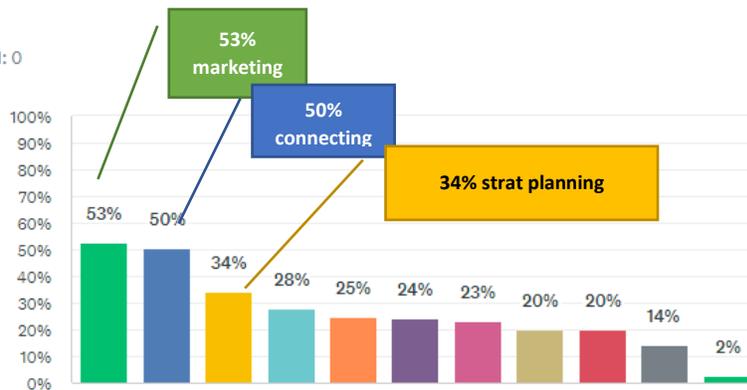


Figure 9: Top priorities

Marketing and advertising was a top priority for 53% of respondents, followed by getting connected in the local business community at 50%. Strategic planning and focus 34%, Reducing operating costs 28%, training or skills upgrading of workforce 25%, Attracting employees 24%, Employee retention 23%, access to business supports, programs and resources 20%, better leveraging technology for business 20%, Expanding into global markets/trade 2%. “Other” responses are in the appendix.

In previous years marketing has consistently been in the top three priorities, with reducing operating costs scoring higher (46%-53%) in all previous years' reports. Attracting workers has been a declining priority, with 44% of businesses in 2019, 35% in 2020, and 17% in 2021 identifying it as a top priority.

Question 10:

Which of the following do you anticipate will be the biggest issues of concern your company will face in 2023? (Please select 1-3 responses)

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

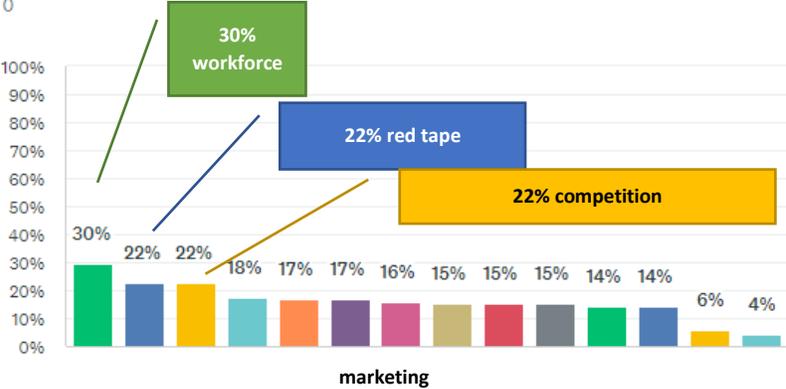


Figure 10: issues of concern

The biggest issue of concern facing local businesses in 2023 will be attracting employees (30%), followed by government red tape and regulations, and competition (22% for both). Other concerns are barriers to expansion/scaling-up (18%), decreasing consumer confidence (17%), cost of space (16%), business taxes (15%), access to capital (15%), access to supports (15%), retaining employees (14%), high speed internet (14%), global markets/trade (6%), and transportation/infrastructure (4%). “Other” responses are included in the appendix. Provincially, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce’s survey revealed that “Inflation and labour shortages are primary concerns for organizations.” Locally, in 2021 businesses’ top concerns were: red tape and regulations (44%), access to business support programs and resources (39%), and business taxes (37%). In 2022, concerns were: red tape and regulations (39%), cost of rent/purchase (39%), and access to business supports and programs (33%).

Question 11:

Which of the following are the most important factors driving Dufferin County's economic growth and prosperity? Please select 1-3

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

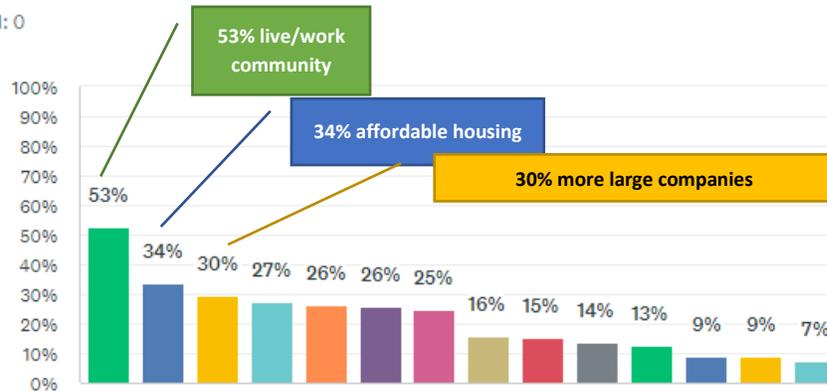


Figure 11: Dufferin's economic growth factors

The majority of respondents (53%) feel that creating a live-work community, so more people both live and work in Dufferin is the top factor driving Dufferin County's economic growth and prosperity. The next factors identified are availability of affordable housing (34%) and attracting more large companies to Dufferin (30%), followed by: Access and affordability of high-speed broadband (27%), support for growth and expansion of existing businesses (26%), attracting new talent to work in our community (26%), developing new businesses and entrepreneurs (25%), utilities such as hydro costs and availability of natural gas (16%), Attracting more small companies to Dufferin (15%), better connect young talent with employment (14%), business occupancy costs (13%), availability of space (9%), access to public transportation (9%). "Other" responses are listed in the appendix

Workforce Questions

Question 12:

What happened with employment levels in your company in 2022 compared with 2021?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

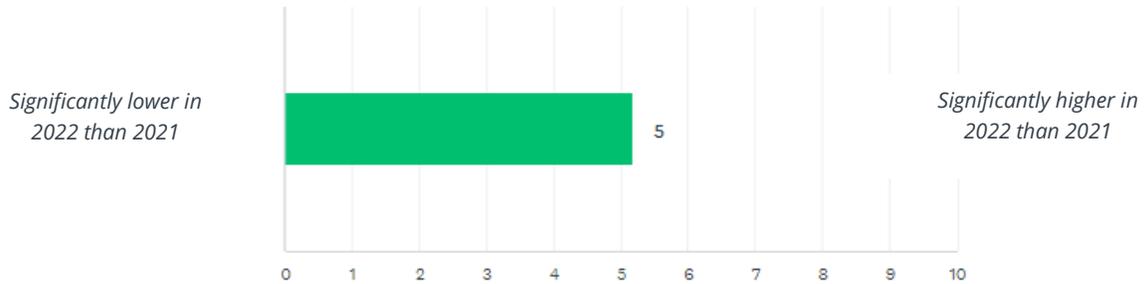


figure 12: employment levels

On average businesses stated that employment levels remained roughly the same in 2022 compared with 2021.

Question 13:

Within the last year have you been able to fill all of your positions with candidates that meet your needs and requirements?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

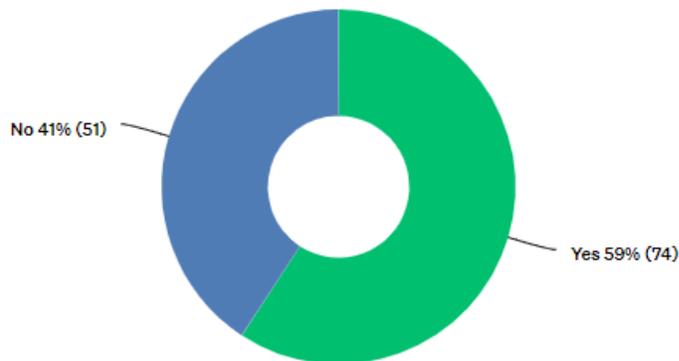


figure 13: filling vacancies

The majority of respondents (59%) were able to successfully fill their vacancies with candidates that met their needs and requirements. Locally, we have seen similar responses year over year. Provincially, larger businesses have not shown this to be the case, "Labour shortages are directly impacting most

employers and 87 percent of large businesses. Shortages are especially acute in education, construction, and accommodation and food services.” (OCC OER Report)

Question 14:

The following activities are undertaken by the Dufferin Board of Trade. Please rank them in order of importance.

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

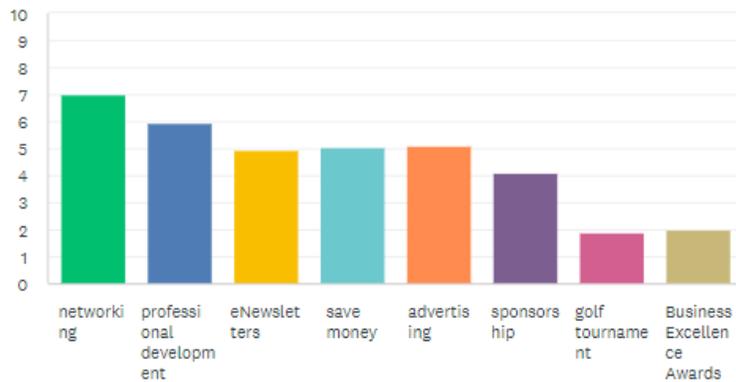


Figure 14: activities

Respondents selected opportunities to network with local businesses as the most important activity, followed by professional development opportunities, eNewsletters, opportunities to save money, advertising and sponsorship opportunities, with the annual golf tournament and business excellence awards ranking lowest in the priorities.

Question 15

Please indicate the top 1-3 policy issues you would like to see DBOT involved in

Answered: 125 Skipped: 0

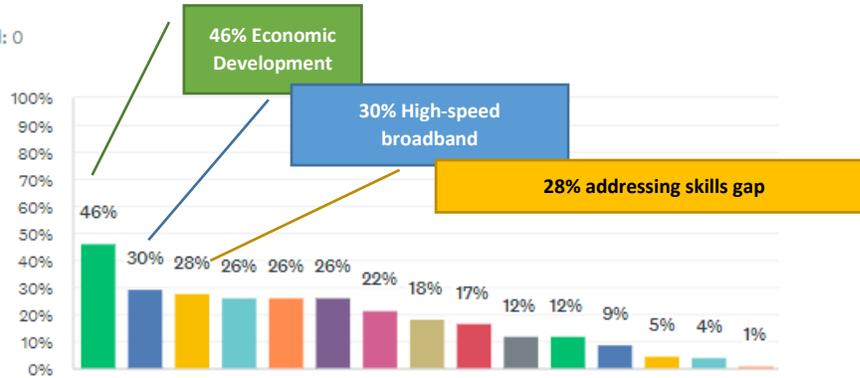


Figure 15: policy issues

Respondents felt that DBOT should be involved in: Economic development – 46%; Access and affordability of high-speed broadband – 30%; Addressing Skills Gap (lack of qualified talent to fill existing positions) – 28%; Local government accountability / governance - 26%; Planning - business land zoning; residential density – 26%; Education and training – 26%; Energy - Cost of Hydro – 22%; Social & Human Services – 18%; Environment / sustainability – 17%; Public Transit – 12%; Property Taxes – 12%; Crime/Safety – 9%; Signage By-laws – 5%; Flooding - prevention and response – 4%; Covid-19 rules and regulations – 1%. “Other” responses can be found in the appendix.

Appendix

Question 4: What industry or sector is your business in? Other responses:

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)		
1	Resort, winery, spa, sports, food and beverage	17	Early Childhood Education and Care
2	Hair	18	Child care
3	IT	19	Network marketing
4	Grief counselling	20	Transporting of goods
5	Powersports/Lawn&Garden/Shopping/Retail/Service	21	Event planning
6	Travel Agency	22	Architecture
7	Call Center Support	23	Events
8	Utility	24	Artisan
9	Aerospace	25	Community Development- social service
10	FITNESS & MARTIAL ARTS	26	Bed and breakfast
11	Heritage Education & Commemoration	27	Security
12	Mineral exploration	28	Animal care
13	Education	29	Short term vacation rental
14	Travel	30	Photography
15	fitness services, handmade goods.	31	Travel
16	Direct selling in health and wellness		

Question 5: Where is your organization primarily located?

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Georgetown

Cambridge

markdale

Dufferin, Wellington and Guelph

Ajdala-Tosorontio

We service Southern Ontario

Travel GTA for shows

Niagara and Overseas

alberta

Hockley - but serving all of your list!

world wide

Question 9: What are the top priorities your company will focus on in 2023? (please select 1-3)

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)
Attracting leadership volunteers
Helping the community
growth
Growing profitability
NFP development
Growing our membership base
We need better internet speed
Employee growths in knowledge in Building supplies/materials
Volunteer retention
Building relationships
finding the right employee in terms of skill, experience, & fit
Build business, partner with environmental friendly partners
Increasing customer base
Getting connected to other regional business communities
Client retention
Top priority is to increase and/or retain the occupancy rate from previous years.
We're all volunteers & would like to attract more
Attracting independent contractors

Question 10: Which of the following do you anticipate will be the biggest issues of concern your company will face in 2023? (Please select 1-3 responses)

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

nothing

Getting new members. We are a not for profit that has been in Orangeville since 1870. We are having difficulty attracting new members

recession

ensuring we have enough support to meet the dramatic increase in need

client's ability to afford services

Ability to fundraise

inflationary increase on the material we purchase

increasing input costs

Getting approval for proposals

ESG. It's a scam.

Higher cost of everything is forcing consumers to spend less

hiring additional employees with industry knowledge

The economy when it comes to donor sponsorships

grateful I am not concerned

Economic recession

finding qualified employees

Attracting clients

Inflation client budget cutbacks

Economic factors that impact occupancy rate. It could go the other way, people don't want to travel as far and take less expensive weekend trips.

residual Covid related issues.

Government funding and volunteers

Question 11: Which of the following are the most important factors driving Dufferin County's economic growth and prosperity? Please select 1-3

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Food Insecurity/Access to Mental Health Supports

I don't know as this is not in our realm of what we do

ensuring diversity in the workplace and on local boards of directors

networking - businesses supporting each other

i dont feel i can answer due to most business is conducted elsewhere

Commuter transit into/out of Dufferin

mortgage rates or modified terms to allow for new, young buyers

Competing with organizations that have strong financial resources, cost of marketing eg. In magazines or other

Rural broadband is still an issue and there's still many underserved areas despite SWIFT's significant help

Question 15: Please indicate the top 1-3 policy issues you would like to see DBOT involved in

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Available and affordable space to grow and expand

housing- if you can't afford rent or home ownership, moving here is not an option

Town is basically becoming at least 4 jurisdictions. Where we are, between downtown and bypass, people travel at high rates of speed. Many businesses in our "jurisdiction" are missed because of this high speed. Plus it is dangerous. Reducing speed limit along here will somewhat tie us into the downtown core. Plus add safety.

Take a close look at what Innisfil did with Uber...we need alternatives to getting around

financial support for business

Affordable Housing Development in order to attract employees

Industrial & Retail Business Growth in each community

red tape reduction - ie. conservation authorities have been extremely slow in reviewing files and asking for very costly studies while they have outdated modeling themselves

Affordable Housing

Planning depts need to be reorganized with business minds

Footnote 1:

The Ontario Economic Report, produced by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (of which DBOT is a member), based upon the OCC's 2023 Business Confidence Survey, which can be found at:

<https://infogram.com/oer-2023-report-1hxj48pd90gx52v?live>

Key highlights of the report include:

"Business confidence has dropped to a new low, with only 16 percent of organizations expressing confidence in the outlook of Ontario's economy in 2023 (down from 29 percent in 2022).

Inflation and labour shortages are primary concerns for organizations.

Despite low confidence in the economy, 53 percent of businesses are optimistic about the outlook and growth prospects of their own organizations, as high employment rates and population growth should prevent a sharp decline in consumer spending.

Small businesses want governments to prioritize policies and programs that support their immediate financial and operational challenges, while large businesses are more interested in broader workforce development and health care issues.

Labour shortages are directly impacting most employers and 87 percent of large businesses. Shortages are especially acute in education, construction, and accommodation and food services.

Businesses appreciate the importance of employee health and well-being, diversity and inclusion, economic reconciliation, and climate action – but there are notable gaps in addressing them."