The state of *Business*

By Lisa Kopochinski

Since 2020, the Brampton Board of Trade (BBOT) has conducted the Business Confidence Index through an annual survey tailored for key local businesses, including both members and non-members.

The key objective of this survey is to measure the City's economic climate, with an emphasis on key areas of importance to Brampton. This report presents the findings from the sixth annual Business Confidence Index (BCI) survey, offering comparisons to previous iterations since BCI's inception.

This year, the questionnaire was updated to capture opinions on current events, including U.S. trade policies and the upcoming municipal election. Key tracking metrics remained in the questionnaire, including business confidence, issues facing businesses, and the impact of inflation.

To meet study objectives, 500 members and additional non-members of the Brampton Board of Trade were invited to complete the Business Confidence Index.

THE THREE MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- Confidence in the economy among business leaders is at an all-time low.

Business leaders have a pessimistic outlook on both Brampton's and their own organization's economic future, as confidence levels have dropped once again this year. This sentiment is likely linked to the recent plant closures and trade policies with the U.S. A small minority believe Brampton's economy will improve next year.

- Inflation and US trade policies have put pressure on business operations.

Business leaders report that inflation and recent U.S. trade policies have negatively impacted their organizations by reducing revenue and increasing expenses, among other issues.

- BBOT is well-positioned to become a trusted source for municipal election information.

Business leaders trust BBOT as a source of information for municipal elections.

KEY FINDINGS

There were four key findings noted from this survey that included the following:

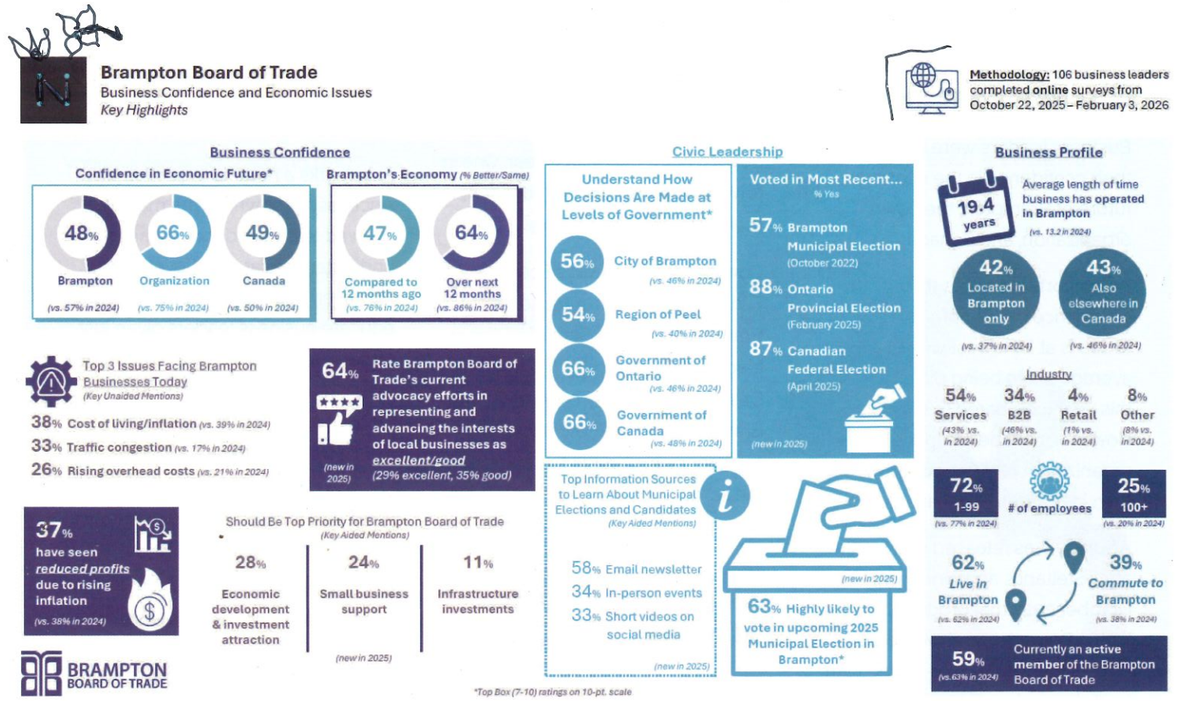
Business Confidence:

- Confidence has lowered this year; one half of business leaders are confident in both Brampton's (down 9 points) and Canada's (unchanged) economic future. Meanwhile, two-thirds are confident in their own organization's economic future (down 9 points). The 2025 Ontario Economic Report also showed that confidence in the provincial economy is low (26 per cent). Recent U.S. trade tensions and the Stellantis closure are likely contributing to sentiment.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MISSISSAUGA

Meet your next superstar hire.
Connect with UTM for top co-op interns and highly skilled new grads.

uoft.me/UTMCIPEmployer
utm.utoronto.ca/careers/HireUTM



Issues Facing Business:

- The top three issues facing Brampton businesses are:
  - The cost of living (38 per cent, down 1 point);
  - Traffic congestion (33 per cent, up 16 points);
  - Rising overhead costs (26 per cent, up 5 points), with other issues following closely behind.
- Inflation continues to negatively impact businesses in a variety of ways, including reduced profit (37 per cent), passing increased costs onto customers (33 per cent), reduced customer demand (33 per cent), and adjusting long-term financial forecasts (30 per cent).
- U.S. trade policies have primarily had no impact or a negative impact on Brampton businesses. Overall expenses, revenues, and capital expenditures have been the most heavily impacted. Business leaders do not expect these conditions will not improve over the next year.

Government and Elections:

- Understanding of how different levels of government make decisions has improved since last year, though there is still opportunity to further educate business leaders.
- Business leaders are more likely to have voted in the most recent provincial (88 per cent) or federal (87 per cent) elections than the municipal election (57 per cent). A similar number of voters (63 per cent) are expected to participate in the upcoming municipal election, presenting opportunity to promote civic engagement.
- Regarding communications, leaders would like to see more summaries that highlight implications for businesses and provide more information on candidates.
- There is moderate interest in attending BBOT events related to the municipal election, with the most appealing events being business-focused panels (53 per cent), virtual Q&As (42 per cent), and breakfast/luncheon Q&As (42 per cent).

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

Business leaders were asked to rate their confidence in the economic future of Brampton, their own organization, and Canada.

It is important to note that confidence in Brampton's economic future is at its lowest with the average score being 6.2 out of 10 this year (compared to 6.5 in 2024). However, confidence in their own organization remains notably higher than in Brampton or Canada.

A survey was released one week after Stellantis announced in October 2025 that production would halt in Brampton and would be shifted to the U.S. This—along with tariff discussions from the Trump administration—likely contributed to the negative sentiment among business leaders.

Confidence in City of Brampton's Economic Future:

One-half of business leaders report being confident (score of 7-10 out of 10), continuing a downwards trend (down 9 points since 2024). One in five leaders are not confident (score of 1-4) in Brampton's future.

Confidence in Own Organization's Economic Future: Two-thirds show confidence in their own business, down 9 points since last year. One in ten indicate they are not confident in their own economic future.

Confidence in Canada's Economic Future: Results mirror those for Brampton, with one half of business leaders expressing confidence. Despite the drop in confidence in Brampton and their own business, confidence in Canada has remained the same since last year. In contrast, one in six show a lack of confidence in the country's economic future.

GOVERNMENT AND VOTING DECISIONS

It is also encouraging that business leaders' understanding of how decisions are made within the government has improved across each level since last year.

A moderate majority of business leaders are confident in their understanding of how decisions are made at the different levels of government. Just over one half each understand (score of 7-10) the decision-making process at the municipal and regional level, while two thirds each understand the provincial and national government levels.

This marks a notable improvement since last year, where the majority showed less confidence in their understanding at each level. However, there is still opportunity to educate business leaders given just under one half only have a moderate to low understanding of government decisions at the Brampton level. It is also important to note that understanding appears to be higher among BBOT members, compared to non-members.

It is also interesting to note that intentions to vote in the upcoming Brampton municipal election—scheduled for October 26, 2026— are lower compared to turnout for past provincial and federal elections.

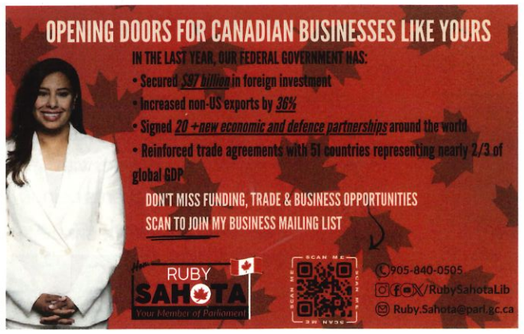
Approximately two-thirds of business leaders say they are likely to vote in this municipal election. This result is similar to the number of leaders who said they voted in the 2022 municipal election.

Business leaders who report being more confident in Brampton's economic future are less likely to vote in the next municipal election (high confidence, 53 per cent; moderate confidence, 69 per cent; low confidence, 78 per cent). Voting is more likely among BBOT members, compared to non-members.

Business leaders were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a few statements regarding the BBOT as an information source for the municipal election.

Agreement levels (score of 7-10) are moderately strong; business leaders trust election information from the BBOT (71 per cent) and that the information is balanced and non-partisan (67 per cent). Comparatively, there is less agreement that the information informs their voting decision (56 per cent).

This presents a strong opportunity for the BBOT to position itself as a trusted source for information on candidates that may help business leaders make their final decision. In summary, business leaders largely agree that the BBOT is trustworthy.



Investia Financial Services Inc.

David Maynard, B.Sc., CFP, CIM, CLU, RIS
Certified Financial Planner

4 Muirland Crescent, Brampton, ON L6X 4G6
Office: 416-623-5479 Cell: 416-618-7025
Fax: 905-454-3120
david@davidmaynard.ca



ISSUES FACING BRAMPTON BUSINESSES

In a recent survey, the most pressing issues businesses face today include cost of living and traffic congestion.

Business leaders were presented with a list of issues and asked to choose the top three that pose the biggest challenge for Brampton businesses currently. Cost of living (38 per cent) remains the top concern, closely followed by traffic congestion (33 per cent) which has notably increased in mentions this year.

Multiple issues are closely tied for the third most important issue, each being mentioned by one quarter. They include rising overhead costs (26 per cent), external perceptions and bias toward Brampton (25 per cent), crime (24 per cent), and access to talent and skilled labour (23 per cent).

The 2025 Ontario Economic Report found that cost of living (78 per cent) was the top reason for concern about Ontario's economic outlook, followed by inflation (62 per cent). The Ontario Economic Report found that housing affordability/housing supply challenges (57 per cent) was one of the top issues whereas it is viewed as less of a problem for business leaders in this study (21 per cent).

When it comes to the current impact of trade policy Changes, it is interesting to note that U.S. trade policies appear to have either no impact or a negative impact on Brampton businesses.

For each area examined, a small number of leaders report that the policies have had a positive impact. Access to international markets, excluding the U.S., has seen the most positive impact (12 per cent).

Trade policies have had the largest negative impact on overall expenses (48 per cent), capital expenditures (45 per cent), and overall revenues (43 per cent). Access to international markets has seen the least negative impact (17 per cent).

It is also important to note that approximately one-third of business leaders appear to have no ties to the U.S. or international markets that impact their business.

A chat with three local business owners

By Lisa Kopochinski



Warren Kozonguizi, owner of The Co-operators,

Chris-Beth Cowie, owner of Empowered4x.

Dr. Omo Ogbamola, owner of Tripplemos Food Processing Company.

Business is booming in the Brampton and surrounding area, so what could be a better time to speak with three local business owners, who are members of the Brampton Board of Trade.

The Co-operators is a Canadian-owned insurance and financial services organization with a long-standing commitment to helping Canadians build financial security. With roots dating back to 1945, the organization has grown into a leading provider of multi-line insurance and investment solutions. Warren Kozonguizi is the owner.

Empowered 4x is more than a coworking space. This Brampton-based company is a launchpad for entrepreneurs, creators and changemakers. With more than 250 members across Ontario, the company provides the lead generation, strategic support and physical spaces that help business thrive. Chris-Beth Cowie is the owner of Empowered 4x.

Tripplemos Foods was built on a clear vision, to bridge the gap between cultural authenticity and regulatory excellence by creating high-quality, African-inspired food products that meet Canadian food safety standards. What began as a bold entrepreneurial transition for Dr. Omo Ogbamola has quickly evolved into a structured and scalable manufacturing operation serving a growing and diverse customer base.

The Bramptonian editor Lisa Kopochinski recently had the opportunity to sit down and speak with Kozonguizi, Cowie, and Dr. Ogbamola, to find out why they chose Brampton and what it means to their business, and what being a member of the BOT means to them. Here what they had to say.

***Bramptonian**: Tell us about your agency and company here in Brampton.*

Warren Kozonguizi (WK): At the Co-operators here in Brampton, we focus on delivering personalized advice and tailored coverage to meet the evolving needs of individuals, families, and businesses.

Chris-Beth Cowie (CC): Empowered4x was incorporated in 2020. However, we have been running since 2019 officially.

Dr. Omo Ogbamola (OO): Tripplemos Food Processing Company is an award-winning, proudly Canadian, female-owned food manufacturing company specializing in authentic African spices and premium hibiscus teas produced locally under CFIA approved standards.

The business was founded in 2022 and incorporated in 2025 with a vision to preserve authentic African flavours while producing high-quality products that meet Canadian food manufacturing standards. Today, we manufacture 11 African spice blends and premium hibiscus tea, with additional products currently in development. Our products are available through Amazon, Walmart, Temu, eBay, the FAIRE wholesale marketplace, and in more than 20 African retail stores across Canada. We are now preparing for the next phase of growth through mainstream retail expansion and the establishment of our own dedicated food processing facility.

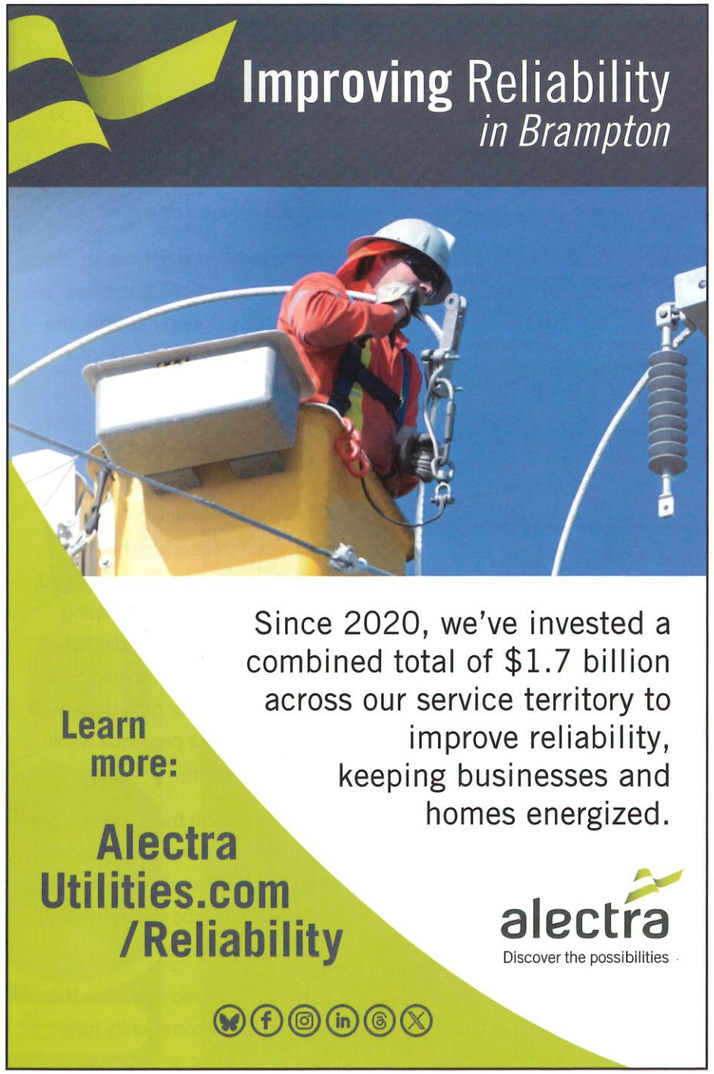
Operating within a highly regulated industry, Tripplemos has achieved CFIA approval, reinforcing its commitment to quality, compliance, and consumer safety. The company's product line includes a range of carefully developed spice blends and food essentials designed to deliver consistent flavour while meeting modern packaging and labeling standards.

***Bramptonian:** Why did you chose Brampton for your business?*

WK: Brampton is one of Canada's fastest growing and most diverse cities, making it an ideal place to serve a wide range of clients with unique needs and perspectives. Its strong sense of community, entrepreneurial spirit, and economic growth create the perfect environment for building meaningful client relationships. Being part of this vibrant city allows us to contribute to and grow alongside the community we serve.

CC: Honestly, it was never really a question, Brampton is home.

The initial vision was simple but powerful: to create a home for entrepreneurs right here in Brampton. And we've been rooted here since the very inception. I've been a Bramptonian ever since I immigrated to Canada with my



"I'm so grateful for the support of BBOT, the support of Brampton as a whole, and the support of the entrepreneurs we get to serve every single day." — *Chris-Beth Cowie*

family in 2002, and this city has had my heart ever since. I love Brampton, and I'm for Brampton 100 percent.

When you're starting and building a business, doing it in a city you genuinely love makes all the difference. And I wasn't doing it alone. Early on, I connected with the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre, which gave me incredible insights on how to actually launch, first through their Summer Company program and then Starter Company Plus. I also plugged into the JobSkills entrepreneurship program back in 2014, when I first started speaking and training.

Back then, we were known as Empowered for Excellence. Then in 2019, as our business model evolved, we rebranded to who we are today: Empowered 4x.

Dr. OO: Brampton's diversity, entrepreneurial culture, and commitment to supporting small businesses made it the ideal location to establish and grow Tripplemos. As an immigrant entrepreneur, I found a welcoming business environment with access to valuable programs, networking opportunities, and strategic partnerships. Resources such as the Brampton Commercial Kitchen and the City's Economic Development Office have provided the structure and support needed to strengthen our manufacturing capabilities and prepare for larger retail opportunities. Brampton has become more than the home of our business. It has become a community that genuinely celebrates innovation, entrepreneurship, and business success.

Bramptonian: *How long have you been a member of the Brampton Board of Trade and what advantages have you received as a member?*

WK: I have been a member of the Brampton Board of Trade since August 2024. During this time, the Board has provided meaningful opportunities to connect with local businesses and professionals across the community. Through networking events, advocacy initiatives, and business focused programs, membership has helped us stay informed, engaged, and actively involved in shaping Brampton's business landscape. These connections and resources have supported our growth and strengthened our presence within the local economy.

CC: My story with them actually goes way back, I first joined around 2015 when I was just starting my business, and it was fantastic for networking right out of the gate.

Last year, I rejoined and wow, the events and the community have been so dynamic and supportive. I genuinely love the work the Board of Trade does, and coming back has let me rebuild those relationships and connections all over again.

One real highlight: my team and I had the privilege of working with the Board of Trade on the Naseem Somani Tribute video for the InspiHer Award. That was a deeply impactful experience learning about the life and legacy of someone so dynamic and inspirational, a woman who cared so much about her community and was truly valued by both the Board of Trade and Dynacare.

And it goes both ways! We've been able to host the Board of Trade right here at Empowered 4x, welcoming their team for New Member Orientation, and opening up our recording studio for the Expert Talk podcast. It's been wonderful being part of this community, and I'm excited for what's ahead.

Dr. OO: I joined the Brampton Board of Trade in January 2026, and my experience has been both rewarding and impactful. The Board has provided meaningful networking opportunities, increased visibility for my business, and valuable connections within Brampton's business community. Through business features, interviews, networking events, and introductions to industry leaders, I have established relationships that continue to support the growth of Tripplemos.

Receiving the Brampton Board of Trade Newcomer Business Achievement Award 2026 has been a tremendous honor and reflects the organization's commitment to recognizing and supporting entrepreneurs who contribute positively to the local economy.

Bramptonian: *How important is community to you?*

WK: Community is at the heart of everything we do. At The Co-operators, we believe that strong communities are built through collaboration, support, and shared responsibility. Whether it's through local partnerships, sponsorships, or volunteer efforts, we are committed to making a positive and lasting impact in the communities we serve.

CC: Honestly, it's the whole reason I'm here. You know the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child?"

"Our long-term vision is to establish Tripplemos as one of Canada's leading manufacturers of authentic African-inspired food products." — *Dr. Omo Ogbampola*

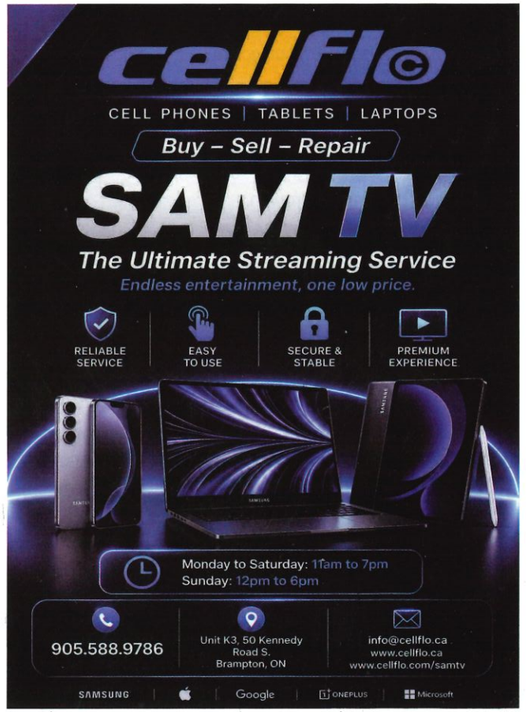
Well, I believe it takes a village to raise a business too. And I've been lucky enough to have an incredible one. I'm so grateful for the support of BBOT, the support of Brampton as a whole, and the support of the entrepreneurs we get to serve every single day.

Right now, we're proud to support about 250 entrepreneurs, and we do it in a bunch of ways. We give them professional virtual business addresses, access to a recording studio, coworking space they can rent, and through our Marketing Agency, we power their businesses with AI marketing and automations.

And we're growing! Beyond our head office at 350 Rutherford Road, we've got three satellite locations. Want to plant your flag downtown? We've got you. Prefer Ottawa? We're there. Scarborough? Covered. Wherever you're building, there's a seat for you in our village.

Dr. OO: Community is central to everything I do because I believe businesses achieve lasting success by creating value beyond the





"Community is at the heart of everything we do."

— Warren Kozonguizi

products they sell. In addition to growing Tripplemos, I am committed to mentoring women, newcomers, and aspiring entrepreneurs by sharing knowledge, encouraging collaboration, and helping others navigate the realities of building a business in Canada. I believe that when entrepreneurs support one another, entire communities benefit through shared opportunities, stronger businesses, and sustainable economic growth. The success of Tripplemos is measured not only by the products we manufacture, but also by the people we inspire, the opportunities we create, and the communities we continue to serve.

Bramptonian: *What are your goals for your company for the next several years?*

WK: Looking ahead, our goals are centered on continued growth, deepening client relationships, and expanding our reach within the community. We aim to enhance our advisory services, embrace innovative solutions, and remain a trusted partner for our clients' insurance and financial needs. Supporting community initiatives and fostering long-term resilience will also remain a key priority.

CC: In a word: scale what works and uses AI to do it better. Everything we do is built around our 4X Method, four core areas where collaboration drives everything:

- ***Co-working:*** We support entrepreneurs working side by side, both in our in-person spaces and online.
- ***Co-learning:*** We create collaborative learning opportunities where our community grows their skills together.
- ***Co-living:*** We're investing in shared living and community spaces, building a true sense of belonging.
- ***Co-giving:*** We give, channeling support into community programs that matter.

Over the next several years, our goal is to do all of this even better leveraging AI and innovative tools to make every one of these areas more effective, more efficient, and more impactful as we navigate the road ahead. The mission stays the same; the tools just keep getting sharper.

Dr. OO: Our long-term vision is to establish Tripplemos as one of Canada's leading manufacturers of authentic African inspired food products. Over the next several years, we plan to expand into major retail chains across Canada, enter the United States market, and establish our own food processing facility to increase manufacturing capacity. We are also investing in product innovation through new tea varieties and the development of our proprietary Tripplemos African Cooking Blend™. Our goal is to make authentic African flavours more accessible while positioning Canadian manufactured African food products for success in mainstream markets.

Bramptonian: *What is the best way for our readers to contact you?*

WK: Readers can connect with us by visiting our local office in Brampton at 14-25 Fisherman drive, calling our office directly at (905) 840 4288 or reaching out via email at warren_kozonguizi@cooperators.ca We are always happy to have a conversation and explore how we can support their insurance and financial planning goals.

CC: If people want to contact me, they can email me at chrisbeth.cowie@empowered4x.com or call the office at (905) 792-8200.

Dr. OO: Readers are welcome to connect with Tripplemos Food Processing Company through our website and social media platforms.

www.tripplemosafricanstore.com
E: tripplemosfoods@gmail.com
LinkedIn: Tripplemos Food Processing Company
Dr. Omo Ogbamola (omoogbamola)
Instagram | Facebook | TikTok: @tripplemosfoods

Bramptonian: *Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.*

WK: My pleasure.

CC: You are welcome.

Dr. OO: You are very welcome.

THE BRAMPTONIAN

Issue 2 2026

BRAMPTON BOARD OF TRADE

How AI is reshaping business

Award-winning Brampton companies

Why arts are important

