

Deputation to Brampton City Council – Budget 2021
Jasmine Moulton, Ontario Director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation
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Thank you for this opportunity to speak tonight on behalf of concerned taxpayers in Brampton.

My name is Jasmine Moulton. I'm the Ontario Director for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The CTF is a non-partisan citizens' advocacy group fighting for lower taxes, less waste, and more accountable government. We have hundreds of thousands of supporters across the country, including thousands right here in Brampton.

By now, you've probably heard many requests for *more* money. But I'm here tonight to ask you to remember where that money comes from.

It's not the government's money. It's taxpayers' money.

Families and businesses are struggling through the worst economic downturn on record.

Yet, what is the single greatest cost faced by the average Canadian family?

It's not housing.

It's not even other essentials such as food or clothing.

It's taxes.

In 2019, the average Canadian family spent 45 per cent of its income on taxes to all levels of government. They didn't start keeping the money they earned until June 14th last year.

But your tax base is hurting.

In Peel Region, the unemployment rate soared to a record high at 16 per cent.

Peel's youth unemployment rate rose even higher, to 36 per cent.

According to the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, 9 out of 10 provincial job losses happened outside of government – by those working in the private sector and the self-employed.

Instead of raising taxes, the government of Brampton should be tightening its belt and *reducing* spending, like those who pay your salaries have been forced to do.

The budget states Brampton has received \$35 million in COVID supports from the federal and provincial governments so far and wants more. But let me remind honourable councillors: there are three levels of government, but only one taxpayer footing the bill.

Those other two levels of government are broke. Ontario's debt is approaching \$400 billion, and the federal government's debt will soon surpass \$1 trillion. Each Ontarian's individual share of those debts amounts to \$50,000. That's \$200,000 in government debt owing for a family of four.

Of course, those debts will eventually need to be repaid. Debt today, means taxes tomorrow, so governments at all levels must reduce their spending now to reduce the debt burden being passed on to the next generation.

But Brampton's proposed budget for 2021 does the opposite. Total operational expenditure is increasing by 2.9 per cent over 2020 levels. That's \$22.1 million you're extracting from the pockets of struggling taxpayers.

What's worse is the plan to grow the size of government while the tax base shrinks. I was shocked to see that the city plans to hire 44 new staff in 2021. There are fewer taxpayers left holding up the massive and growing governmental overhead. It's not sustainable, and it's not wise to increase the burden on taxpayers struggling to get back on their feet.

Government employee compensation is the single largest area of operating expenditure by the Brampton government, with labour costs representing 57 per cent of all spending in 2021. If this budget is passed, the cost of government employees will increase by 3.2 per cent, or nearly \$14 million dollars.

But the tax grabs don't stop there. The proposed budget would take another \$14.8 million out of taxpayers' pockets next year by increasing property tax rates by \$9.8 million, while assessment growth will put a further \$5 million in government coffers.

But Brampton's property taxes are already high enough. Out of the 35 largest municipalities in Ontario, Brampton ranks 13th for the highest property taxes. There's plenty of room for improvement.

The proposed budget for 2021 says that the average household will pay \$120 in increased taxes next year, but that's based on a residence valued at \$538,000. The average price of a single detached home in Brampton reached \$989,000 in August of this year, according to Zoocasa.

In conclusion, tax hikes are the last thing struggling families and businesses need right now. Taxpayers need relief. The government of Brampton must tighten its belt and get spending under control.