

What's Happening in... Ontario?



For this edition of “What’s Happening In...?” we had extra insight from an NAI Global partner based in the region. Doug Finlay of NAI Peninsula has over 3 decades of experience in commercial real estate (CRE) – much of that in Ontario, Canada – so he offered to tell us all about it.

Canada’s most populated province, Ontario is one of the thirteen provinces and territories in the country, and it is big, says Doug, “geographically, economically, and population-wise”. For context, Doug continues, Texas, Florida, and New York state – or alternatively Germany, Italy, and the UK – could all fit into Ontario “and still have room to spare”.

Here you will find Ottawa (Canada’s capital), Toronto, Niagara Falls, and the Parliament of Canada (the federal legislature).

Economic Drivers, Excuse the Pun

In terms of economic activity, Doug likens Ontario to a small country. It boasts a GDP of \$867 billion, or almost 40% of the entire Canadian GDP. Partly that’s due to the fact that it is positioned in the core of the North American Free Trade zone. Cross-border trade is a big deal in the region, with \$1.9 billion worth crossing the border daily.

“Ontario is a manufacturing powerhouse including being either first or second in any given year for automotive assembly,” Doug says. “Ontario’s trade in the auto sector is intrinsically interwoven with the USA auto manufacturing states, with vehicle parts and assembly going back and forth across the border like an assembly line”.

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In March 2022, a new \$4.1B (C\$5B) electric vehicle battery plant in Windsor was announced, right across the border from Detroit – a joint-venture between Stellantis (formerly Fiat and Chrysler) and South Korean LG Energy Solutions. “This is a testament to Ontario’s strength in the auto manufacturing segment – including this push into the future of electric autos”.

More Key Sectors

Other key sectors for the region include services, manufacturing information and communications technologies, biotech pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Plus, “most major US corporations either have offices and plants here, or are doing business here. Ontario is where US companies head their Canadian operations,” says Doug.

Population Metrics

Around 15 million people call Ontario home, and – as Doug puts it – “all of whom shop and eat and drive cars and consume goods, buy houses, become seniors, etc.”

Together with the percentage of company headquarters (mentioned above), this is why he believes it’s a great opportunity market for “buyer brokerage and tenant representation” – which is his passion within commercial real estate (CRE).

