



# **Compendium of Policy Resolutions 2020-2023**

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## COMPETITIVENESS

### A. Advance Ontario's Bioeconomy

Authored by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, South Grenville Chamber of Commerce and Brockville Chamber of Commerce

#### Issue:

Industry is on the cusp of transformation: traditional petroleum-derived chemicals and products will be increasingly substituted or blended with more sustainable resources derived from biomass. Ontario can leverage its strengths in advanced manufacturing and resource development to lead the way on provincial and national bioeconomy strategies. A comprehensive bioeconomy framework will create new businesses, high quality long term jobs and stable growth while reducing carbon emissions.

#### Background:

The bioeconomy is based on using renewable resources derived from plants and waste to produce a wide range of products, such as bio-fuels, biochemicals and biomaterials (e.g. plastics, textiles), while minimizing impact on the environment. It involves all processes including invention, development, production and use.

With growing international demand for sustainable, low-carbon goods and services (estimated to be worth \$5.8 trillion with an annual growth rate of 3%<sup>1</sup>), and the vast biomass resources available in Ontario and across Canada, the economic potential is enormous. Multiple industries, such as health, agriculture, forestry and natural resources, as well as rural and urban communities stand to benefit from the bioeconomy. The net result is the creation of new businesses, revitalization of old businesses, regional diversification and more importantly - jobs.

For a sector with such high growth potential and access to vast resources, Canada's bioeconomy is lagging. In 2008, the sector was valued at 6.4% of GDP on a per capita basis in Canada, whereas in the United States it was valued at 8.45% of GDP.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Sweden, is considered to be a world leader in the bioeconomy with 30% of its national energy supply fed by biomass, compared to 1% in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

Canada's slow emergence in the bioeconomy is explained by the "lack of a clear strategic direction" and the fragmentation of programs that "does not support all types of bioproducts and policy initiatives," according to the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers in the Discussion Paper *A Forest Bioeconomy Framework for Canada*.

For example, at the national level, the forestry industry is seen as the key bio-based resource and Natural Resources Canada is leading support for the industry. At the provincial level, agriculture is seen as a key bio-based resource and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) has taken the lead. Activities usually occur in silos and some bioproducts receive more support than others. In Ontario, electricity and fuels receive the most support, even more so since cap-and-trade legislation took effect. Ontario's growth opportunities for forest biomass cannot be realized without the establishment of a Provincial mandate that increases the sustainable use, acceptability and competitiveness of Ontario's Crown forests.

A more comprehensive approach might entail the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth coordinating the development of an all-encompassing framework of public policies, in partnership with the relevant ministries, including OMAFRA, Natural Resources and Forestry, Environment and Climate Change

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<sup>1</sup> Forest bioeconomy in Ontario – A policy discussion by I. Majumdar, et. al. <http://pubs.cif-ifc.org/doi/pdf/10.5558/tfc2017-007>

<sup>2</sup> Measuring the biobased economy: A Canadian perspective, William Pellerin and D. Wayne Taylor; INDUSTRIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY WINTER 2008, page 363-366

<sup>3</sup> Forest bioeconomy in Ontario – A policy discussion by I. Majumdar, et. al. <http://pubs.cif-ifc.org/doi/pdf/10.5558/tfc2017-007>

and Research, Innovation and Science. Input from private stakeholders would also be essential to a successful framework.

In addition to breaking down silos, a comprehensive framework should address some of the challenges faced by the bioindustry. According to a survey conducted by BioTalent Canada, the “single greatest challenge” reported by the bioindustry is limited access to capital. In 2008 65.9% of respondents said this was their greatest challenge and by 2013, that number rose to 73.8%.<sup>4</sup> The Ontario and federal governments have responded by investing millions of dollars into business accelerators, such as Bioindustrial Innovation Canada, and funding needs to continue.

*A Forest Bioeconomy Framework for Canada* cites “Innovative financial mechanisms, including tax measures to de-risk commercialization” as one of the six policy areas that should be addressed in a bioeconomy framework. The others include:

1. Efficient standards and an effective regulatory regime for new bio-based products
2. Collaborative research and development along the innovation continuum
3. Public sector procurement to promote clean tech and supply chain sustainability
4. Outreach to attract investment and increase demand for Canadian bioproducts
5. Accessible comprehensive investment-grade data on the bioeconomy
6. Workforce training and strong partnerships with Indigenous communities

The key way to succeed in the bioeconomy is to address these policy areas in an integrated and coordinated effort involving government, industry, investors and academia.

## **Recommendations**

### **That the Government of Ontario:**

1. Work in partnership with all relevant government departments, non-governmental agencies and private sector partners to develop a provincial bioeconomy framework that builds on existing models.
2. Take the lead in working with the federal government, provinces, territories, non-governmental agencies and private sector partners to develop a national bioeconomy strategy.
3. Continue to fund successful business accelerators and venture capitalists that support bioindustrial companies and projects.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.biotalent.ca/bio-economy-facts>

## **B. Canadian Nuclear Innovation**

Authored by the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Canada's nuclear industry must have continued investment in nuclear science and technology and its applications that benefit both the environment and the Ontario economy.

### **Background**

The current restructuring of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the need for an innovation mandate for Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) create an opportunity for the Federal and Ontario governments along with nuclear industry partners to play a lead role in fostering nuclear innovation by leveraging CNL's S&T capabilities. The parties should develop a new collaborative approach for defining nuclear science, technology and innovation priorities and for establishing program funding that will enable Ontario's nuclear industry to be competitive and sustainable in world markets.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Establish a joint government–industry nuclear science, technology and innovation council.
2. Leverage Ontario's nuclear technology and expertise domestically and abroad.
3. Provide greater certainty and clarity to the nuclear regulatory review process.

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Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



### C. Putting Wood to Work for Ontarians

Authored by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce and Co-sponsored by: Chamber of Commerce Brantford Brant, Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Timmins Chamber of Commerce

#### Issue:

Economic development and employment opportunities in Ontario's forest sector are being limited by insufficient wood supply due to made-in-Ontario barriers and the absence of a long-term forestry strategy for the Province. Policy decisions are often made without full consideration of social and economic impacts.

#### Background:

Businesses run and prosper on certainty, yet for Ontario's forest products sector, consistent access to affordable wood continues to be uncertain as Provincial barriers are limiting the sector's ability to access increasing forest volumes.

In 2015, Ontario forestry companies harvested over 15 million cubic metres, an increase from 10.5 million cubic metres in 2010, which represents less than half of one per cent of Ontario's managed crown forests. As a result of MNR restrictions, access to actual harvest volumes is just meeting today's demand, which means there is no room to grow Ontario's renewable forestry sector, despite a healthy and growing forest. We need a new path forward that grows good paying jobs and supports hardworking men and women across our province.

Wood supply is a simple concept but a more complex issue in reality. Municipalities and industry have seen the damaging results of non-professional analysis that greatly underestimates industrial capacity and significantly overestimates supply. In response, professional foresters sitting on the Ontario Forest Industries Association's Woodlands Committee completed a wood supply analysis that demonstrates supply is only just meeting the current industrial demand. This leaves very little room to grow and threatens existing facilities as the decline is projected to continue into the future. The analysis also identifies policy and utilization barriers that significantly limit access to MNRF's theoretical allowable harvest volumes. Working together to address these barriers will allow existing facilities to maintain operations and will enable the sector to continue to grow.

Greater demand for wood and packaging products and increased U.S. housing starts are contributing to increased investment and employment in Ontario's renewable forest products sector. These growth opportunities cannot be realized without the establishment of a Provincial mandate that increases the sustainable use, acceptability and competitiveness of Ontario's Crown forests.

In addition, the increased investment and ownership by First Nations in Ontario's forestry businesses has created significant opportunities and hundreds of new jobs for First Nations communities. Red Rock Indian Band Chief Edward Wawia has stated that *"Our forest operations generate wealth for our community that offsets the costs for social and economic development, so our community can be self-sustainable."*

Developing an Ontario Forestry strategy that recognizes the value of our forests, removes made-in-Ontario barriers, and commits to increase reliable access to actual harvest volumes will make Ontario stronger.

**- 57,000 direct jobs in over 260 Ontario communities**

**- 1 of every 100 Ontarian is employed directly or indirectly by the forest sector**

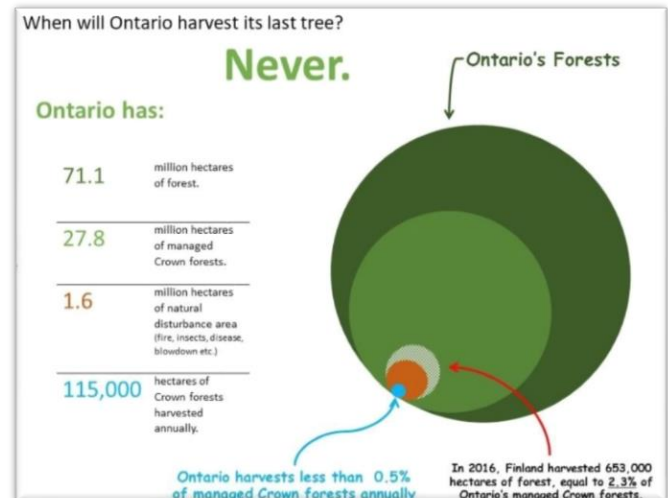
**- In 2013, Finland harvested 65 million cubic meters and Ontario harvested 14 million cubic meters. Ontario's landmass is 3X Finland.**

Far too often the Government of Ontario has developed its policies with little regard for social or economic consequences – an action that leads to unbalanced and unsustainable policies. As a result, many communities are feeling the unintended impacts of policies that focus solely on environmental concerns at the unnecessary expense of social and economic factors, including the loss of economic development and employment opportunities. A wood supply objective must be pursued within the context of all three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

**The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:**

1. Develop a Provincial forestry strategy that recognizes the growing value of Ontario's renewable forests by:
  - removing made-in-Ontario barriers; and
  - increasing reliable access to actual harvest volumes.
2. Conduct and publicly release socio-economic impact assessments of all legislation, regulation, and policies that could reduce the provincial fibre supply and/or reduce access to the land base/natural resources. These assessments must consider all three pillars for sustainability (social, economic and ecological) in protecting Ontario's productive forest land base within the Area of the Undertaking (AOU).



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## **D. Improving Digital Services and Identity for Ontario Businesses**

Authored by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and Co- sponsored by the Milton, Greater-Kitchener-Waterloo, Newmarket and Cambridge Chambers of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Within Canadian law, legislation applicable to traditional commerce is also understood to apply to business conducted via the Internet. Laws governing business incorporation, business name registration, taxation, consumer protection, advertising, importing or exporting, product safety, product standards, intellectual property and liability and so on, apply to e-business. The Province of Ontario was one of the leading jurisdictions in the world through the passing of the Ontario Electronic Commerce Act (s.o.2000 Chapter 17); However, businesses in Ontario believe that the current status quo on Provincial E-Government services and policies governing provincially regulated industries has not kept pace with other jurisdictions.

### **Background**

In addition to feedback from members of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce network and the outcome reports from the Ontario Red Tape Challenge (2016-2017), global indices point to objective gaps in Canada and Ontario's performance. According to the 2016 United Nations (UN) e-government index, Canada slipped three positions to a ranking of 14th overall.

To their credit, the Province has recognized these challenges through the appointment of a Minister Responsible for Digital Government, the creation of the Ontario Digital Service (ODS) unit and a commitment to become Canada's Most Open, Transparent and Digitally Connected Government<sup>5</sup>.

Businesses in Ontario would like to prescribe the following as priority areas:

### **E-Government**

With exponential advances the capability of online service delivery and interfaces, there is a growing expectation from businesses for digital service delivery by Governments. Financial institutions allow clients to quickly check balances, transfer funds or pay bills through mobile applications. Online retailers offer more selection, delivery on demand, and easy returns. Uber, Airbnb and other organizations active in the "sharing economy" are disrupting and overhauling established industries. In a digital era where businesses are investing in and benefitting from the productivity enhancements from these delivery mechanisms, governments must rise to the challenge.

While private sector firms have shifted to a rapid response, customer-centric delivery models where "there's an app for that," many government processes and transactions continue to operate on paper, mail services and in-person visits. Ontario's Red Tape Challenge process has revealed several gaps, ranging from the user experience to the unavailability of services like Ontario Business Information System (ONBIS) registry system on evenings and weekends<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>Province of Ontario Mandate letter: Digital Government. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-digital-government>

<sup>6</sup>Opportunities: Corporate and commercial law, Ontario Red Tape Challenge (2017) <https://www.ontario.ca/document/red-tape-challenge-financial-services-report/opportunities-corporate-and-commercial-law>

Once self-service systems are implemented they result in significantly lower cost service delivery. A customer service interaction on the web is nearly 11 times less expensive than a phone transaction and 25 times less expensive than a face-to-face meeting.<sup>7</sup>

### **Facilitating Digital adoption in Regulated Industries**

With advancements and industry-wide adoption of robust online security standards and emerging technologies like Block Chain, many businesses and their customers are also confident that they can migrate various transactions and records of note to electronic mediums.

One example affecting millions of Ontarians every day is the mandatory requirement for drivers to carry their printed proof of auto insurance (commonly known as “pink slips”) by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. Almost every U.S. jurisdiction allows consumers to receive proof of auto insurance electronically. Through smart regulation design, privacy concerns have been assuaged, with legislation that expressly outlines the scope of law enforcement’s authority when checking proof of auto insurance on an electronic device.

In January 2018, Nova Scotia became the first province to give consumers the option to receive their proof of insurance electronically.

This is one of many examples from industries that are facing an escalating regulatory burden. Ontario’s Minister of Finance completed an independent evaluation of the mandate reviews of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO), the Financial Services Tribunal (FST), and the Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario (DICO). The expert advisory panel recommended the agencies’ mandates under review be modernized and acknowledged major changes in governance structure and associated accountability mechanisms are essential for improving mandate alignment<sup>8</sup>.

### **Amalgamation of Digital Business Identity (One business number)**

Any business owner in Canada deals with all three levels of government separately. These interactions, especially for business start-ups have plenty of overlap leading to paperwork redundancy.

ServiceOntario is the Ontario government’s primary public-facing service delivery organization, with responsibility for delivering information and high-volume routine, rules-based transactions to both individuals and businesses.

The national Business Number (BN) was developed by the Federal Government in the 1990s to enable both business and government to streamline operations and realize efficiencies. With the BN, businesses are assigned a single registration number for their dealings with various participating public sector programs.

In Ontario, the BN is currently used by businesses for taxation returns, occupational health and safety, employment standards and labour disputes. However, in other provinces the BN has been successfully implemented for registries, licensing, procurement, application for permits and reception of government benefits.

Several municipalities have also declared an interest in pursuing a singular BN, some of them even signing MOU’s with Service Ontario. The Province does not currently have a clear timeline for a full BN migration.

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<sup>7</sup> Society of Information Technology Management, <https://www.ibm.com/blogs/commerce/2012/02/part-4-social-media-and-the-city-new-value-for-local-government/>

<sup>8</sup>Expert panel proposes "radical change" after mandate reviews of Ontario financial regulators.  
<https://www.osler.com/en/resources/regulations/2016/expert-panel-proposes-radical-change-after-manda>

**Recommendations:**

1. Create a common corporate registry, with provisions for information-sharing between provinces, to eliminate the need to register a business multiple times.
2. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation and identify a strategy for the introduction of online submissions as an option for common transactions between businesses and the Province of Ontario, in particular, the Articles of Amendment (Form 3 under the Business Corporations Act).
3. Further explore Regulatory Sandbox experiments, which are sector-based temporary approvals, allowing both established and new businesses to test out innovative new products and services without incurring all the normal regulatory consequences of engaging in those activities.
4. Government should allow insurers to offer an electronic option for proof of auto insurance and other insurance documents,
5. As part of Ministry of Economic Development and Growth's Red Tape Challenge, implement a new engagement exercise aimed at improving E-Governance and online services.
6. In collaboration with interested municipalities, explore the replacement of the Ontario Business Identification number with the Federal Common Business Number across an expanded set of applications

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## E. Address Ontario-Quebec economic mobility

Submitted by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Co-sponsored by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### Issue:

Overly broad efforts to address general regulatory barriers have proven insufficient to address long-standing significant challenges for the flow of commerce between Ontario and Quebec.

### Background:

Ontario and Quebec share a uniquely important economic relationship within Canada's business landscape: with a combined GDP of more than \$1 trillion, the Ontario-Quebec region is the fourth largest in North America, after California, Texas and New York.<sup>9</sup> Trade of goods and services between Ontario and Quebec has grown by nearly 11 percent over the last 10 years, from \$75.8 billion to \$84 billion<sup>10</sup>. The two provinces account for nearly two thirds of Canada's population, almost 60 percent of its GDP, and 53 percent of its interprovincial trade.<sup>11</sup>

However, despite the importance of their integrated economies, there remain many unique regulatory and cultural barriers between the two that pose considerable challenges to a truly equitable flow of commerce. This has perhaps been most visibly evident within the construction sector, with Ontario associations having pointed to Quebec's construction market as one of the most heavily regulated in North America.<sup>12</sup> This led to retaliatory legislation by the Ontario government in the form of the restrictive Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, which was passed in 1999, and repealed in 2006 in favor of a more collaborative approach, though ongoing concerns resulted in a failed effort to revive it via private member's bill in 2013.<sup>13</sup>

Although they're often far less visible, similar sectoral challenges exist for Ontario businesses in other areas, including forestry, environmental testing, transportation, and countless additional sectors; the lack of documentation around the extent and sectoral breadth of this problem forces many individual industries to lobby Quebec for piecemeal solutions, if they have the resources to pursue them at all. In some cases, the lack of communication or knowledge about these issues can lead to Ontario businesses unknowingly incurring significant fines.

The economic harm posed by these unique challenges has been recognized by the two provinces in the form of the Ontario-Quebec Trade and Cooperation Agreement (OQTCA), which also effectively serves to recognize their special trade relationship.<sup>14</sup> Last updated in 2015, it is designed to simplify the flow of commerce between the two provinces, and while it offers a framework for discussion, its overly broad nature fails to effectively address much of this ongoing regulatory concern.

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<sup>9</sup> Government of Ontario, Ontario and Quebec Strengthen Interprovincial Trade, May 2015

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2015/05/ontario-and-quebec-strengthen-interprovincial-trade.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Quebec and Ontario Working Together to Fuel Innovation and Growth, Services Quebec, Sept. 22 2017, <http://www.fil-information.gouv.qc.ca/Pages/Article.aspx?aiguillage=ajd&type=1&lang=en&idArticle=2509223140>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ottawa Construction Association, Resources: Working in Quebec <http://www.oca.ca/resources/quebec.php>

<sup>13</sup> CBC News, Bill to restrict Quebec construction workers in Ontario defeated, Sept. 2013

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/bill-to-restrict-quebec-construction-workers-in-ontario-defeated-1.1703959>

<sup>14</sup> Government of Ontario, Trade and Cooperation Agreement Between Ontario and Quebec

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/trade-and-cooperation-agreement-between-ontario-and-quebec-0>

The federal government attempted to rectify these and other such regulatory misalignments through the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) in April 2017.<sup>15</sup> While it provides some progressive relief measures on specific areas such as procurement, roughly one-third of the 300-page document is dedicated to provincial exemptions, creating opt-out measures on many key files for the Ontario-Quebec relationship.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, there exist many regulatory concerns that exist within Quebec that fall outside of the CFTA's intended purview.

These gaps mean that these issues must be addressed on a province-by-province basis; this approach that is mirrored by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's *10 Ways to Build a Canada That Wins 2018*, which states that despite the CFTA's advances, "progress will depend on the adoption of best practices in regulatory management by governments across Canada".<sup>17</sup> As such, identifying and addressing these unique barriers will be best achieved by direct cooperation between Ontario and Quebec.

Barriers to business also exist at the cultural level: according to the 2016 census, 44 percent of Quebec residents are able to speak Ontario's dominant language, whereas only 11 percent of Ontario residents are able to speak Quebec's.<sup>18</sup> As a result, Ontario businesses have a generally higher barrier to entry to Quebec markets than the reverse, though some neighboring border communities – such as the City of Temiskaming Shores, the City of Ville-Marie, their associated Chambers of Commerce, and the Temiskaming First Nation – are finding success by working collaboratively to build relationships, find common ground, and advance shared economic goals.

### **Recommendations:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Work with Ontario businesses to identify and remove barriers to the movement of services, labour, and goods between Ontario and Quebec, with a focus on industry-specific regulations, standards, and certifications.
2. Create and promote programs designed to foster relationship-building between Ontario and Quebec business communities, including measures to improve business support for bilingual access.
3. Work with business organizations and associations to better communicate industry-specific challenges and opportunities of doing business in Quebec, as well as the measures required to meet regulatory compliance.

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<sup>15</sup> Canadian Free Trade Agreement, Canadian Free Trade Agreement Finalized, April 2017 <https://www.cfta-alec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CFTA-news-release-1.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Global News, Forget that out-of-province beer: On booze and most other things, new interprovincial trade deal falls short, April 2017 <https://globalnews.ca/news/3364019/forget-that-out-of-province-beer-on-booze-and-most-other-things-new-interprovincial-trade-deal-falls-short/>

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 10 Ways to Build a Canada That Wins, Feb. 5, 2018 <http://www.chamber.ca/advocacy/10-ways-2018/>

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada, English-French bilingualism reaches new heights, August 2017 <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016009/98-200-x2016009-eng.cfm>

## F. Make Carbon Pricing Revenue Neutral

Authored by the Toronto Region Board of Trade and co-sponsored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce.

### Issue

Businesses understand the need for environmental stewardship, including reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. While pricing carbon remains the most efficient approach, the focus should be on combating climate change, not raising new revenues for government to spend.

### Background

Ontario's *Climate Change Action Plan*, (CCAP) sets out a strategy to reduce provincial GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.<sup>19</sup> The centrepiece of the CCAP is a cap and trade program that puts a price on carbon, increasing the costs of emissions and generating new revenues for the government. The auction of emission credits, implemented in January 2017, has raised \$1.9 billion.<sup>20</sup> The government spends these funds on many initiatives aimed at reducing GHG emissions, including grants for building retrofits to increase energy efficiency, construction of infrastructure for cycling and renewable energy programs.<sup>21</sup>

A carbon price—whether through a tax or cap and trade scheme—is the most effective way to reduce GHG emissions as it allows companies, residents, non-governmental organizations, researchers and entrepreneurs to find the best ways to reduce pollution. However, Ontario's program for reinvesting the revenues, rather than returning them through rebates or tax cuts, is flawed for three reasons. First, operating costs for businesses in Ontario are already high, and the cap and trade scheme just adds to the burden. High electricity prices, increased labour costs and a large tax burden present significant challenges.

Second, while the idea of reinvesting carbon pricing proceeds towards further reductions in GHG emissions is appealing, governments are often poor at selecting effective investments. For example, a recent analysis has found that electric vehicle subsidies in Quebec are a very expensive way to reduce GHG emissions.<sup>22</sup> Ontario has a similar program and has expanded it to include more expensive vehicles.<sup>23</sup>

Third, providing tax cuts and rebates is more likely to ensure long-term support for carbon pricing. Public opinion research from BC indicates that almost two-thirds of residents support the carbon tax, while a 2013 poll indicated that a majority of Canadians (in all provinces except Alberta) would support carbon pricing if it also cut other taxes.<sup>24</sup>

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Introduce legislation to require all revenues raised by carbon pricing<sup>25</sup> to be returned to businesses and consumers through tax cuts or rebates and not into general revenue.

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.applications.ene.gov.on.ca/ccap/products/CCAP\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.applications.ene.gov.on.ca/ccap/products/CCAP_ENGLISH.pdf) p. 12

<sup>20</sup> [https://files.ontario.ca/post-auction\\_public\\_proceeds\\_report\\_en\\_2017-11-29.pdf](https://files.ontario.ca/post-auction_public_proceeds_report_en_2017-11-29.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2017/12/ontario-announces-results-of-november-cap-and-trade-program-auction.html>

<sup>22</sup> Dale Beugin, "Can subsidies for electric vehicles 'boost the signal' from carbon pricing," Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, June 28, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, *Choose Wisely: Options and Trade-Offs in Recycling Carbon Pricing Revenues*, April 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Aaron Wherry, "Would Canadians support a carbon tax?" *Maclean's*, March 12, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> This includes the current cap and trade scheme as well as the carbon tax "backstop" levied by the federal government.



2. Protect businesses in energy intensive, trade exposed industries by providing free carbon credits or rebates to invest in reducing their carbon footprint, to ensure they are not put at a competitive disadvantage with other jurisdictions.
3. Ask the Auditor General to provide independent oversight to ensure that all carbon revenues are returned to businesses and residents.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **G. Protect the Viability of Energy-Intensive Trade Exposed companies that have reduced carbon emission in Ontario.**

Submitted by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce and co-sponsored by Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

Ontario's Cap and Trade system effectively penalizes companies that are early adopters of technologies that reduce, recycle and capture carbon emissions. By recognizing and rewarding these efforts, there would be greater incentive for companies to invest in new technologies as available that reduce carbon emissions on a continual basis. In addition, gaps in programming under the *Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016* and the Climate Change Action Plan similarly punish early adopters and encourage a "wait-and-see" approach to investments aimed at reducing GHGs. Companies need an assurance that funds invested in Ontario's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account will ultimately provide benefit in the form of accessible programming, regardless of the compliance period in which the funds were invested.

### **Background:**

In 2017 members of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce agreed that the cap and trade system should be suspended "with appropriate cost mitigation to affected businesses". Should suspension not occur or should another carbon pricing mechanism replace it, the viability and competitiveness of Energy-Intensive Trade-Exposed (EITE) sectors should be strategically ensured so they can compete with manufacturers operating in jurisdictions that do not have similar taxation.

EITE manufacturers operating in Ontario, such as greenhouses, oil and gas, steel and chemical manufacturers, are unfairly impacted by Cap and Trade, which erodes their competitiveness, compromises their ability to continue operating in Ontario, and makes those jobs vulnerable.

Many EITE manufacturers are "technologically mature" and already amongst the most efficient in the world. Emissions processes can generally be described as variable or fixed, with the latter being fundamentally limited by the boundaries of currently known scientific processes involved in the manufacturing process. In other words, many industries have improved technologically and thermodynamically to a point that any new advancements will require the development and application of entirely new technologies, and in some cases entirely new chemical processes. Cap and Trade is effectively taxing these early adopters by imposing the annual decline cap factor, falsely assuming that they are capable of reducing their emissions.

Many manufacturers have also found ways to capture and recycle emissions (i.e. sell to third parties such as greenhouses, or use it to manufacture other products onsite), yet protocols for emission allowances don't recognize this. It is assumed that emissions generated are also released. Allowance calculations should recognize these efforts, and not penalize the companies through taxation, as they directly help achieve the government's goal of reducing atmospheric GHGs.

The Green Ontario Fund was established by the Ontario Government to distribute Cap and Trade revenues. Its programs, including GreenOn Industries, the Industrial Conservation Initiative and SMART Green, provide funding to manufacturers to invest in machinery, equipment and processes that reduce their carbon emissions. However, if advanced technical capabilities don't exist, companies miss out on the funding. The Green Ontario Fund should provide guarantees that some funding will be available long term to these sectors as technologies become available.

Ontario's carbon pricing system should recognize the improved performance and environmental leadership of early adopters by fairly distributing emission allowances and revenues derived from carbon pricing mechanisms.

Business in Ontario are also concerned about the threat of “Carbon leakage” a concept whereby trade exposed industries, competing in international markets against countries with inferior environmental mitigation and carbon pricing regimes are unable to compete and suffer decline in production. According to a review of models<sup>26</sup> based on the California Cap and Trade experience, a 10 percent increase in domestic production costs resulted in a decline of ten (for median intensity) to twenty (for higher intensity manufacturing and resource industries) percent decline in domestic production<sup>27</sup>.

**Recommendation:**

That the Government of Ontario:

1. Refrain from applying annual declining cap factors to industrial sectors with fixed emissions limited by currently available technological and scientific processes.
2. Account for captured and recycled CO<sub>2</sub> and reduced emissions in allowance calculations.
3. Develop a framework that allows carbon pricing revenues to be accessed in the long term, regardless of compliance period, to ensure equitable distribution to sectors and/or innovative individuals at the front of the innovation curve who are working to develop modern low-carbon technology.
4. Dedicate a portion of carbon pricing revenues to programs that incentivize Energy-Intensive, Trade-Exposed Industries to conduct R&D to advance low carbon technologies
5. Study policy mechanisms within free trade agreements and with the World Trade Organization that cover Border Carbon Adjustments and emissions permits to create a fairer market for Ontario EITE.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>26</sup> Brunnermeier, S. B. and A. Levinson (2004). Examining the evidence on environmental regulations and industry location. *The Journal of Environment & Development* 13(1), 6–41.

<sup>27</sup> Fowle, Reguant & Ryan. “Measuring Leakage Risk” (2016). <https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/meetings/20160518/ucb-intl-leakage.pdf>

## **H. Perform a Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Global Adjustment and Time-of-Use Billing programs to restore energy competitiveness**

Authored by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario's electricity prices have risen by 71 percent from 2008 to 2016, far outpacing electricity price growth in other provinces as well as increases in income and inflation. The Global Adjustment charge (GA) now comprises the overwhelming majority of an Ontario electricity bill, but the GA is not transparent and not well-understood, even by the Ministry of Energy. In addition, the Time-of-Use Billing (TOU) program rolled out with mandatory smart meters has made energy costs dramatically higher during business hours, disproportionately affecting businesses. The first complete impact study of the program has revealed less-than-spectacular results for consumption patterns and conservation, but no economic impact analysis has been conducted.

### **Background**

The cost of electricity in Ontario has been climbing far beyond the rate of inflation.<sup>28</sup> The reason for most of this increase has been the growing GA, which, according to the Auditor-General, had reached 85 per cent of a residential bill by 2016.<sup>29</sup> Ontario's electricity rate per kWh is competitive, but the GA renders this irrelevant.<sup>30</sup>

The GA covers the cost of building new electricity infrastructure in the province, maintaining existing resources, as well as providing conservation and demand management programs. These include energy storage, large renewable procurement, the Hydroelectric Contract Initiative, the Industrial Electricity Incentive and Combined Heat and Power programs, the Hydroelectric Standard Offer Program, non-utility generators, and the Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) and MicroFiT programs. As with TOU, many of these were primarily aimed at conservation and greening Ontario's energy generation rather than economic growth and fiscal optimisation, and it is worth examining whether these myriad programs should all be funded by ratepayers. However, these programs are neither transparent nor well-understood. The Auditor-General called for greater clarity on these charges at the end of 2016, which was rejected by the Ontario Energy Board.<sup>31</sup>

Time-of-use pricing enables power companies to incentivize the use of electricity when demand is low, which theoretically translates into less demand overall.<sup>32</sup> However, many consumers, especially businesses, are not able to choose when to consume electricity. To those in such a position, time-of-use billing is simply an additional cost and does not accomplish the program's goal.

The IESO's recent three-year analysis of TOU revealed that, while TOU had limited success in load-shifting, there was no evidence of conservation as a result. General-class consumption showed very little load-shifting

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<sup>28</sup> Jackson, Taylor, Ashley Stedman, Elmira Aliakbari and Kenneth Green. Evaluating Electricity Price Growth in Ontario. Fraser Institute, 2017. <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/evaluating-electricity-price-growth-in-ontario.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Allison Jones, *Among the dubious expenses filed by power generators in Ontario ... raccoon traps* (<http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ontario-auditor-general-to-examine-health-care-school-boards-electricity-2>), National Post, December 6, 2017

<sup>30</sup> Hydro Québec, *Comparison of Electricity Prices in Major North American Cities* ([http://www.hydroquebec.com/publications/en/docs/comparaison-electricity-prices/comp\\_2015\\_en.pdf](http://www.hydroquebec.com/publications/en/docs/comparaison-electricity-prices/comp_2015_en.pdf))

<sup>31</sup> Keith Leslie, *Ontario Energy Board refuses auditor's call to clarify global adjustment on hydro bills* (<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/ontario-energy-board-refuses-auditor-s-call-to-clarify-global-adjustment-on-hydro-bills-1.3199973>)

<sup>32</sup> Ontario Energy Board, *Time-of-Use (TOU) Prices* (<http://www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/OEB/Consumers/Electricity/Electricity+Prices>)

and no evidence of conservation.<sup>33</sup> This confirms the hypothesis that general class consumers have very little flexibility in terms of how much energy they consume and when.

However, no study has yet revealed what effect TOU is having on the broader economy in terms of hampering GDP and job growth, particularly among manufacturing and heavy industry, which are disproportionately heavy energy consumers. The dearth of information is compounded by the government's failure to introduce TOU as a pilot scheme with a control group. Such a study is now called for to assess whether the meagre results from TOU are worth the (currently unknown) economic costs, and whether different programs might achieve greater conservation at the same or lesser cost to the economy.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Conduct a comprehensive, independent review of the electricity sector and publish the results, including an objective economic impact analysis assessing the full range of inputs that make up the Global Adjustment (GA) and specific analysis of what programs are being billed to which users or taxpayers
2. Pursue cost-reducing measures based on these findings, where applicable
3. In pursuit of full transparency in the energy sector into the future, commit to altering the distribution of charges and costs included in the GA only after a demonstration that such an alteration would have a differential, positive, impact on socio-economic outcomes for all Ontarians
4. Commission an independent analysis of the impact of the Time-of-Use Billing program on the provincial economy and publish the results
5. Reassess the merits of continuing the TOU program accordingly.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>33</sup> The Brattle Group, Mountain Economic Consulting & Associates, eMeter, *Analysis of Ontario's Full Scale Roll-out of TOU Rates – Final Study*, February 2016 <http://www.ieso.ca/-/media/files/ieso/document-library/conservation-reports/final-analysis-of-ontarios-full-scale-roll-out-of-tou-rates.pdf>

## **L Balanced Species at Risk Policy Needed to Provide Jobs and Economic Opportunity**

Authored by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Co-sponsored by North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Species at risk policy continues to threaten the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of northern and rural communities. A long-term and workable solution is needed to truly open Ontario for business.

### **Background**

Ontario is recognized as a world leader in sustainable forest management. Harvesting 0.2% of Ontario's renewable resource annually, Ontario's forest products sector directly employs over 150,000 hardworking men and women in every corner of the province.

The Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA) is an equivalent process to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and provides for continuous supply of species at risk habitat over space and time. In recognition of this, forestry-based businesses and communities have been requesting from government a need for a permanent solution to ESA for the forest sector; that is, to allow the sector to operate under one act, the CFSA. Extensions made to the current regulation under previous governments have not provided any long-term certainty. The sector needs a permanent, long-term solution and it is hoped that this discussion paper is the beginning of a constructive path forward.

The Ontario government is currently undertaking a review of the ESA to “improve protections for species at risk, consider modern and innovative approaches to achieve positive outcomes for species at risk, as well as to look for ways to streamline approvals and provide clarity to support economic development.”<sup>34</sup>

As part of this review, changes made to the ESA must include the consideration of climate change on habitat on all species at risk policy and recognize the cumulative impact of all species at risk policy on a healthy economy; and socio-economic impact analysis must be completed and shared with impacted stakeholders and Indigenous communities prior to any species at risk policy being implemented.

Furthermore, under a permanent regulation or legislative change to the ESA recognizing equivalency, species at risk policy and prescriptions delivered under the CFSA must consider the impacts of climate change and the cumulative social and economic impacts.

Ontario has a window of opportunity to ensure a workable outcome on species at risk policy that provides a long-term solution that protects jobs and the economy. However, there is a concern that the federal government could step into non-federal lands and prescribe how forests will be managed through an unworkable Section 11 Conservation Agreement under the Species at Risk Act or Emergency Protection Order.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Recognize equivalency between the ESA and CFSA through a permanent section 55 regulation or legislative change to the ESA.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTM2NTM2&statusId=MjA4MDg1&language=en>

2. While working under the CFSA, ensure all species at risk policy and prescriptions take into account the impacts of climate change and the cumulative social and economic impacts.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **J. Improving the Process for Establishing Regulations That Impact Business**

Authored by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

New and existing regulations invoked by the Ontario Government that affect business can unintentionally place businesses in jeopardy of survival. This could arise due to failing to consult and consider the implications of a regulation to the operation of a business, it could arise due to conflicting regulations with no clarity on which regulation supersedes, or it could arise from costs being in excess of social or economic benefits to be gained.

### **Background**

There have been instances where poorly developed laws and regulations have meant considerable expense to businesses.

A recent example involves a restaurant caught in the middle of two provincial commissions – Ontario Human Rights and the Ontario Alcohol and Gaming. Ontario Human Rights has determined that a patron has the right to smoke ‘medical marijuana’ at the doors of the restaurant while Ontario Alcohol and Gaming will revoke the restaurant’s license if alcohol is served to an individual known to have used a controlled substance.

In this particular case the restaurant owner incurred thousands of dollars in legal fees in trying to determine what avenues were available to him in the near impossible task of meeting the conflicting requirements of the Commissions. The goal of the business was to prevent the smoking of a controlled substance within the immediate outdoor space of the restaurant while abiding by the alcohol serving rules. Additionally, the taxpayers have to fund the Ontario Rights Commission and the Alcohol & Gaming Commission in them defending their respective regulations while neither have an obligation to assist in finding a solution.

In a situation like this, the cost will fall on the business to try to resolve such a situation. The real shortcoming is in the process for development of legislation.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Move to a regulatory model whereby all proposed legislation and regulations must be supported by a cost-benefit analysis and an analysis on the impact on business.
2. Move to a regulatory model whereby all legislation and regulations must be reviewed for their degree of conflict and integration with existing legislation.
3. Work with the federal government to adopt a standard of regulatory harmonization between the two levels of government.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022



## K. Support Ontario's Steel Industry and its Supply Chain Clusters

Authored by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

The Ontario steel industry, includes steel producers as well as manufacturing industries within its value chain and geographical clusters and has long been a cornerstone of the provincial economy. Recently, a combination of illegal tariffs, instability in the global market economy, and foreign competition from industries benefiting from unfair economic advantages has led to a sharp decline in their ability to compete globally. The Ontario government needs to focus public policy and investment efforts towards supporting this important industry, clusters and the innovation it creates.

### Background

Steel is a versatile material whose local production is essential to supporting local industries, consumer products, building and maintenance of our transportation and physical infrastructure. Ontario is home to more than 70% of Canada's steel production capacity. Our steel industry directly employs 16,000 and indirectly employs about 53,000 Ontarians.<sup>35</sup> Ontario's steel industry thereby has a multiplier of approximately 3.3:1; that is, there are 3.3 jobs outside of the steel industry for every direct job within the industry. Beyond contributing to overall employment, Ontario steel makers contribute to supply chains within the broader manufacturing sector in the province. In particular, steel makers play a crucial role in Ontario's 400-km automotive corridor, with direct impacts on the province's auto assemblers, and over 1,200 auto parts suppliers.<sup>36</sup> Challenges faced by this industry have a notable ripple effect across the province on related SME companies, suppliers, and manufacturers.

The rise of the steel industry was integral part of Canada's development as a world-class economy in the 20th century. From Algoma in Sault Ste Marie to Dofasco and Stelco in Hamilton, Ontario firms especially distinguished themselves as centers of excellence and advancement in new varieties of steel. Steel producers by principle agree to compete against imports on a fair commercial basis but are in global competition against foreign government subsidies, state-owned enterprises, and other forms of support that run counter to the trade rules. The United States announced illegal tariffs of 25% on imports of Canadian steel would take effect on June 1, 2018, under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act 1962, suggesting Canadian steel products pose a national security threat to the U.S. In response to the unprecedented tariffs, Canada imposed retaliatory countermeasures on imports of steel from the United States.<sup>37</sup> Market conditions are jeopardized by an ongoing violations of WTO practices, the ineffectiveness of trade remedy laws and lack of full reciprocity within trade treaties.

While the majority of media coverage has focused on the decline of the industry, tariffs, foreign competition and oversupply in the existing market, experts remain optimistic that fundamental forces, which if harnessed, will continue to support the prosperity and global demand for Ontario steel. While challenges related to international markets remain a federal issue, the province can still play a critical role in:

1. Supporting investments for organizations in new technologies under various funding envelopes;
2. Working with the federal government to negotiate more equitable trade regimes and adjudications processes;
3. Incentivizing the development of a skilled workforce equipped to participate in the transition to advanced manufacturing;
4. Easing goods movement infrastructure bottlenecks, especially near trading hubs;
5. Incentivizing the development and participation of steel industry clusters and value chains.

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<sup>35</sup> Ontario Newsroom <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2018/04/ontario-supporting-4700-jobs-in-hamiltons-steel-industry.html>

<sup>36</sup> Ontario Newsroom <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2018/04/ontario-supporting-4700-jobs-in-hamiltons-steel-industry.html>

<sup>37</sup> Global Affairs Canada [https://international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/controls-controles/steel\\_alum-acier\\_alum.aspx?lang=eng](https://international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/controls-controles/steel_alum-acier_alum.aspx?lang=eng)

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Taking inspiration from the European Steel Technology Platform, work with the federal government to develop a coordinated steel manufacturing strategy that especially prioritizes investment in trade-enabling infrastructure near major clusters.
2. Explore the legislated and voluntary expansion of procurement tools to include fair and preferential treatment for Canadian steel products where the exported alternative doesn't meet or exceed Canadian and provincial environmental, health and safety regulations and does not allow similar, fair and equal access to their markets for the same product.
3. Given their role as suppliers of high-performance material in the manufacturing supply chain and in flowing down R&D improvements,<sup>38</sup> prioritize allocation of the newly announced Ontario Carbon Trust funds to help energy-intensive businesses like steel industry to invest in low-carbon processes, technology and innovation and other capital investments.<sup>39</sup>
4. Work with the Government of Canada by pursuing diplomatic channels to eliminate the remaining U.S. tariffs on Canadian steel products.
5. Strongly encourage that local suppliers and domestic steel content be used in all provincially and federally funded projects if the materials can be supplied from domestic sources.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>38</sup> Birnbaum, Cohen, Harris and Warrian (2009) Ontario Manufacturing, Supply Chains and Knowledge Networks: A Report to the Toronto Regional Research Alliance (TRRA), Toronto: TRRA October 2009

<sup>39</sup> Government of Ontario <https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2018-11/EnvironmentPlan.pdf>

## **L. Supporting Ontario to Become a Leader in Global Mining Innovation**

Authored by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, North Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Huron Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The current commodity volatility is impacting the competitiveness of Ontario's mining sector. Strategic government investments in areas such as mining research and innovation is needed to stimulate this sector in a challenging economic time and to position the province for success when global mining fortunes begin to turn for the better.

### **Background**

Mining is a competitive advantage for the province.

Ontario's mineral production and related activities contributes \$12 billion to Canadian GDP and creates 78,800 jobs.<sup>40</sup> The Ontario Mining Association estimates that there are approximately 900 mining supply and service sector companies in Ontario, that combined to contribute an economic impact of \$6.6 billion.<sup>41</sup> The City of Toronto is the mining finance capital of the world, and Ontario's expertise in mineral production, mining supply and services, finance, and innovation are in global demand.

It is essential that the provincial government take active steps, such as investing in innovation to maintain Ontario's competitive advantage and to ensure the mining sector's continued role as an economic driver for the province. In face of a difficult economic environment, innovation and creative ideas are needed more than ever to reduce costs and increase production. Mining innovation allows for the development of new technologies, products, and business processes necessary for Ontario firms to stay competitive. With mines becoming deeper and more remote, research and innovation is increasingly essential to developing new tools and techniques to address these challenges.

Ontario is home to a number of nation-leading mining research and innovation groups and initiatives, including the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation (CEMI), the Mining Innovation Rehabilitation and Applied Research Corporation (MIRARCO), the Northern Centre for Advanced Technology (NORCAT), and important mining programs at postsecondary institutions including those offered at the University of Toronto's Lassonde Institute of Mining, Laurentian University's Goodman School of Mines, and Lakehead University's Centre for Excellence in Sustainable Mining and Exploration. The Northern Ontario Mining Supply and Services Association (SAMSSA) also represents the largest concentration of expertise in mining supply/products and services including innovation.

Direct government investment is necessary to leverage the capabilities of these institutions. Although we are encouraged by the 2015 Ontario Mineral Development Strategy which includes innovation objectives, we believe specific and measurable action items are needed to bring this vision into reality. Improved funding flows and ratios as well as a broader vision of innovation will both contribute to sustaining mining innovation throughout the downturn and enhancing Ontario's mining innovation expertise on the global stage.

The success of mining innovation is impacted by the time it takes for funding to flow and the government-to-industry ratio of funding. In some jurisdictions, proposals can take over a year to be processed and it can take another year before approved funding begins to flow. The time required impacts the momentum of the project as a whole, available talent and resources, as well as the delay in the potential economic impact and adoption. It also impacts the willingness of management within industry to commit to funds. Most managers

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.oma.on.ca/en/ontariomining/EconomicContribution.asp>

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.oma.on.ca/en/ontariomining/facts\\_figures.asp](https://www.oma.on.ca/en/ontariomining/facts_figures.asp)

and business leaders are willing to commit funds for projects that accrue benefits within their “lifetime” in a particular position, generally between 1-3 years. This incentivizes shorter term thinking, unless the commitments are approved at the highest levels.

Generally, Ontario mining companies and the government contribute research and innovation funds on a 1:1 ratio. Matching investments are provided regardless of the type of project. With fewer resources available from industry, this skews investments towards cheaper and lower risk research projects, and away from the innovation and commercialization projects that are necessary to realize productivity gains in the sector. In order to attract funds and partnership from global mining companies, the Government of Ontario needs to consider adjusting its funding ratios and consider options such as increasing ratios to 4:1 or 5:1 to provide incentives to support larger-scale, longer-term, visionary provincial mining innovation projects given that the ventures have a strong business case and a high return on investment. Increasing the relative government-to-industry ratio for innovation and commercialization projects will incentivize greater industry investment in higher risk projects and boost productivity enhancing activity in Ontario during this downturn in the mining cycle. The Ontario Government is also encouraged to work with the federal government to enhance funding ratios in mining innovation to better leverage private sector funds.

Further, for innovation to work, it must be adopted. Mining innovations need to be demonstrated and implemented as workable beyond the theoretical, but also show commercial viability. The lack of commercialization is one of the reasons why so little of the funding for mining research has impacted mine operations. The majority of funding in the province is targeted at research in academia that may not necessarily translate into industry-relevant innovation or commercialization. While university-based research is essential, research in operating mines and with suppliers is equally important. The Research, Demonstration and Implementation (RD+I) approach to focus on practical applications, distinct from academic research, was developed by the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation (CEMI) in 2011, and is aimed at addressing this very important issue. Mining service and supply firms also make significant contributions to the commercialization process and their efforts should be supported in an integrated manner. Funding and programming in such areas will further encourage commercialization and industry adoption of important mining innovations.

In face of the current economic environment and competition from jurisdictions with lower wages, operating costs, and less stringent environmental regulations, Ontario has little choice but to innovate. Given the relative strength and coherence of the mining industry, research and innovation organizations and our mining supply and service sector in Ontario, we have a tremendous opportunity to become a global powerhouse in this field – so long as all the factors for success are in place in which mining innovators can thrive. Conventional approaches are failing to deliver new mines at greater depths and in more remote locations; innovation is essential if we are to sustain our strength in mining.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Increase the relative government-to-industry funding ratio for innovation and commercialization projects, and manage funding flows as appropriate based on the size and timeframe of such projects.
2. Provide funding for mining innovation projects that go beyond academic research and incorporate the mining industry, the supply and service industries, and other cross-sector industries to support implementation and commercialization requirements.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **M. Changes to Alcohol Retail in Ontario Need to Support Local Industry and Jobs in the Wine and Grape Sector**

Authored by the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Leamington Chamber of Commerce, Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, and Grimsby Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

As the Ontario government considers new retail for wine in the province it is essential that the government uses this opportunity to ensure Ontario grape growers and wineries are able to grow their businesses, contribute to the provincial and regional economies and create local jobs. Key to ensuring the future growth of the Ontario grape and wine sector is:

- Eliminating the 35% import tax currently imposed on local Ontario wineries;
- Eliminating the 6.1% retail store tax on domestically produced wine;
- Ensure direct delivery of all Ontario wine to new retail opportunities; and,
- Not trading the current retail monopoly for a grocery led oligopoly.

### **Background**

In 2015, the Ontario wine and grape industry contributed \$4.4 billion to the Ontario economy, supported 18,000 jobs, hundreds of small family-owned businesses in Ontario communities and attracted over 2.4 million tourists to wine country every year.<sup>42</sup> This in itself accounted for nearly half of Canada's wine and grape industry. An average bottle of Ontario wine sold generates \$29.69 of business revenue, \$5.23 of tax revenue and \$8.71 of wages. For every \$1.00 spent on Canadian wine in Ontario, \$3.95 in GDP is generated across the province.

In 2015, there were approximately 456 grape growers operating in Ontario with a combined acreage of 18,383 grape-bearing acres. There were also approximately 180 wineries in Ontario that sold over 8.3 million nine-litre equivalent cases of wine. Total winery revenue representing wine sales, wine kit sales and non-wine revenue such as merchandise, events, etc. was \$562.9 million.

The wine and grape industry is a key economic driver in Ontario but is especially important to the Niagara, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County areas. Windsor-Essex County alone has 17 wineries due to its unique maritime climate which allows it to have longer sun hours and greater heat units than any other area in Canada. This unique climate contributes to the production of award-winning wines created from the finest locally grown vinifera and French hybrid wine grapes.<sup>43</sup>

Ontario is already one of the most open wine jurisdictions in the world. At the LCBO, Ontario wines hold only a 24 percent market share. Other wine producing nations around the world dominate their own market. Spain, South Africa, Argentina and Chile each own over 90% of their domestic market. Italy owns over 80%, Australia over 75%, the USA over 60% and even Russia is at 50% ownership of their own market. Major wine producing countries such as Spain, Italy, France, America and Australia provide hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies particularly for marketing abroad. These subsidies are often directed by the foreign wineries at maintaining and growing market share in Canada and Ontario.

Alongside limited market share, Ontario wineries pay the 35% import tax that is also levied against foreign wineries. The elimination of this tax would allow Ontario wineries and grape growers to create more jobs in

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<sup>42</sup> <https://wgao.ca/economic-impact/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.epicwineries.com/wineries/>

rural Ontario, keep protecting the Greenbelt and continuously invest in the Ontario economy.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. **Eliminate the Import Tax on Domestic Wines:** Ontario wineries currently pay a 35% import tax through the LCBO markup structure. Ontario wineries are seeking a 35% permanent tax credit that is predictable.
2. **Allow Direct Delivery to retail stores:** Provide Ontario wineries the ability to deliver directly to any new retail store channel similar to US wineries. It is the best way to ensure a fair and reasonable margin on wine sales in new retail channels.
3. **Eliminate the Retail Store Tax:** No other Ontario business has a 6.1% tax on top of the other sales taxes the government collects. Reduce the Retail Store Tax by 6.1%.
4. **Prevent Private Oligopolies from Arising:** Ensure market is accessible to retailers of all sizes, including independent licenses for specialty wine shops i.e. a license enabling independent stores with no chains or ability to consolidate.
5. **Work with other provinces to enable Ontario wineries to better serve their customers.** Enable cross border shipping so Ontario wineries can ship purchased products home to customers in provinces including Quebec, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **N. Ensuring Access to Export Markets for SMEs**

Authored by the Richmond Hill Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Ontario SME Export Businesses lack affordable access to insurance products to allow them to compete outside of Canada.

### **Background**

In order to do business on the World Stage in general, and in particular, in the European Union and United States, business must carry sufficient insurance products to be able to even come to the table to qualify to sell their products. This situation exists particularly in large corporations and purchasing blocks with Vendor Management Organizations that rapidly exclude Ontario Startup in sectors including technology and financial technology.

Typical insurance requirements are, as separate items<sup>44</sup>:

- Commercial Blanket Bond for Deliverables - US\$25Million
- Technology Errors and Omissions Insurance – US\$10Million<sup>45</sup>
- Media Errors and Omissions Insurance – US\$10Million
- Privacy and Network Security Insurance - US\$10Million
- Commercial General Liability Insurance - US\$2Million (this is available)

The authors, as an exercise, attempted to obtain the above insurance in 2017, were quoted US\$1Million per year.

Without these insurance products, at affordable levels, any investment in SME technology companies that expect to export their products will face undue hardships and must resort to indirect sales through local agents, that directly impacts companies' bottom lines, and puts their viability and growth at risk.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Work with the Insurance Industry to come up with affordable and available products that allow Ontario SME businesses to export and compete outside of Ontario and Canada.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>44</sup> Typical VMO survey done in 2017 by member to Large US Bank (names cannot be disclosed).

<sup>45</sup> This level of insurance is not available in Ontario based on communication with major local insurance companies.

## **O. Fair Business Practices to Ensure Ontario Stays Competitive**

Authored by the London Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

In a time when the political climate is becoming increasingly polarized, it is important that private companies engaging with government know where they stand. Governments change through the political will of the people and when that change occurs, it is imperative that businesses partnering with the government are treated fairly.

### **Background**

While changing circumstances or political climate may necessitate the cancellation or modification of policy or regulations that impact the government's contractual commitments, every effort must first be made to understand and respect the impact of such changes on Ontario's businesses and the economy.

To the extent that affected parties to a contract are not treated fairly and in accordance with corporate and commercial law and the terms of their contract, this failure will have ongoing negative consequences for future government procurement. Future bidding entities will exit the Ontario marketplace and diminish the competitiveness of the remaining players, and those remaining will build this kind of political risk into the pricing of their product or service.

We live in a world where attracting talent and business opportunities is becoming increasingly competitive between jurisdictions and it is important Ontario be viewed as a province that supports business. The impact on the Venezuelan economy arising from politics taking advantage of the business community demonstrates the risks that Ontario runs when cancelling contracts without adequate compensation. Since 2007 oil production in Venezuela has been on a steep decline, despite oil prices that were regularly above \$100/bbl. In 2015 Venezuela's oil production had fallen to 2.6 million BPD, a decrease of more than 20% below 2006 levels. By comparison, the U.S. oil production has risen by 86% during the same period. In 2007 Venezuela demanded changes to the agreements made by the international oil companies like ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron, Total and ConocoPhillips that would give the government majority control of the projects. Total, Chevron, Statoil and BP agreed and retained minority interests in their Venezuelan projects. ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips refused, and as a result, their assets were expropriated. The result of stripping the rewards from the industry without fair compensation was to stifle future investment and this should serve as a warning.

Cancelling contracts and not honouring agreements can lead to the voting public losing faith that they will be treated fairly when the political winds of another special interest group conflict with their own interest.

The large international companies may be able to withstand the impacts of political changes; however, this may not be the case for small entrepreneurs. During the start up phase of a new business many entrepreneurs are betting their personal savings on the success of the contracts they enter into with government and others. Knowing that the government has a track record of cancelling contracts without sufficiently compensating the individuals involved will increase the perceived risk and lead to less entrepreneurial activities developing through interaction with the government.

We understand and respect the enthusiasm with which the new Ontario Government has moved to attempt to correct many of the ill-conceived energy programs that they inherited from their predecessors. However, in doing so, the Government must exercise every caution to ensure that their actions, although laudable in their intent, do not inadvertently cause more harm than good.

In 2018, the Ontario government proceeded to direct the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) to cancel 758 renewable energy contracts in the Province. Large Renewable Power contracts cancelled include



hydroelectric, solar and wind projects. Feed-In-Tariff (FIT) contracts cancelled included solar, biomass, biogas and hydroelectric projects. Most cancelled projects had not yet received their notices to proceed from the IESO.

In a separate move, the Province enacted the White Pines Cancellation Act (Act), cancelling the Project's FIT Contract and regulatory approval, and required White Pines to decommission the project, after major equipment had been ordered and construction had begun. The Act does include provisions for some cost recovery for expenses incurred in the development and decommissioning of the Project; however, it does not compensate for any lost revenues.

It is unclear what, if any, compensation will be made available to other developers.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create policies to reasonably compensate parties for cancelled contracts ideally including a formula that takes into account the opportunity cost of the investments made by developers;
2. Disclose the cost (or an estimate thereof) of cancelling a project to the public when such a cancellation occurs;
3. Designate and empower by statute the Auditor General for Ontario to review contract cancellation costs incurred and to provide an independent analysis of the actual costs versus benefits achieved by governments as a result of a contract cancellation;
4. Upon entering contracts where more than half of the contract is to be performed during a new government include terms of possible cancellation; and,
5. Where possible enter contracts in phases with terms coincidental to the political election cycle.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **P. Keeping Ontario's Small Business Support Services Strong**

Authored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and co-sponsored by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Ontario's small businesses and entrepreneurs rely on the hands-on training and support they receive from the Province's Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBEC) to start and grow their business. Many of these businesses go on to become important members of Ontario's chambers of commerce and boards of trade. The future of this network, funded by the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) and host municipalities, is crucial for the success of communities across Ontario. This network requires long term, sustained resources.

### **Background**

Ontario's 47 SBECs are in every corner of the Province. They provide business advisory services like consultation and seminars, along with Province of Ontario programming, to locals interested in starting and growing a business. Their local expertise has made the difference for countless Ontario businesses.

Ontario's SBECs have been the Province's primary resource for main street businesses and entrepreneurs since the 1990s. Small businesses represent 98% of Ontario business. To the more than 400,000 small enterprises employing fewer than 100 people in Ontario, SBECs offer:

- free consultations with a qualified business consultant
- access to business research
- review of business plans
- referrals to local support resources like chambers of commerce
- workshops and seminars
- guidance on licenses, permits, registration, regulations and other documents you need to start a business
- import and export information
- information on patents, copyright and trademarks
- mentoring and networking opportunities

Over the most recent fiscal year, April 2017 to March 2018, SBECs responded to over 198,000 individual public inquiries and helped over 8,300 businesses start or grow, leading to the direct creation of almost 9,500 jobs. This is the result of support delivered in over 27,000 one-on-one business consultations. Furthermore, SBECs referred nearly 1,400 growing businesses to chambers of commerce to help those entrepreneurs on their journey.<sup>46</sup>

The chambers of commerce in Ontario would like to express their support for SBECs as important local partners in business development. Ontario's small businesses and entrepreneurs would greatly benefit from the SBEC network's continued work, backed by long term support from the Province of Ontario.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

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<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, *Enterprise Centre Reporting*, (April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018).

1. Implement dedicated long-term and stable funding through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for Ontario's Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBECs), recognizing that they have been important resources for Ontarians as they start and grow businesses since the late 1990s.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **Q. Reducing Permitting Delays in Mining Exploration**

Authored by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, North Bay District Chamber of Commerce, Huron Chamber of Commerce, and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Given their importance to the economy, and fluctuations in metal markets, it is crucial for mining exploration projects to receive permits in a timely fashion. It is therefore increasingly problematic that Ontario routinely fails to provide these permits within a reasonable timeframe.

### **Background**

Valued at nearly \$10 billion in 2017<sup>47</sup>, Ontario's mineral production is essential to its overall economic success. However, this success story is the result of ongoing, diligent efforts by junior firms and major companies alike to conduct exploration, which carries significant risk: the process of developing a single mine can often require 500-1,000 grassroots exploration projects.<sup>48</sup> Given their importance to the economy, and fluctuations in metal markets, it is crucial for mining exploration projects to receive permits in a timely fashion. It is therefore increasingly problematic that Ontario routinely fails to provide these permits within a reasonable timeframe.

Frustrations related to this issue have been widely and increasingly shared in the media in recent years, as growing numbers of mining exploration firms have publicly aired their concerns that delays were extending to such a duration that projects become less economically viable<sup>49</sup>; this punishes existing investors while providing less confidence to prospective investors.

This issue is not purely anecdotal: Permit Times for Mining Exploration in 2017 specifically finds that investors are losing confidence in the mineral exploration permit process in many Canadian provinces—including British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec—which has grown longer over the past 10 years and less transparent.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the report indicated that exploration companies routinely experienced longer waiting times for permits than in competing provinces, and that Ontario “also offered less transparency and certainty throughout the permitting process.”

This also impacts perception of industry participants regarding Ontario's friendliness as a mining jurisdiction: nearly 40 percent of mining-sector representatives who participated in the Fraser Institute report indicated they expected to wait in excess of six months for the required exploration permits, with 7 per cent anticipating the process would take in excess of two years. In turn, this affects firms' certainty of receiving their permits; without that confidence, firms are less likely to invest. Notably, 20 percent of mining firms have “no confidence” of receiving their required permits, according to the Fraser Institute.

Moreover, 43 percent also felt that the lack of transparency in Ontario's permitting process served as either a mild or strong deterrent to investment.

Similar concerns apply to the delays surrounding environmental assessments, which have had a considerable impact on numerous projects throughout the province. The most visible example of this issue has been within the so-called Ring of Fire, a multi-mineral deposit in the James Bay Lowlands whose potential value is estimated at \$60 billion by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.<sup>51</sup> However, progress has been very slow on

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<sup>47</sup> [https://www.oma.on.ca/en/ontariominer/facts\\_figures.asp](https://www.oma.on.ca/en/ontariominer/facts_figures.asp)

<sup>48</sup> Roderick Eggert, “Mineral Exploration and Development: Risk and Reward”, 2010

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.miningmarkets.ca/news/ontario-permitting-delays-irk-northern-graphite/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/permit-times-for-mining-exploration-2017.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Jed Chong, “Resource Development in Canada: A Case Study on the Ring of Fire”; Parliament of Canada, 2014

numerous fronts for many of the exploration firms active in the region, in part due to the many ongoing delays in the environmental assessment process.<sup>52</sup>

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Dedicate sufficient resources to streamline and improve the process for reviewing and approving exploration permits and environmental assessments; and
2. Work with the federal government to address the duplication of regulatory requirements and processes required for mining exploration, including environmental assessments.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>52</sup> Liam McGuinty, “Where are we now? A Report Card on the Ring of Fire”; Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2015

## **R. Support for free market opportunities to address high electricity prices**

Authored by the Ottawa Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Electricity prices in Ontario are the highest in the country, undercutting the competitiveness of businesses in the province and reducing the attractiveness of the province as a destination for investment. It is the responsibility of the Government of Ontario to explore opportunities for businesses and residents to obtain relief from these pressures.

### **Background**

Between 2008 and 2015, due to a myriad of factors, electricity prices in Ontario rose by 71%, outpacing the growth of Ontario's economy by a factor greater than four.<sup>53</sup> Its impact on businesses has been well-documented by this chamber. This resolution will attempt to provide a constructive free-market solution to this challenge – virtual net metering.

Virtual net metering is a billing arrangement which allows multiple homeowners or businesses to participate in the same net metered electricity generation system and share the output from a single facility that is not physically connected to their property (or their meter). Under this arrangement, the electricity generated from a single project creates bill credits which can be used by one or more participating customers to account for a portion of their total electricity needs.

The supplier is partnered with the local utility to ensure the monthly energy (kWh) produced by the project is netted off of the participants' electricity bill proportionally based on their level of ownership in the project. As many of these projects deploy electricity generation that produces power at peak-demand times, this will allow subscribers to take advantage of the 'peaking' nature of the 'time-of-use' period, which will significantly reduce their electricity bills.

The move to deregulate the electricity grid in Ontario was the correct one, but the province has yet to truly harness the potential of the free market opportunities that will provide businesses in Ontario with the open, fair, and competitive electricity options that will enable lower prices and long-term resiliency of the grid.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Commit to continue with Time-of-Use pricing and investigate opportunities to enable ratepayers in the province to enter in to virtual net metering arrangement under a time-of-use/production pricing scheme.
2. Amend O Reg 541/05 (the Net Metering Regulation) to allow for virtual net metering.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>53</sup> Jackson, Taylor, et. al., *Evaluating Electricity Price Growth in Ontario*. The Fraser Institute, 2017

## **S. Addressing the Challenges of Ontario's Largest Economic Sector: Small Business**

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

The cumulative regulatory burden, constant legislative changes and reporting requirements present a disproportionate impact on small businesses and are an obstacle to prosperity, growth and competitiveness.

### **Background**

Businesses throughout the province have repeatedly highlighted the cost of regulatory compliance as a barrier to investment and growth. Business owners have said they find it incredibly difficult to navigate the regulatory framework – especially when that framework is frequently changing due to new and/or updated legislation. When new and/or updated legislation unwittingly introduces hidden costs, the problem is only exacerbated. The Government of Ontario needs to take steps to reduce red tape for small businesses and make it easier for them to understand and comply with regulations.

Recent years have seen significant changes implemented or proposed to WSIB, labour relation, the minimum wage, and pension plans. Businesses saw many changes as a result of Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*, 2017, and the subsequent introduction of Bill 47, the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act*, 2018, which repealed or rewrote many of Bill 148's changes. Businesses continue to see many changes due to environmental regulations and the federal carbon tax. While regulatory change is not necessarily “bad” – in fact, updating and modernizing regulations should be a priority for all governments – it can have a lasting, negative impact on businesses, if they are implemented haphazardly, or if the government does not make compliance easy. The cost of such changes disproportionately burdens small businesses that often do not have dedicated human resource departments or dedicated personnel to manage the complexities of the requirements.

According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Ontario had 429,852 small businesses in December 2018; this represents 97.7 percent of all businesses in the province.<sup>54</sup> The Ontario government has shown its commitment to broad, structural red tape reduction. The Cutting Red Tape webpage was introduced for businesses to submit red tape issues they face. Furthermore, the appointment of an Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction has demonstrated the government's commitment to tackling this issue.

The Ontario government recognizes that reducing unnecessary red tape will save businesses time and money and that such reduction is an integral part of growing Ontario's economy. The *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act*, 2019, contains several proposed amendments that will support small businesses. We applaud the government's efforts to reduce red tape thus far, however there is still much work to be done.

The Government of Ontario can ease the regulatory burden by establishing a regulatory concierge service for small businesses in Ontario. Such a concierge service would be a single-access point for information, support and expertise on regulatory compliance in Ontario. The concierge service would offer one-on-one support to small businesses so that they can successfully navigate regulatory frameworks and achieve compliance with

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<sup>54</sup> [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h\\_03114.html](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h_03114.html)

much greater ease and so they could devote their limited resources to growing their businesses and the economy.

Such a concierge service is nothing new. The federal government already runs a program called *Concierge*, which is “a single access point to funding, expertise, facilities, and global opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking to grow through innovation.” *Concierge* does not offer funding itself; it provides customized, one-on-one guidance to innovators so that they can find funding and take advantage of other government programs. *Concierge* leverages the expertise of a team of “innovation advisors” so that business owners can spend their time and energy more effectively.

Other jurisdictions have understood the benefit of one-stop support for businesses:

- Greater Sudbury’s Regional Business Centre
- Hamilton’s One-Stop for Business
- The British Columbia Business Registry
- One Stop Business Registration Portals in Wisconsin and Virginia

While certain single-window initiatives in Ontario exist, such as Service Ontario’s ONe-Key, these are ‘self-serve’ initiatives rather than concierge services, and they do not address the regulatory burden that weighs on Ontario’s small businesses.

Creating a team of industry experts to guide business owners through regulations in Ontario will make Ontario attractive for investment and allow existing businesses to spend their resources more efficiently.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. streamline government services by creating a concierge service to provide single-window, one-on-one, customized access for small businesses to guide them through regulatory compliance processes and help them achieve compliance obligations.
2. develop interconnectivity between municipal, provincial, and federal concierge services to enable knowledge-sharing and to ensure that each is able to provide the best guidance and expertise to its clients.
3. continue to work with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ontario’s business community, and with small businesses in order to reduce red tape.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023



## **T. Creating Northern Ontario Economic Hubs, Technology Clusters, and the Innovation Ecosystem**

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario's economic performance is not shared equally in all regions in the province due to differences in their economic makeup or base. External macro factors play an important role not only in Ontario's economic performance but also in each region to varying degrees. Regional growth performances during 2015 were led by the Toronto and Hamilton-Niagara regions, with the Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie and London regions close behind. At the other end of the growth spectrum were the northern regions and to a lesser extent Windsor-Sarnia and Stratford-Bruce.

### **Background**

Much of the research on the contemporary-knowledge economy starts from the assumption that economic inputs have shifted away from traditional resources and physical attributes towards new knowledge and innovations. As an economy steeped in the natural resource industries, Northern Ontario's strengths can be said to lie in incremental innovation - generating new value from its demonstrably strong markets.

The term innovation is quite hazy, and lacks universal definition. "In common use" writes Dr. Richard Hawkins, "innovation is used interchangeably with invention [and] often used synonymously with technology," which he argues is a misapplication. He writes, "[t]o this day, virtually all of the strategies, programs and measures undertaken by the Federal and Provincial governments in Canada[. . .] remain oriented to promoting industrial R&D and/or supporting the growth of start-up companies, mainly in the technology goods sectors" (Hawkins).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines innovation as "the introduction of a new or significantly improved product, process or method [that] holds the key to boosting productivity" (OECD Ministerial Report).

Building the Innovation and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem is a key element to the success of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. The Plan contains policies that focus and guide action on building a regional economy that is resilient, sustainable, building on the strengths and human potential of today's northerners by providing them with more education, training and career opportunities, attracting people and investments. The Growth Plan aims to strengthen the economy of the North by:

- Diversifying the region's traditional resource-based industries
- Stimulating new investment and entrepreneurship
- Nurturing new and emerging sectors with high growth potential.

Communities with a high level of entrepreneurial activity tend to be better off economically. As a Nation, Entrepreneurship is a powerful force driving innovation, productivity, job creation and economic growth. Entrepreneurs have made fundamental impacts throughout the history of Canada, and today more and more Canadians from all walks of life are becoming entrepreneurs. In Canada entrepreneurs and the Small and Medium size businesses they generate account for 54% of our gross domestic product, employ 74% of our workforce and create 54% of our new jobs nationally.

The creation of the Entrepreneurial and Innovation Ecosystem requires:

- A risk taking culture
- Talented, diverse and imaginative work force and students
- A community that gives back
- Abundant capital
- Collaboration with industry
- Government support

Canada's level of entrepreneurship is on a par with Australia, with about 13 per cent of the working-age population involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity, according to Peter Josty, executive director of the Centre for Innovation Studies, Alberta. Among the positive attitudes cited for Canadian culture:

- Highly supportive of individual success achieved through personal effort.
- Emphasizes self-sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative.
- Encourages creativity and innovation.

But the culture of innovation is different in Canada. "In most countries consumer services is the big sector, but in Canada, the highest rate is in the business to business services and that's a whole different ballgame," Josty said in an interview with CBC News Network's The Exchange with Amanda Lang.

Canada also lags in entrepreneurship — in which process engineers and others improve business efficiency within a larger company, he said. "The number of people in large businesses doing this is half the rate in the U.S. and Australia and we think this correlates with poor innovation and productivity in Canada," Josty said.

The peak age range for Canadian entrepreneurship is 45 to 64, but there remains a lot of activity among Canadians under age 45. More highly educated Canadians are more likely to start businesses, but there are entrepreneurs with every level of education. Creating the environment of risk taking is critical in building entrepreneurs of the future and stemming the outward migration of youth from the North.

Shifting investments into attracting youth and immigrants to the region and developing a high-skilled and technical labour force will set the region apart from competitors who dominate industries made up of low-skilled workers. This means building a strong education system with government and industry partners and less restrictive and more specialized apprenticeship programs. These strategies are broad, but necessary, given the challenges facing the region. 'Creating jobs' by pumping money into a few companies is a short-sighted goal that usually only last as long as the funding does. However creating the Ecosystem in which innovation can thrive and entrepreneurship commercialize the outcome from innovation is critical to the future of Northern economies.

As the economies of the North are somewhat isolated from centres of concentrated economic activity with limited access there is the natural existence of collaborative efforts amongst firms. Where there has been a need to build stronger collaboration is between firms conducting and or needing R&D with academic institutions, assuming they have R&D capacity. Building this capacity is critical to the development of ecosystems and economic clusters

In many communities of Northern Ontario the elements of this ecosystem exists but require a stronger emphasis in the education system and teaching of entrepreneurship. Due geographical location there is strong sense of community that sees the business leaders sharing their financial success within the community but also a willingness to share their wisdom and experience to new and existing entrepreneurs.

Access to capital is relatively sophisticated in the urban communities of the North with extensive bank, credit union and capital lease companies. There also is a strong network of resources such as the Community Futures organizations, NOHFC, Fed Nor and community based micro lending programs. Most significant in

providing innovation capital is the Northern Ontario Angels Network which has provided over \$50 million in private monies to a variety of investment opportunities realizing significant economic impact.

For Northern Ontario's businesses to be able to expand their markets beyond local boundaries, they first need to be given the opportunity to build capacity in their local market – that is, to build civic capital, which begins with access to a skilled workforce. The Private Sector Youth Internship provides this opportunity to business owners who have the potential and willingness to grow – not abandoning their local roots, but naturalizing their market in new climates, while blooming where they are planted.

In terms of the digital economy, for small and isolated communities who have little opportunity for industry within the physical locality, having access to high quality internet speeds could make or break a fledgling digital entrepreneur. The digital foot print expands into educating a skilled workforce in remote areas as well as delivering efficient modes of health care. By arming communities with opportunities that are unfettered by eternal download speeds and sprawling geography which place knowledge and opportunity out of reach, high speed broadband services can function as a springboard of opportunity for small, northern communities to expand their horizons, and markets.

At the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's annual Ontario Economic the theme of Building Prosperity by Strengthening the Innovation Ecosystem brought together leaders from the private sector, elected and non-elected members of the Provincial government, academia and chambers of commerce from across the province. While a Northern perspective was lacking the elements of the many conversations, discussion and presentations were applicable to creating a Northern Innovation Hub. Government as an enabler of the Innovation and Entrepreneurial ecosystem can enhance the Northern economy through addressing the following:

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Locate a physical office(s) in Northern Ontario for the Ontario Centre of Excellence to maximize its investment in regional innovation through University and College research based funding and capital grants to develop knowledge clusters that support inherent economic drivers.
2. Align programs and services with company evolution from start-up to maturity and ensure funding and resources are available at each step of the process.
3. Streamline the process between the federal and provincial governments to better co-ordinate and focus innovation-related programs.
4. Simplify program support and expedite the funding process to ensure that government programs and services allow innovation to occur at the speed of the market.
5. Support investments for organizations to invest in new technologies under various funding envelopes to encourage innovation in existing economic engines of the Northern clusters and value chains.
6. Incentivize the development of a skilled workforce equipped to participate in the transition towards advance manufacturing.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **U. In the Spirit of Business**

Submitted by: Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce, Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Aligning the craft distilling industry with the policy regimes of the craft brewery and winery industry will help maintain this industry as a positive growth sector for the Ontario economy.

### **Background**

Craft distilling is a growth industry. Distillers are creating jobs and boosting economies in large and small centres alike.

In the past few years, there has been some movement to parity with other craft alcohol industries. These improvements include allowing craft distillers to distribute their products to bars and restaurants and are appreciated by the industry.

But there is more to be done. In its 2019 report “Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario”, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) identifies a number of positive economic results from the industry that would only be enhanced by parity with the other sectors of beverage alcohol, including:

- The spirits industry and craft distillers in Ontario generate over \$2.4 billion in annual sales
- The spirits industry supports 6,000 jobs across the province and contributes \$1.5 billion to Ontario's Gross Provincial Product every year.
- Ontario is currently home to 39 spirit distillers. There has been an increase in the number of small and artisan distillers that specialize in niche products across Canada.
- The spirits industry works closely with local farmers and contributes to the economic growth of rural areas across Ontario.

The report also connects the beverage alcohol industry to a number of adjacent industries, including farming, tourism, and hospitality. The power of beverage alcohol to be a force for economic development – particularly rural economic development – should therefore be reflected in policymaking.

However, the most significant challenge to be addressed is around taxation. The tax is currently 61.5% at craft distillery tasting rooms, which is 10 times what Ontario wineries pay. And the time is now to consider change as the tax regime for beverage alcohol is part of the comprehensive Government of Ontario review that is underway.

The call for change is not only coming from chambers of commerce and boards of trade, but alongside the Ontario Craft Distillers Association. Modelling by the Ontario Craft Distillers Association (based on experience in Nova Scotia, BC, and Alberta) shows that any cut in taxes is more than recouped within approximately two years because of taxes associated with job growth in the industry.

Nova Scotia continues to be a leader in the spirit industry as the government reduced the government mark-up by 60-80% in 2014, with another 10% mark down if distillers use provincially-grown agricultural products. The government also cut the license fee from \$2,000 to \$500 and increased production threshold, and introduced a graduated mark-up based on annual production. This has allowed craft distillers to thrive. Furthermore, in British Columbia, since the introduction of a graduated tax system in 2013, the industry has

grown from 7 to 60 distilleries and the volume of craft spirits produced in British Columbia grew by almost 400 percent.<sup>55</sup>

In order to achieve parity across alcohol categories, where spirits can be sold and how consumers access the product also deserves consideration. As such, spirits should also be allowed at grocery, convenience, corner stores etc; dedicated shelf space/displays for craft distillers at the LCBO, so that the small players can compete next to the international brands; and permitted at farmers markets.<sup>56</sup>

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Freeze the current spirits basic tax.
2. Offer further pricing incentives to craft distilleries for spirits made primarily with Ontario ingredients, graduated by production method and volume.
3. Improve access for craft distillers and consumers by:
  - a. Allowing spirit sales at grocery, convenience, and corner stores, etc.
  - b. Having dedicated shelf space/displays for craft distillers at the LCBO, so that the smaller players can compete next to the international brands
  - c. Permitting the sale of spirits at farmers markets

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>55</sup> “Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario,” Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2019, pg 15.

<sup>56</sup> “Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario,” Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2019, pg 5.

## **V. Support Ontario's Forestry Industry by Establishing an Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program**

Submitted by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

As a direct result of United States duties on softwood lumber, the Ontario forest sector has more than \$245 million in deposits currently being held at the border. In the face of these baseless trade actions, our forest industries are unable to reinvest in their employees and operations, putting mills and communities at significant risk. To ensure we keep mills open and people working, we encourage the Province to establish a Made-in-Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program to ensure our Forest sector continues to grow and thrive.

### **Background**

The Canada / United States (U.S.) softwood lumber dispute is the longest running trade dispute between our two countries. We are currently in the fifth individual trade action spanning four decades.<sup>57</sup> The U.S. alleges that Canadian timber is sold at below-market prices, and this assertion is used as the basis to impose punishing duties on the Canadian industry.<sup>58</sup> However, these duties are arbitrary and punitive, and have never survived Canadian appeals under the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization.

In 2017, the U.S. imposed new import duties as high as 24 percent on Canadian lumber as part of its most recent trade action.<sup>59</sup> As time goes on, the cash tied up in duty deposits becomes an increasing threat to the viability of lumber producers in Ontario and across the country.

The Ontario forest sector accounts for 21 percent of the nation's forest industry employment, employing 172,000 people, and spurs \$15.5 billion in economic activity,<sup>60</sup> yet as one of the largest sectors contributing to our provincial economy, they are continually face insurmountable barriers with respect to U.S. border tariffs.

Supporting Ontario's renewable industry in a tangible way by providing the lumber sector with commercial loan guarantees, will help preserve the industry's credit and enable it to borrow against cash deposits so that litigation and costly duties cannot hinder the industry as in previous years.

The Federal Government has established a mechanism to help companies seeking to diversify their product line, make efforts to develop new markets overseas, help Indigenous communities and groups improve their performance and participation in forestry, and extend work-sharing agreements in order to minimize layoffs.<sup>61</sup> These programs may be helpful in provinces where lumber market diversification is an option, but for Ontario,

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<sup>57</sup> Rahman, Osman, and Stephen Devadoss. "Economics of the US-Canada Softwood Lumber Dispute: A Historical Perspective." *The Estey Centre Journal of International Law and Trade Policy*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2002, pp. 29–45.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Baker, Peter, and Ian Austen. "In New Trade Front, Trump Slaps Tariff on Canadian Lumber." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 25 Apr. 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/us/politics/lumber-tariff-canada-trump.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/us/politics/lumber-tariff-canada-trump.html).

<sup>60</sup> "Canada's Forest Industry: By the Numbers (35 Facts)." Canada Action, [canadaaction.ca/forest-sector-by-the-numbers-economic-contribution](http://canadaaction.ca/forest-sector-by-the-numbers-economic-contribution).

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/plansperformancereports/dpr/2018-19-DP-NRCAN-EN.pdf>

whose natural market is the United States, the Federal programs are not realistic. Ontario's lumber producers need to have adequate liquidity to survive the U.S. lumber trade action, and to do that it requires support to maintain access to cash until the legal process is concluded.

Without the establishment of a Provincial loan guarantee program, many of our provinces' sawmills will not be able to finance deposits at acceptable rates without the support of the Provincial government. While such intervention may be claimed by the United States as a countervailable subsidy, such a finding could not have any impact for at least two years and, even then, would not calculate to anything detrimental to the government or the industry.

Keeping Ontario open for business means establishing a Provincial commercial loan guarantee program. As a natural resource-rich province, the government must do all it can to realise the success of our industries who are responsible in maintaining our forests for generations to come.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Establish an Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program that supports the Ontario forest sector with working capital by:
  - a. offering loan guarantees to assist the industry in maintaining credit and borrow against cash deposits.
  - b. providing access to any Ontario lumber producer that has paid an anti-dumping tariff and countervailing tariff.
  - c. allowing the forest industry access to 75 percent of the paid anti-dumping and countervailing tariff through loans at a commercial rate comparable to current bank rates.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## W. Support Ontario's Growing Cannabis Industry

Submitted by: the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the Guelph Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

Ontario's legal cannabis market has not reached its full potential for growth. Existing regulation inhibits market growth and efficiency in a number of ways. The Government of Ontario needs to focus public policy and investment efforts towards supporting this emerging industry by ensuring post-secondary training focuses on key skills required by the cannabis industry, by investing in post-secondary cannabis research, by considering edibles consumption lounges, and by permitting cannabis retailers and licensed producers to establish a commercial relationship with one another.

### Background

Ontario's legal cannabis market is not meeting its full potential. Currently, Ontario has 24 cannabis retail stores serving a population of 14 million people. An additional 50 stores are expected to be operational by spring 2020. The Province of Alberta, in comparison, has opened over 300 cannabis retail stores, serving a population of 4 million people.<sup>62</sup> Provincial government estimates suggest Ontario's cannabis market could support up to 1,000 retail stores and create approximately 14,000 jobs in the retail sector alone.<sup>63</sup> Ontario had the highest cannabis sales of all other provinces in the first year of legalization, with a total of \$216 million in sales.<sup>64</sup> This suggests the legal cannabis market is drastically underserved, allowing the illicit market to continue flourishing.

Ontario is home to about half of all Licensed Producers across Canada, employing approximately 6,000 Ontarians.<sup>65</sup> To support this emerging industry, the Government of Ontario needs to focus public policy and investment efforts effectively in the key areas detailed below.

Now that THC-infused edibles and beverages have entered the legal market, cannabis consumption lounges for edibles (excluding smoking or vaping cannabis) in Ontario would create opportunities for investors, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses and, in turn, create jobs. The emergence of consumption lounges would provide adults with a safe, secure, and sanitary space to consume cannabis products. Consumption lounges also present an opportunity to act as a front-line resource for public education, thereby complementing the Province's efforts to educate consumers on responsible consumption, especially for new products they may be unfamiliar with.

Ontario is home to 44 leading postsecondary institutions. Post-secondary institutions will need to continue to work with the cannabis industry to ensure courses and programs meet industry needs and an evolving regulatory environment. As an example, Niagara College launched an eight-month Commercial Cannabis Production program that focuses on large-scale crop cultivation, the federal regulatory environment around cannabis production, and business fundamentals, in addition to an experiential learning component

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<sup>62</sup> Cain, Patrick. *As Ontario moves to open up cannabis retail, here's what we'll see next*. December 2019. Global News <https://globalnews.ca/news/6289867/ontario-cannabis-store-announcement-whats-next/>

<sup>63</sup> George-Cosh, David. *Ontario expects up to 1,000 pot stores, opens door to shopping malls*. November 2018. BNN Bloomberg <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/ontario-expects-up-to-1-000-pot-stores-opens-door-to-shopping-malls-1.1169064>

<sup>64</sup> Statistics Canada. "The Retail Cannabis Market in Canada." December 11, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2019005-eng.htm>

<sup>65</sup> Statistics Canada. "Labour Force Survey." November, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181207/t005a-eng.htm>



developed with over a dozen LPs.<sup>66</sup> With access to a strong talent pool, the cannabis industry can flourish in our province.

In terms of infrastructure, Niagara College established the Canadian Cannabis Research and Education Institute, which focuses on applied research and training in cannabis production and food and beverage innovation in partnership with industry. The University of Guelph is also investing in the development of the Guelph Centre for Cannabis Research (GCCR). The GCCR will be a home for cannabis research in Canada and provide opportunities for governments and academic researchers, in partnership with industry and associations, to perform collaborative and multidisciplinary research at a centralized facility. The centre aims to engage in a range of projects, including horticulture research to optimize production, yield, and quality. They are further developing cannabis strains targeting certain human and animal disorders, as well as processing and extracting essential oils to maintain medicinal properties. The GCCR's mandate includes training and enhancing the technical capacity of the cannabis industry.<sup>67</sup> To date, the University of Guelph has secured half of the funds needed to complete this 30,000 square-foot research venue. A lack of infrastructure funding hinders the ability of post-secondary institutions to build a talent pool for Ontario's cannabis industry.

The Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) is currently the exclusive wholesaler and online retailer of legal recreational cannabis in the province of Ontario. The OSC is responsible for purchasing cannabis from licensed producers (LPs), setting the prices and markups, and distributing the product to retailers. This structure puts Ontario at a competitive disadvantage in cannabis, as conversations between retailers and LPs can take up to several months with this model.<sup>68</sup>(1)

Permitting cannabis retailers and licensed producers to establish a commercial relationship with one another would allow LPs and retailers to negotiate their product mixes, along with the associated prices, terms and conditions. As an example, an LP would have the ability to make a deal with an independent retailer to establish a new product line and brand at an exclusive price to that boutique retailer. In turn, the retailer could support the LP by entering into significant, long-term, supply arrangements which would help the LP grow its business.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Consider the licensing of private consumption lounges for Ontarians to consume THC-infused edibles and beverage products.
2. Act as a convener by engaging the cannabis industry and postsecondary institutions, identifying the skills needed for current and future positions in the cannabis industry and developing a strategy highlighting the variety of education and employment opportunities related to the legal cannabis sector.

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<sup>66</sup> Commercial Cannabis Production. 2020. Niagara College.  
<https://www.niagaracollege.ca/environment/program/cannabis-production/>

<sup>67</sup> Armstrong, Kenneth. "First Nations cannabis company helping finance new U of G Cannabis Research Centre." December 3, 2018. GuelphToday.com. <https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/cannabis-research-centre-atu-of-g-expected-to-begin-construction-in-spring-1146589>.

<sup>68</sup> Rossi, R. and Beatty, P. *What's next for Ontario's cannabis industry?* December 2019. Toronto Sun.  
<https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-whats-next-for-ontarios-cannabis-industry>

3. Develop a funding pool that allows post-secondary institutions to apply for capital needed to build new infrastructure, such as those underway at the University of Guelph and Niagara College, to attract research dollars, industry, and students and, in so doing, support the growth of Ontario's cannabis talent pool.
4. Permit cannabis retailers and licensed producers to establish a commercial relationship with one another by working collaboratively to create exclusive and unique products and wholesale pricing, within the broader framework of the OCS maintaining its oversight role as regulator.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **X. Make the Ring of Fire a Provincial Priority**

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

The Ring of Fire is a transformative project for Canada. Provincial action is required to expedite the development of the Ring of Fire and ensure the economic and social potential of this multi-generational project is realized.

### **Background**

The Ring of Fire is a mineral resource rich area of approximately 5,120 km<sup>2</sup> located in the James Bay Lowlands region of Northern Ontario. Since the early 2000s, significant deposits of copper, zinc, nickel, platinum, palladium, vanadium, and gold along with the first and largest deposit of chromite in North America have been discovered. Based on current projections, the Ring of Fire is estimated to hold more than \$60 billion in geological riches<sup>69</sup> with deposits being significant enough to sustain activity for a century.<sup>70</sup>

The Ring of Fire is not only a Northern Ontario, but it should be a priority for all of Ontario as it will have far-reaching impacts across the nation. In the first ten years of the Ring of Fire development, all levels of government stand to increase their tax revenues by nearly \$2 billion, with the provincial government projected to accrue between \$700 to \$760 million.<sup>71</sup> In the long term, the provincial government is expected to receive \$2.34 to \$2.63 billion in taxes from the Ring of Fire.<sup>72</sup> Long-term benefits to Ontario's GDP (32 years) have been forecasted to range between \$16.8 and \$27 billion.<sup>73</sup> The Ring of Fire is also estimated to sustain over 5,500 full-time equivalent jobs annually within its first ten years, along with significant GDP increases and economic activity in multiple sectors.<sup>74</sup> Benefits will not only impact the mining and mining supply sectors but will also generate economic opportunities within the manufacturing, construction, utilities, wholesale/retail, trade, and financial services sectors among others.

The Ring of Fire's polymetallic deposits are of global significance and have the potential to enable the diversification of Canadian exports – a shared goal of both the provincial and federal governments, and the business community. The Ring of Fire holds billions of dollars' worth of high-quality chromite, an essential metal in stainless steel production, demand for which is expected to increase in the years to come.<sup>75</sup> China, the largest importer of chromite, accounting for 60 percent of global demand, has already demonstrated significant interest in the Ring of Fire.<sup>76</sup> The provincial government should promote the Ring of Fire's polymetallic deposits internationally as a significant investment and trade opportunity.

Further, the Ring of Fire has the potential to result in significant innovation gains in Ontario. Private sector actors for example are already developing innovative energy saving methods such as refining ferrochrome

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.oma.on.ca/en/news/index.aspx?newsId=02d35d94-38c9-4daa-953e-996cf3469ec0>

<sup>70</sup> "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 1.

<sup>71</sup> "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 11.

<sup>74</sup> "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 12-14.

<sup>75</sup> <http://kwgresources.com/ring-of-fire-railroad-chromite-supply-and-demand-roskill/>

<sup>76</sup> <http://kwgresources.com/global/>

using green and low-cost natural gas rather than electricity. The provincial government should work with Indigenous groups and private sector actors to spur environmental innovation and explore technologies that can reduce energy costs and help make exploration in the Ring of Fire more efficient. Recent announcements by the province on further exploring the potential of small modular reactors is a step in the right direction, and such technology can be tested and applied in projects such as the Ring of Fire.<sup>77</sup>

The Ring of Fire has endless economic opportunities but will only be successful if community needs are addressed. In August, 2019, the province decided to end the regional framework agreement with nearby Indigenous communities, and proceed instead with a series of bilateral agreements.<sup>78</sup> In Budget 2019, the federal government committed significant funding toward skills training and building Indigenous capacity, both critical investments needed for the Ring of Fire to succeed; the provincial government should match such initiatives. These communities will require access to continuous skills and educational programs to build capacity in management, finance and regional/community-based infrastructure planning in order to participate in decision-making and resource development and to prepare community members for potential job opportunities.

Now is the time for the provincial government to scale-up efforts and work jointly with the Government of Canada, Indigenous communities, and industry to capitalize on the window of opportunity and advance this project forward. Following conversations with industry stakeholders and federal government representatives, the chamber has learned that the Government of Canada is willing to partner with the province on developing the Ring of Fire, but it requires the province to prepare a funding proposal for the project. The Premier has advocated in recent months for the necessity of cross-government collaboration following a contentious election, and such a funding proposal could be an example of such a partnership.

The Ring of Fire has been referred to as a “game changer,” and “the most promising mining opportunity Canada has seen in a century.” The Ring of Fire also offers a unique opportunity to be a template for the development of natural resources in remote and isolated locations alongside Indigenous communities. This type of framework can serve to help inform resource development across the country.

The Ring of Fire should be treated as a national priority and communicated to all federal government departments as such.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Recognize and promote the development of the Ring of Fire as a project of provincial and national economic and social significance across all sectors;
2. Partner with the federal government to immediately begin negotiations on a cost-sharing agreement to fund infrastructure needs in and around the Ring of Fire;
3. Begin to work without delay with the federal government, industry and community partners to build capacity and community readiness of Indigenous communities so that they may take full advantage of resource development in the Ring of Fire;
4. Actively promote the Ring of Fire, along with other mining projects, in the global arena as a trade and investment opportunity; and

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<sup>77</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2019/12/premier-ford-premier-higgs-and-premier-moe-sign-agreement-on-the-development-of-small-modular-reacto.html>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/regional-framework-ends-1.5261377>

5. Partner with the federal government, the private sector, and Indigenous communities to explore innovative technologies and R & D opportunities to reduce energy costs and create efficiencies in the Ring of Fire.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **Y. Establish a Business Energy Audit Program**

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

### **Issue**

When the Ontario Government ended the Cap & Trade system, it cancelled a number of energy conservation programs that were funded through this tax. The business Energy Audit program was one of those casualties. However, the program was very successful and encouraged businesses to perform an energy audit and use the findings to implement energy conservation programs.

### **Background**

The Ontario Government has stated that it intends to help Canada meet the Paris 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets through programs that will help residents and businesses reduce their GHG emissions.

In order to develop a successful plan for GHG emission reduction, a business needs an energy audit performed by a qualified contractor in order to use the findings to implement an energy conservation plan.

In the past, the Government has funded up to 50% of the cost of an energy audit as an incentive to get businesses to retain a consultant and complete the audit.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Establish an Energy Audit program for businesses and fund up to 50% of the cost of the audit to a business through a grant.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **FISCAL/TAXATION**

### **A. Ontario's Debt Reduction Strategy**

Authored by the London Chamber of Commerce

#### **Issue**

Ontario's net debt, the difference between total liabilities and total financial assets, was \$301.6 billion in 2016-2017 – the highest of any non-sovereign jurisdiction in the world. While the Ontario Government's formula for forecasting a balanced budget is being challenged by the Provincial Auditor General, the Ontario Government is nevertheless projecting a balanced budget in 2017-2018 and the forecast is to remain balanced through 2020. However, Ontario's net cumulative debt has now exceeded the \$300 billion mark. This should be a wake-up call, as that is more than double the \$153.7 billion net debt of less than a decade ago.

One of the strategies associated with prudent fiscal management is the need to be prepared for a downturn in the economy. In order for the Ontario Government to be prepared for the next economic downturn, it will have to produce surpluses and reduce the debt significantly over the next three years. Economic cycles typically do not last far beyond 10 years, so we need to focus our preparations now to weather the next storm.

Furthermore, Ontario has the highest debt in Canada and the second highest debt per capita. The negative consequences of this unsustainable yet seemingly insatiable and chronic appetite for debt includes the huge servicing costs of that debt which divert funds away from critical government services and leaves Ontario vulnerable to interest rate increases as well the very real threat of credit-rating downgrades that lead to higher borrowing costs in future. Looking forward, apart from jeopardizing the sustainability of our public services, Ontario's debt crisis will be a drag on our domestic business confidence as well as having a chilling effect on foreign direct investment.

This massive debt also creates an intergenerational shift of the tax burden. Without a more robust plan to eliminate the ever increasing level of debt, we will be leaving that debt for future generations.

#### **Background**

In response to the economic downturn that took place in 2008, the Ontario government had relaxed its fiscal policy by running significant deficits year over year. Fiscal policy involving borrowing in recessionary/post recessionary times to boost the economy is a commonly used approach; however this approach must be balanced with a plan to repay the borrowed amounts during the ensuing years of post recessionary growth in order to be sustainable.

Provinces (or countries) with high debt-GDP ratios find themselves having to allocate a larger share of their budgets to debt service, while having little room to borrow for future downturns in the economy and leaving no fiscal capacity at all to withstand a future recession. The forecasted debt-to-GDP ratio will be at 37.8% for 2016/17 up considerably from just 26% in 2008.

For its part, the Ontario Chamber remains concerned about the way that the Federal Government allocates \$72.8 billion worth of transfers to other levels of government in Canada and sees it as a major disadvantage for Ontario. Since we see little relief coming from the Federal Government, the burden of responsibility must then lie squarely on the shoulders of the Ontario Government to get its debt levels under control.

To reduce the debt, the Ontario Government must either increase revenues, decrease spending, or the most likely scenario – it will consider a combination of both.

In its efforts to find an additional \$10 billion plus dollars per year however, the Ontario Government must ensure that it is not utilizing harmful strategies which may in effect damage the economic growth in Ontario. In other words, the Government must not use strategies which will impede Ontario's business community from the anticipated slow and steady economic growth or severely damage vital sectors of our economy.

During the fall of 2014, Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board, The Hon. Deb Matthews announced four pillars by which the Ontario Government would address the deficit problem.

These included:

- a) Tackling the underground economy
- b) Maximizing assets
- c) Evaluating public service compensation
- d) Program review and transformation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce believes that these four pillars remain an excellent building blocks for the Ontario Government to begin identifying sources to find the \$10 billion per year required to eliminate the increased debt accumulated in the last 10 years. This can only succeed if the Province adopts more ambitious targets coupled with transformational changes in the way government does business.

With a projected slower growth future for the province, combined with the growing demands of a rapidly aging population, the need to deal with our debt now becomes all the more critical.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. **Expand Alternative Service Delivery (ASD)** in the health sector and replicate elsewhere where service quality can be improved and costs lowered. By opening up service delivery to the private and not-for-profit sectors, ASD models take advantage of market incentives to enhance productivity, achieve greater efficiencies, and harness new technology.
  - a. Beyond its fiscal benefits, ASD accomplishes many other public policy objectives: ASD enables government to leverage private sector investment to modernize the delivery of public services. • ASD enables government to access new and innovative business models. • ASD facilitates the commercialization of government intellectual property and business processes.
  - b. Utilizing ASD in specific services, such as the back-office reconciliation of Ontario Health Insurance Plan transactions and frontline services like Service Ontario, can help the government save money while preserving (or even enhancing) its capacity to deliver valuable services.
2. **Adopt a formal policy on asset recycling.** In Ontario, asset recycling could be one method of reducing the province's large infrastructure deficit, in the context of a reduced fiscal capacity. The Premier's Council on Government Assets is a good start, but the government must adopt a broader policy that applies to more government assets and regularizes the review process. In spite of the many non-action recommendations of the Premier's Council on Government Assets, the Government must move aggressively on this recommendation if the "*Maximizing Assets*" pillar of the Treasury Board is to have any meaning or impact.
3. **Tackle the underground economy to increase revenues by establishing tougher penalties for noncompliance** and a stronger focus on high-risk industries. The 2012 Drummond Commission estimated that strengthened compliance measures could yield over \$500 million per year for the province. Without addressing this problem more aggressively, fewer and fewer Ontario businesses will be paying the bulk of Ontario's taxes while those that don't continue to grow.



**4. Apply more rigor to regularly mandated program reviews across all ministries and departments** that re-examine the programs, services, and operations of government ensuring that these are aligned with citizens' expectations of government. Furthermore these reviews should begin with the mandatory questions: Should government be engaged in this activity? Is this policy accomplishing what we want? How do we know? Are there other programs across government that are duplicative? The Ministry of Finance should consider a cash pooling arrangement within and between all departments and ministries whereby any annual budget surpluses (or unspent money) could be allocated by the Finance Minister to either pay down debt or re-allocated to other departmental/ministerial projects instead of borrowing to finance them. Departments/ministries would then be able to re-apply for that money in the next following budget year.

These reviews should also determine how programs and services align with government priorities, help reduce spending, and where appropriate achieve savings by identifying redundancies and inefficiencies. In this way, program reviews can make government more effective and responsive. They can also be used to “rejuvenate the public service by eliminating unsuccessful programs and strengthening effective ones. By answering the questions posed above, governments can redirect public resources away from non-essential programs and services, and toward core ones

**5. Establish Outcomes-based Incentives and Accountability in the Public Service Sector.** Closely linking incentives and accountability for public servants to specific outcomes can increase the efficiency of government, improve program and service quality, and help the government do more with less. If the government is to move toward fiscal sustainability, it will need to take steps to enhance its return on investment and ensure that desired outcomes are being achieved at the desired cost. a. Public sector compensation is the most accessible tool to achieve this outcome. For example, instead of cancelling pay-for-performance incentives, government should reinvigorate them for all levels of the public service and tie them to specific and measurable financial outcomes.

**6. Adopt user-pay models for government services.** This means that part or all of service operating costs are met by the end user. In other words, the government puts a price on a program or service. Depending on the price, user-pay can be used to partially or fully cover the cost to government of providing the service.

a. In Ontario, adopting user-pay models for specific government services could be a method of maintaining current service levels and quality in the context of a reduced fiscal capacity and increased demand for services. Currently, many government services in Ontario are funded entirely out of general revenue. This means that all citizens pay for these services, regardless of whether or not they use them. By appropriately applying user-pay to some of these services, government could continue to provide them, while reducing the amount of money it contributes.

b. User fees also help regulate and mitigate unnecessary or fraudulent demand and encourage more efficient use of public services.

*c. Example: Transport for London UK (TfL), London's public transit agency, introduced a congestion charge in central London. The congestion charge acts as a user fee for roads in downtown London: during working hours, motorists are charged a tariff for bringing their vehicle into a designated area of the city. As a user pay scheme, the congestion charge has successfully acted to regulate the demand for road infrastructure and raise revenues.*

**7. Adopt a Means Testing provision for specific services.** Means testing means that recipients with greater means may be asked to make a greater contribution to the cost of that service. Many services and benefits in Ontario are currently available to all Ontarians at the same upfront cost (often at no charge), despite significant variation in people's financial means.

a. Adding a means-testing provision to the price of a service takes into account an individual's 'ability to pay'. From a fiscal perspective, *means testing* can be a method by which government secures additional funds by

reducing access for those with higher incomes. Individuals with greater means will pay more for a means-tested benefit or service.

b. By varying the cost of or access to a service based on means, it can also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government spending. Means testing reduces spurious demand, thereby increasing access to those that require the service.

*c. Example: Australia integrated means-testing into residential aged care as part of a reform package. The government reduces the amount it contributes toward the care and accommodation of individuals with greater financial means. This is one strategy that Australia is taking to increase the sustainability of aged care, in the context of an aging population similar to that of Ontario.*

8. **Investigate cost saving alternatives** for the location of provincial back office functions to save on real estate, wages, and cost of living.

9. **Review the option to enhance the marketing and sale of Ontario Saving Bonds** where the return on investment would improve the provincial debt management position including the investment of surplus cash in the bond program rather than in external financial markets.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **B. Unrealized “Heads and Beds Levy” hurts Ontario’s Economic Competitiveness**

Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce and Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

There has been an unacceptable period of inaction to raise the annual payment in lieu of taxes or “heads and beds levy” (*Section 323 of the Municipal Act 2001*) on specified public institutions (i.e. provincial correctional facilities, hospitals, and universities). As a result municipalities are forced to compensate in other ways, including hiking property taxes.

### **Background:**

The payment in lieu of taxes made by the Province of Ontario on behalf of post secondary education institutions and hospitals was \$50 per student or hospital bed in 1973. This rate changed to \$75 in 1987 and has not changed since.

This rate of \$75 per student/bed does not reflect the change in cost of delivering services to Ontario municipalities. The result is undo pressure on all tax classes, particularly the commercial and industrial classes which are taxed at a ratio that averages about 1.5 times the residential rate.

Payments in lieu of taxes tend to be a controversial issue, but with all of the pressures on municipalities, including the arbitration system, this levy is an unrealized resource. Municipalities are also mindful of the fact that Bill 148 will affect city operating budgets. Cities are setting aside money to cover most of the costs linked with the coming increase in the minimum wage in Ontario. Additionally changes to the Employee Standards and Labour Relations Acts include entitlements for personal emergency leave for part-time workers and statutory holiday compensation. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) asked in 2012 to increase the heads and beds payments to \$140 per student/bed to reflect inflation. However, given the current provincial financial pressures we are suggesting an increase of the levy to \$100 per student/bed then attach it to the Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Using the \$100 to reflect inflation:

In Kingston, it has been estimated that an increase in the heads and beds levy to adjust for inflation would provide approximately \$1 million to the City’s annual budget.

In Peterborough, based on current expectations, an increase in the heads and beds levy would result in approximately \$1.1 million to the annual budget. That is approximately \$274,000 in extra funding per year.

The economic impact of such funds in municipalities would be immediate.

Post-secondary institutions across the province are working on the premise that full-time enrollment numbers will continue to increase. A number of reports on the health care system predict the number of acute beds will remain stagnant, but that does not mean the amount of the payment in lieu of taxes should. As a result of the levy remaining at 1987 levels, Ontario municipalities with post-secondary institutions are facing significant competitive disadvantages and ultimately, this will have an impact on Ontario’s economic recovery.

In its 2017 pre-budget submission to the Provincial Government, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce identified the heads and beds levy as a way to improve the conditions for municipalities to thrive. The Province has seen fit to attach Minimum Wage to an economic factor such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) based on an argument from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Network. We feel this mechanism would be effective for the “Heads and Beds Levy” as well.

**Recommendation:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government:

- To reflect inflation since the last levy increase in 1987, increase the “Heads and Beds Levy” to \$100 per student/bed and then tie future yearly increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## C. Using the Private and Not-for-Profit Sectors to Deliver Public Services

Authored by the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade

### Issue

Ontario is facing challenges that will weigh heavily on its fiscal capacity. The economy is projected to grow sluggishly for the next 20 years. With the province's debt-to-GDP ratio improving, and the first balanced budget in a decade, the government is projecting that balance will continue through to 2020, although that outcome is uncertain in the current domestic and global economic environment. The province's debt is projected to be \$312 billion in 2017-2018, and is projected to grow to \$336 billion in 2019-2020<sup>79</sup>. And Ontario's population is aging, placing increased pressure on public finances and the next generation of tax payers.

In order to preserve government's fiscal capacity and to continue to deliver the services upon which Ontarians rely, Ontario must find ways to deliver services more efficiently.

### Background

Governments around the world are increasingly adopting public-private service delivery partnerships (alternative service delivery or ASD). Norway, for example, allows private firms to operate publicly funded hospitals. The bulk of Denmark's emergency services are provided by a private, for-profit company. Much of Australia's public auditing is provided by private sector providers. The state of Maine has hired a private service provider to improve the state's child immunization rate.

Ontario was once a leader in service delivery innovation. In the past, governments of all political stripes partnered with the private, not-for-profit, and broader public sectors as a means of meeting fiscal challenges while maintaining overall service levels. For example, all three political parties signed onto or renewed the government partnership with Teranet, a private company, to operate Ontario's Electronic Land and Registration System (ELRS). Under the terms of the contract with Teranet, the government received an initial payment of \$1 billion and a 50 year stream of royalty payments in exchange for exclusive electronic land registration and writ services.<sup>80</sup>

Since deals like Teranet, however, the pace of innovation has slowed. Some within government are reluctant to use ASD models because of the misconception that ASD is ideologically motivated and is nothing more than an effort to reduce the public sector's overall wage bill. However, these are neither the objectives nor the consequences of the vast majority of ASD arrangements. ASD is a means by which governments can leverage the capital, technology, specialized skills, and expertise of its partners in order to meet specific public policy objectives, address complex social problems, and achieve better outcomes for their populations. ASD also enables government to leverage private sector investment to modernize the delivery of public services, to access new and innovative business models and to commercialize government intellectual property and processes.

There has been significant involvement in public-private partnerships (PPPs) in Ontario in recent years, with both successful and unsuccessful outcomes. Successes have included diverse Infrastructure Optimization projects completed under Alternative Financing and Procurement (AFP) partnerships with the private sector. They include the Union Pearson Express Line<sup>81</sup>, and redevelopment of provincial highway service Centres

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<sup>79</sup> Jones, Allison. "Ontario balances budget, but debt rises to \$312 billion." *CTV News*, The Canadian Press, 27 Apr. 2017, <http://bit.ly/2nzb8pt>.

<sup>80</sup> Hjartarson, McGuinty, and Schwenger. *Unlocking the Public Service Economy in Ontario: A New Approach to Public-Private Partnership in Services*. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), 2014.

<sup>81</sup> Infrastructure Ontario, *Union Pearson Express Line*, [www.infrastructureontario.ca/union-pearson-express-line/](http://www.infrastructureontario.ca/union-pearson-express-line/).

along Highways 400 and 401<sup>82</sup>. In 2016, 49 out of 51 completed AFP projects exceeded industry standards, with 93% also delivered on time or early<sup>83</sup>. Failures have also occurred however, including the IBM contract for the Phoenix payroll system, servicing federal government employees and run by Public Services and Procurement Canada. The goal was to lower labour requirements and reduce costs using a centralized system across 34 government departments; the issues upon launch in 2016 included payment errors affecting approximately 120,000 employees<sup>84</sup>, and numerous privacy breaches<sup>85</sup>. Another failed PPP example involves the bankruptcy of Carillion Canada, the country's largest facilities management and construction service.<sup>86</sup>

Many opportunities for ASD exist within Ontario's broader public sector, including the provision of IT services and back office functions, the operation of government service interfaces like Service Ontario, and a variety of logistical services in areas like health, education, and corrections. Moving forward, caution must be exercised in selecting PPP partners to ensure that service delivery and public safety is not compromised by outsourcing to a third party controlled provider.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Build capacity within government so that it can begin to benchmark the current costs of public service delivery, and adopt new approaches to procurement, contract management, and labour relations.
2. Conduct a government-wide audit as a means of identifying service areas where the public could benefit from the introduction of an alternative service delivery model. Government should make the results of the audit public.
3. Supplement the neutral third party audit conducted by the Auditor General with one of additional breadth and scope focused on recent Canadian PPP initiatives. This will provide a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the risks and rewards associated with this model.
4. Build an 'early wins' strategy by moving ahead with service delivery reform in areas where barriers to transformation are fewer. Any alternative delivery method should demonstrate best practices in service delivery, more effectively meet the needs of end users, and ensure that public safety is not compromised.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>82</sup> Infrastructure Ontario, *Ontario Highway Service Centres*, [www.infrastructureontario.ca/ontario-highway-service-centres](http://www.infrastructureontario.ca/ontario-highway-service-centres).

<sup>83</sup> Infrastructure Ontario, *Alternative Financing and Procurement Track Record 2016*, [www.infrastructureontario.ca/workarea/downloadasset.aspx?id=36507222128](http://www.infrastructureontario.ca/workarea/downloadasset.aspx?id=36507222128).

<sup>84</sup> Government of Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, Public Service Pay Centre. "Privacy and the Phoenix pay system." *Government of Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, Public Service Pay Centre*, 19 Oct. 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ntcva1>.

<sup>85</sup> Government of Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, Public Service Pay Centre. "Privacy and the Phoenix pay system." *Government of Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, Public Service Pay Centre*, 19 Oct. 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ntcva1>.

<sup>86</sup> Gatehouse, Jonathon. "Canada could feel effects from highways to hospitals as Carillion goes bust." *CBC News, CBC/Radio Canada*, 15 Jan. 2018, <http://bit.ly/2rVazMc>.

## **D. Maintain Ontario Mining Tax rates**

Submitted by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Co-sponsored by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

In the lead-up to the 2018 provincial election, the Ontario government continues to face pressure to review the provincial mining tax system in order to increase tax rates for operating mines. This would threaten the viability of Ontario's mining sector and discourage further investment in resource development.

### **Background:**

The Ontario mining industry is a significant contributor to the provincial economy, producing approximately \$10.6 billion in non-fuel minerals, accounting for more than a quarter of Canada's total value of mineral production. Roughly \$371 million is also spent on exploration projects in Ontario every year, ranging from prospecting to advanced exploration. Moreover, mining is the largest private-sector employer of Aboriginal Canadians, who account for 11% of all mining jobs in Ontario.<sup>87</sup>

Despite these contributions, the Ontario government has continued to see pressure to increase the mining sector's tax burden as a means of addressing the provincial debt. This would mean revisiting Ontario's Mining Tax Act, which dictates a 5% tax rate on profits from remote mines, and a 10% tax rate on profits from non-remote mines.<sup>88</sup> The province's sole diamond mine – the De Beers Victor Mine, set to close in 2019 – is subject to a separate 13% rate through the Ontario Diamonds Royalty, which is contained within the Ontario Mining Act.

Although the Ontario government has opted to maintain rates in recent years, it continues to be pressured by various entities, both internal and external, to change the status quo. A December 2015 report by Ontario's auditor general criticized the province's Ministry of Northern Development and Mines for its lack of effective encouragement of timely mining development in Ontario<sup>89</sup>, inferring the need for higher rates. This has fueled discussion from special interest groups such as MiningWatch Canada that the government needs to raise tax rates for Ontario's remote, non-remote and diamond mines.

With much rhetoric about "business paying its fair share" dominating discussions in the lead-up to the 2018 provincial election, it is imperative that Ontario's existing conditions remain unchanged, as outlined in Ontario's Mining Act. A heavier tax burden would only threaten the vitality of Ontario's mining sector -- which routinely identifies rising costs as a major challenge -- and exacerbate the industry's existing regional challenges.

This kind of regulatory uncertainty, combined with soaring energy rates, has already damaged Ontario's competitiveness: Ontario has slipped out of the top 15 mining jurisdictions in the world within the Fraser Institute's Annual Survey of Mining Companies, slipping to 18<sup>th</sup> in 2016.<sup>90</sup>

### **Recommendation:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

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<sup>87</sup> Mining Association of Canada, "Facts and Figures of the Canadian Mining Industry 2016", <http://mining.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Facts-and-Figures-2016.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> Ontario Ministry of Finance, "Ontario Mining Tax", <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/tax/mining/index.html>

<sup>89</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2015 Annual Report, <http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arbyyear/ar2015.html>

<sup>90</sup> Fraser Institute, "Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies, 2016", Feb. 28 2017

1. Maintain the current mining tax rates for remote, non-remote, and diamond mining operations.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



## **E. Addressing US Tax Cuts and Maintaining Ontario Business Competitiveness**

Authored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and Co-Sponsored by the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Governments across Canada are under increasing pressure for a response to President Trump's recently passed agenda of corporate tax cuts.

### **Background**

The United States Senate and House of Representatives passed the final version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on December 20, 2017. The plan cuts the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent in 2018 and makes their combined federal-state rate lower than Canada. University of Calgary economist Jack Mintz has calculated that the overall tax rate on new investment in the U.S. will drop from 34.6 to 18.6 percent, lower than the current Canadian rate of 21.6 percent.

A December 20, 2017 opinion column in The Vancouver Sun<sup>91</sup> by Fraser Institute staff Charles Lamman and High MacIntyre noted that “neither the federal government, nor any of the provinces, has presented a plan to maintain Canada’s competitive position on business taxes. To the contrary, some provinces in the past two years have actually raised their corporate tax rates, making us less competitive compared with the U.S.”

Furthermore, current federal and provincial finances particularly in Alberta and Ontario make short-term tax relief highly challenging without running larger deficits.

In an April 26, 2017<sup>92</sup> Globe and Mail article, Canadian Business Council president and chief executive officer John Manley indicated that federal and provincial governments should start preparing to cut business tax rates for their next round of budgets. Ben Bergen of the Canadian Council of Innovators indicated in this same article that a lower U.S. corporate tax rate would definitely affect Canadian business in relation to access to talent, capital and customers.

Mintz has historically argued that Canada’s competitive edge in attracting business investment has rested on two pillars – a lower corporate tax rate and free trade. One pillar is gone with the second highly unstable for Canadian businesses exporting into the U.S. In a December 19, 2017 Financial Post article<sup>93</sup> Mintz further observed that Canada’s competitive position is about to get rocked, making it harder for Canadian governments to push costs onto businesses through higher taxes and regulations. Federal and provincial authorities will need to change course and if politicians sit on their hands, Canadians will see investment, jobs and profits flowing to the United States.

Mintz is not proposing tax cuts in response to Trump but rather a series of initiatives such as streamlined regulations and directing revenues from carbon taxes back to business. Above the tax cuts, notes Mintz, Canada is increasing regulations while the U.S. is implementing an agenda of heavy reduction.

In response to the federal government’s proposed tax changes for small business in 2017, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce requested a comprehensive review of the Canadian tax system with a view towards fairness and simplification for all taxpayers and increasing the competitiveness of all businesses.

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<sup>91</sup> Canada about to lose its edge on taxation: PM must respond to Trump cuts. Vancouver Sun. December 29, 2017

<sup>92</sup> Canada needs plan for U.S. tax cuts. The Globe and Mail. April 26, 2017

<sup>93</sup> Trump tax tsunami is about to wallop Canadian jobs and investment. Financial Post, December 19, 2017

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce Compendium of Policy Resolutions 2017-2020 contains a series of recommendations addressing regulatory reform and red tape reduction including:

- Cease the piecemeal approach to new regulations that are negatively impacting Ontario business and adopt a principled approach to reduce the total cost to business, and conduct a robust and public cost-benefit analysis of all new regulations to determine their impact on competitiveness (Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce 2015);
- Move to a regulatory model whereby all proposed legislation and regulations must be supported by cost-benefit analysis and an examination on the impact for business. Also regulations and legislation must be reviewed for their degree of conflict and integration with existing legislation. Work with the federal government to adopt a standard of regulatory harmonization between the two levels of government (Burlington Chamber of Commerce 2016);
- Request that all municipalities reduce their regulatory burden on local business (Whitby Chamber of Commerce 2015).

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Review relevant legislation and regulations affecting business and apply a measurement to determine their potential impact on investment attraction;
2. Support a review of the Canadian tax system to increase the competitiveness of all businesses and economic sectors.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **F. Cannabis Excise Tax**

Authored by the Mississauga Board of Trade

### **Issue**

The Federal Government has proposed a Cannabis Excise Tax to be implemented once retail cannabis sales are legal in Canada. They have agreed to share this revenue on a 75-25% basis with the Provinces. Municipalities are also requesting a piece of this tax to offset local regulatory and enforcement costs.

### **Background**

The Federal Government has released its table of excise tax charges that will be collected from the retail sale of cannabis once legalized in Canada. Details can be found at [https://www.fin.gc.ca/n17/data/17-114\\_1-eng.asp](https://www.fin.gc.ca/n17/data/17-114_1-eng.asp).

In a recent meeting of Federal and Provincial Ministers of Finance, it was announced that the Federal Government will share 75% of the excise tax revenue with the Provinces recognizing costs that they are likely to incur in the regulation of the retail sale of cannabis going forward.

Municipalities, through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), have been calling on both the Federal and Provincial Governments to also share this revenue with municipalities given that they too will incur costs associated with the regulation and enforcement on this new legal cannabis regime. AMO issued a news releases on this on November 30, 2017 - <https://www.amo.on.ca/AMO-Content/News-Releases/2017/AMOCallsonOntarioGovernmenttoCoverMunicipalCannabi>.

Given the fact that the relationship of municipalities is generally through the Province and not the Federal Government, and that 75% of the excise tax will be given to the Provinces, the municipalities should be entitled to a portion of the tax to support local costs for this system.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Provide municipalities 1/2 of the provincial take of the Federal Cannabis excise tax revenue it receives from the Federal Government to help municipalities offset the costs associated with the legalization and distribution of cannabis in Ontario.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **G. Review transfers of responsibilities between the provincial and municipal governments to improve efficiency, service delivery, and cost**

Authored by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The downloading of provincial government services and costs onto municipal governments has resulted in a multi-billion-dollar funding gap as revenue streams were not downloaded to match. This has resulted in many programs being severely underfunded as municipal governments cannot effectively finance them. Those that are still running are often run inefficiently as municipal governments lack the human capital, economies of scale, experience, or market power to run them as cost-effectively as the provincial government. Although downloading has saved money for the provincial government, the net effect to the taxpayer has been higher costs and cuts to services.

### **Background**

To balance the provincial budget, the Ontario government began a program of “downloading” its responsibilities onto municipalities in 1995, including programs such as child care, transit, housing, public health, and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Even municipal total revenue growth of 1.6 per cent above nominal GDP has not been enough to prevent the appearance of a \$3.3 billion funding gap.<sup>94 95</sup>

The Province did not give municipalities any additional tools for revenue generation.<sup>96</sup> The Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review resulted in \$1.9 billion being re-uploaded, but this has narrowed the gap, rather than closing it.<sup>97</sup> While ODSP has been re-uploaded, for instance, municipal governments still fund transit services that used to be provincial, and Ontario is still the only province in Canada where property taxes fund provincial income redistribution programs such as Ontario Works.

Collecting only 7-8 cents of every Ontario tax dollar, municipalities are simply unable to fund these programs adequately.<sup>98</sup> Factoring in education costs, 50 cents of every 2016 property tax dollar went to running provincial programs.<sup>99</sup>

The necessity of spending such a huge amount of municipal tax revenue on provincial programs is that spending in other areas, such as infrastructure, has not kept up. In 2012, the infrastructure backlog alone had reached over \$60-billion.<sup>100</sup>

The level of government at which taxes are paid is immaterial for Ontario’s businesses. Transfers of responsibilities should aim at efficient service delivery, not at saving one level of government’s budget at the expense of another’s.

### **Recommendations**

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<sup>94</sup> Pat Vanini, Association of Municipalities of Ontario Executive Director, quoted in “The property tax crunch,” Brodie Fenlon (*The Globe and Mail*, March 27, 2017) (retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/incoming/the-property-tax-crunch/article1083881/> on January 26, 2018)

<sup>95</sup> Livio Di Matteo, “Beware of Ontario municipalities asking for ‘revenue tools’” (Vancouver: *Fraser Institute*, August 18, 2016) (retrieved from <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/blogs/beware-of-ontario-municipalities-asking-for-revenue-tools> on January 26, 2018)

<sup>96</sup> The City of Toronto has been granted special taxing powers and the 2017 Budget allowed municipalities to levy a per-room hotel tax, which cannot help municipalities which are not tourist hotspots outside Toronto

<sup>97</sup> Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ontario Ministry of Housing, *Provincial Uploads*,

<sup>98</sup> Pat Vanini, *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario, *Towards a New Federal Long-Term Infrastructure Plan, AMO’s Submission to Infrastructure Canada* (Toronto: AMO, 2012)

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Commission an independent review of all transfers of responsibilities since 1995 to assess, in terms of absolute cost and service delivery, whether residents and taxpayers are better served by said responsibilities residing with the provincial or municipal governments. This review should be completed by the end of 2022.
2. Accompany all transfers of responsibilities with sufficient and sustained funding adequate to service delivery
3. Consult with municipal governments before embarking on provincial services reviews or cuts that would impact municipal government services.
4. Ensure representation from the Ontario business sector on the review panel.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 21, 2021

## **H. Protect tourism industry competitiveness within the Municipal Accommodation Tax**

Submitted by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Co-sponsored by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

As communities across Ontario consider implementing the new Municipal Accommodation Tax, measures must be taken to ensure that the tourism industry is appropriately protected against uncompetitive increases, and that affected businesses have a say in how those tourism dollars are used.

### **Background:**

Ontario's tourism industry plays a vital role in the provincial economy<sup>101</sup>, supporting nearly 180,000 related businesses and 372,000 jobs while generating over \$28 billion in provincial GDP.<sup>102</sup>

However, in addition to being disproportionately impacted by rapid changes to Ontario's minimum wage,<sup>103</sup> this industry faces another obstacle: on Dec. 1, 2017, Ontario municipalities were accorded the ability to impose a Municipal Accommodation Tax on facilities that provide stays under 30 days. This is of concern to industry groups, who fear it may reduce their competitiveness, and directly impact the provincial economy.<sup>104</sup><sup>105</sup> One such group includes the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which had expressed in the lead-up to the 2017 provincial budget that it opposed providing the City of Toronto the ability to levy this particular tax, in part because of its potentially detrimental impact, but also because of its potential to be applied to other municipalities – something which has since come to pass.<sup>106</sup>

This concern has arisen because the new “hotel tax” differs greatly from the Destination Marketing Program (DMP), which it will effectively replace. Whereas the DMP is a voluntary model that allows participating businesses to help oversee how its tourism dollars are spent, the new tax can be applied unilaterally by municipal governments.

Additionally, the new tax is being touted as having been “developed as a revenue tool for municipalities”<sup>107</sup>: as little as 50 percent of its revenues – or, in municipalities with an existing DMP, an amount that matches the total revenue it generated – must be provided to a non-profit tourism organization, with the remainder flowing to City coffers. This, along with its non-voluntary approach, removes much of the spending oversight by those businesses who are directly impacted.

As such, the lack of a cap on this tax is a significant industry concern. At a time where municipalities are faced with increased costs and shrinking revenues, the ability to levy a simple and potentially limitless tax against non-residents may prove all too attractive. Competitiveness may be further harmed should municipalities seek to exceed rates seen in other provinces and regions; to date, every Ontario municipality who has passed the hotel tax has done so at 4 percent.

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<sup>101</sup> Ontario Chamber of Commerce, “Closing the Tourism Gap: Creating a Long-Term Advantage for Ontario”, Nov. 17, 2016

<sup>102</sup> Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, “About Destination Ontario,”

<sup>103</sup> Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, “Assessing the Economic Impact of Ontario's Proposed Minimum Wage Increase”, Sept. 12, 2017 [http://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/minimum\\_wage](http://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/minimum_wage)

<sup>104</sup> Financial Post, “Ontario municipalities are getting new powers to tax hotels and hoteliers are furious”, April 28, 2017

<sup>105</sup> Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association, “RE: City of Toronto Act (COTA) – Hotel/Lodging Room Tax”, January 17, 2017 <http://www.orhma.com/Portals/0/Insider/2017/ORHMA%20LETTER%20TO%20PREMIER%20HOTEL%20TAX%20COTA%20JAN%202017.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/OCC-Letter-Toronto-Hotel-Tax-1.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> Niagara Falls Review, “Diodati calls for clarity on hotel tax, DMF”, Nov. 8, 2017 <http://www.niagarafallsreview.ca/2017/11/08/tourism-sector-calls-for-clarity-on-hotel-tax-dmf>

Various groups have spoken out about the potential impact of the legislation and its lack of potential restrictions, suggesting that such measures may create “noticeable losses”, and that “the impact on the convention business might be significant.”<sup>108</sup> Similarly, industry groups indicate that “the imposition of this tax with no defined amount and no cap has the potential to bring the total sales tax on a hotel room to an unprecedented high.”<sup>109</sup> While the implementation of this tax across a number of communities means that its full repeal is unlikely,

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:**

1. Cap the Municipal Accommodation Tax at 4 percent, except in municipalities where existing Destination Marketing Program fees exceed 4 percent, in which case the cap should match that total and all funds be directed to the appropriate non-profit tourism organization.
2. Ensure businesses who pay a Municipal Accommodation Tax can participate in the oversight and distribution of the tourism-focused portion of revenues.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>108</sup> Institute on Municipal Finance & Governance, Munk School of Global Affairs, “New Tax Sources for Canada’s Largest Cities: What are the Options?”, November 2016

[https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/imfg/uploads/368/imfgperspectives\\_no15\\_kitchenandslack\\_nov\\_23\\_2016.pdf](https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/imfg/uploads/368/imfgperspectives_no15_kitchenandslack_nov_23_2016.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> Greater Toronto Hotel Association, “GHTA Responds to New Tax on Hotels in 2017/18 Provincial Budget,” April 27, 2017

## **I. Getting Ontario Back to Fiscal Balance**

Authored by the London Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Ontario's debt continues to grow and is expected to reach \$347 billion in 2018-19. The Province has reported deficits in 24 of the last 29 years resulting in Ontario becoming the most indebted sub-nation in the world.<sup>110</sup> The public debt burden becomes even more sizeable once Ontario's portion of the federal debt is factored in, an estimated \$300 billion out of a total of \$779 billion.<sup>111</sup> Interest on the provincial debt is expected to reach \$12.5 billion in the current year making it the fourth largest line item on the government's expense statement. With interest rates forecasted to continue an upward trajectory, the cost to service the debt will only increase, thereby diverting funds from essential services such as housing, education, and healthcare. The provincial government's economic and fiscal review released in November 2018 indicates that the government is keenly aware of the dire situation that Ontario faces fiscally, and it has taken strong steps to tackle out of control spending. It fails, however, to include a concrete plan to tackle the debt and provide a timeline of when the government expects to bring the province back to fiscal balance.

### **Background**

While running deficits in years of sluggish growth or during recessionary periods is considered a reasonable fiscal approach, Ontario's economy has been growing at rates of about 3%+ over the past few years. Although growth rates are forecasted to decrease below 2% over the short term, and well below the levels experienced before the Great Recession of 2008-2009, this only means that Ontario will have to do more with less. The size of Ontario's debt during 2009-10 was \$194 billion or about 32% of GDP.<sup>112</sup> Since then, \$153 billion more was added reaching a net Debt-to-GDP ratio of almost 41%. This unprecedented level of borrowing took place during a period of positive economic growth, albeit not one as booming as the years prior to the Great Recession. Lower rates of growth have widely been accepted as the new norm in the new economy, but government spending has not adjusted accordingly.

In a recent update released by the IMF in December 2018, the organization warns that another global recession is just around the corner and governments around the world are ill prepared to deal with another downturn. BlackRock, the world's largest money management firm puts the chances of another recession happening in 2021 at 54%.<sup>113</sup> Ontario's current financial position has prompted Moody's to recently downgrade the province's credit rating from Aa3 to Aa2,<sup>114</sup> therefore compromising the province's ability to raise funds in case of a severe downturn.

The Chamber applauds the government's recent efforts to bring accountability back to the province's finances and we're encouraged to see that some of the Chamber's recommendations are being implemented. The Chamber has long advocated for governments to apply more rigour to regularly mandated program reviews across all ministries and departments. The Auditor General's office has also been tirelessly working to untangle the complexity of various government mandated programs, and to bring transparency to the government's often opaque process of reporting. We are pleased that the government is taking the Auditor General's recommendations to task in its efforts to uncover waste and irregularities.

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<sup>110</sup> Ontario's Economic And Fiscal Outlook Fall 2018

<sup>111</sup> Fraser Institute, Livio Do Matteo, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/article/the-trudeau-and-ford-governments-two-fiscal-statements-one-debt-problem>

<sup>112</sup> Fraser Institute, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/article/brief-history-of-ontario-public-debt>

<sup>113</sup> CBC News, Jonathon Gatehouse, The National, <http://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.4939070>

<sup>114</sup> Financial Post, <https://business.financialpost.com/news/economy/moodys-downgrades-ontarios-credit-rating-from-aa3-to-aa2-citing-deficit>



Current levels of debt and deficit within the province are a threat to Ontario's economic prosperity. With the millennial generation being more mobile than any generation prior to it, Ontario runs the risk of losing much of its top talent if it cannot sustain a reasonably high standard of living. Furthermore, business in Ontario will find it increasingly difficult to attract new talent from other provinces and countries as the provincial debt makes Ontario less and less competitive.

The recent findings that the current deficit had been understated by \$8 billion as a result of the government's borrowing to reduce hydro bills, begs the question of what else might be underreported and what the true size of the deficit is. Furthermore, the current environment of rising interest rates will only make servicing the debt more expensive. And, Canada's shrinking demographic of working age Canadians means that the debt burden will fall on fewer shoulders now, and in the future.

It is, therefore, critical that the government act to immediately put in place a concrete plan that addresses the current deficit, brings the province's finances back to balance, and works towards reducing the provincial debt.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement an action plan that sets targets to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 35% over the next five years with a long-term goal of 30%. Although it may seem a lofty goal, we believe the seriousness of Ontario's debt/deficit situation warrants it, and even if the government fails to meet the 30% target, they will ultimately be better served by reaching for a more ambitious goal than for a vague measure of success.
2. While the government has made some progress in this area, we urge that they continue the review of government funded programs, and measure the spending of public dollars against value-added metrics, and/or return on investment.
3. Build upon the progress that has been made to date by continuing to review the Province's handling of surplus properties. Ontario is the second largest property owner in the country, behind only the federal government. According to the Auditor General of Ontario the province owns 4,838 buildings of which 812 are vacant costing the province about \$19 million a year to maintain. During the five year period ending in 2016/17 the government sold properties worth \$229 million.<sup>115</sup> However, the process of selling surplus properties is slow and behind schedule.
  - a) Funds generated from the sale of assets should go directly toward paying down the debt.
  - b) Revenues generated from repurposing assets should be invested to enhance other economic activities.
4. Expand Alternative Service Delivery (ASD) in areas of government where service quality can be improved. By opening up service delivery to the private and not-for-profit sectors, ASD models take advantage of market incentives to enhance productivity, achieve greater efficiencies, and harness new technology.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>115</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2017 Annual Report  
[http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en17/v1\\_311en17.pdf](http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en17/v1_311en17.pdf)

**J. Protect Public Sector Services by Monitoring the Public Sector's Total Compensation Premium**  
Submitted by: Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

**Issue**

Ontario's public services are under threat as the province struggles to contain deficit spending while also carrying a growing debt burden. One of the major contributors to spending is the total compensation premium paid to public sector workers relative to those in the private sector. Intelligent and targeted policies aimed at understanding the fiscal and economic impact of this premium will bring fairness to employment across Ontario, increase competitiveness, and enable long-term sustainability of essential public services.

**Background**

Recent research has demonstrated a significant wage gap between Ontario's public and private sectors. The Ontario public sector wage premium (the degree in which public employees earn more than private sector employees) is estimated to be 10.3 percent, after controlling for such factors as gender, age, type of job and industry.<sup>116</sup> The rate is 7.3 percent after factoring in unionization. Non-wage benefits are also elevated: 82.7 percent of public sector workers were covered by a registered pension compared to 24.6 percent of private sector workers; nearly all were covered by a defined benefit pension (compared to only 39.8 for private sector works); they retired on average 2 years earlier and were substantially less likely to lose their job.

When 'total compensation' (i.e. wages plus non-wage benefits such as pension, health benefits and vacation time) of government workers, is out of line with the private sector, it places an excessive burden on the provincial budget and on the lower paid private sector workers who effectively subsidize their counterparts in the public sector.

Effective legislation on public pay accountability is possible. Ontario's Pay Equity Act 1990 successfully reduced sex-based wage discrimination. And legislation on public expenses successfully controls the business-related expenses of public sector employees (Public Sector Expenses Review Act 2009, etc.).

The first step is reliable data that include non-pay benefits. This would enable 'total compensation' metric benchmarking. At the moment, such data is not being collected in Canada. Canada should follow the example of the U.S., which collects data on 'total compensation' in the private sector as well as at the municipal, state and federal levels. The Ontario government should press the Federal Government to mandate this data collection by Statistics Canada.

Data should also control for factors such as occupations that don't significantly compete with the private sector, (e.g. teachers) and gender and other anti-discriminatory wage-parity measures.

Thereafter the goal should be to bring 'total compensation' in the public sector in line with that in the private sector.

**Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Collect data for 'total compensation' metric benchmarking to bring total compensation in the public sector in line with that in the private sector.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>116</sup> Palacios, et al. 2019. Comparing Government and Private Sector Compensation in Ontario. Fraser Institute.

## **K. Achieving Property Tax Fairness Across Ontario**

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce and Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Co-sponsored by the Mississauga Board of Trade, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Milton Chamber of Commerce, and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Commercial and industrial payers contribute significantly to Ontario's property tax base, which is the primary source of revenue for municipal government. However, real concerns about the benefits received by businesses versus residential taxpayers, and the rationale for the notable disparity in tax treatment between residential and non-residential ratepayers, continue to persist. Put plainly, the proportion of property value and the resulting tax contributions made by these two distinct groups of property owners relative to the overall tax revenue collected by municipalities for the services they consume are vastly different and inequitable. This trend affects commercial and industrial enterprises of all sizes and across all sectors and is pervasive in communities across the province.

### **Background**

Ontario's Property Tax system has not been fully reviewed since the new Ontario Fair Assessment System (OFAS) was first introduced by the former Harris government approximately 25 years ago.

Since that time, significant changes have occurred across Ontario's economic landscape influencing global and local competitiveness and fundamentally altering traditional economic paradigms. This trend has been further compounded by increasing demands placed on municipalities as they are confronted with new and evolving challenges, such as: social housing, the opioid crisis, climate change, rapidly evolving technology, and the growing infrastructure deficit. This list goes on.

While municipalities are alive to such concerns, as pressure on the property tax increases, the municipality community is faced with the daunting task of attempting to balance their fiscal realities against growing and competing demands for local and regional services. This situation is compounded by the limited revenue tools available to municipalities to meet their financial obligations and an antiquated system of property tax mitigation programs and relief mechanisms to achieve locally sensitive tax policy priorities that have not been comprehensively revisited or reformed since the mid-1990's.

It is also important to note that property tax bills in Ontario include a substantial portion of the total levy that is directed to the Province to fund our education system. In many cases, this share of the property tax bill (known as the provincial education tax) exceeds the amount collected for municipal purposes. The disparity in terms of tax rate treatment between non-residential and residential property owners for municipal purposes is even more extreme when the education tax rate is considered, further exacerbating the disproportionate property tax burden shouldered by commercial and industrial property owners and their tenants.

When property tax is unfavourably biased against the business community, the province's economic competitiveness, its ability to attract and retain talent and investment, create jobs, and to position Ontario for growth and prosperity are undermined.

In acknowledging the shortcomings of Ontario's current property tax system, the Province made a promise in its 2019 Spring Budget to develop an action plan *to Respect Ontario Property Taxpayers* underpinned by a comprehensive review to explore opportunities to:

- Enhance the accuracy and stability of property assessments;
- Support a competitive business environment;
- Provide relief to residents; and

- Strengthen the governance and accountability of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to ensure better representation for Ontario property taxpayers.

To support a meaningful and informed review process, the government committed to seeking input on these issues through consultation with residents, businesses, municipalities and other stakeholders.

Thus far, no plan has been revealed to fulfil this promise. However, recognizing that 2020 is the year in which MPAC will undertake a comprehensive province-wide reassessment (revaluation) of all property to provide the basis for property taxation in 2021 through 2024, the timing of a thorough and thoughtful review of Ontario's property tax system, with a focus on modernization to ensure competitiveness, is crucial to inform transparent, stable and equitable property tax treatment into the future.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Honour its 2019 Budget Commitment to ensure a modern and competitive property tax system and to develop an action plan to respect Ontario's property taxpayers based on meaningful and thoughtful consultation and collaboration with affected stakeholders including: residents, business, industry, municipalities, and subject matter experts.
2. Consider providing new revenue and/or property tax mitigation tools and flexibility to municipalities in order to manage property tax burdens in a fair and equitable manner, address new economic paradigms, and to target relief to business property owners/tenants in response to local tax policy priorities and objectives.
3. Address the significant disparity between residential and non-residential tax rates for education tax purposes.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **L. Regional Approach to Provincial Procurement Reform**

Submitted by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste Marie Chamber of Commerce, and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The Government of Ontario is moving forward with a centralized procurement model across the Ontario Public Service and the broader public sector which may adversely impact small- and medium-sized businesses and regional economic development across the province.

### **Background**

On March 28, 2019, the Treasury Board of Ontario announced that it would be leading an initiative to transform how goods and services are purchased by the Ontario Public Service and the broader public sector.<sup>117</sup> The initiative will leverage the government's buying power to develop economies of scale and centralize all provincial procurement in Queen's Park. While the Treasury Board develops this new procurement model, it has restricted long-term procurement contracts by the province's various departments. This initiative by the Treasury Board is projected to save the province \$1 billion per year.

The government's goal of creating efficiencies through centralized procurement is well-intentioned, but it risks leaving small- and medium-sized businesses unable to successfully bid on provincial contracts. Large provincial contracts cannot effectively be fulfilled by regional suppliers, which could result in large contract awards being made only to national or multinational distributors, thereby damaging regional suppliers & economic development. A centralized buying model puts businesses outside of the GTA at a disadvantage, and impedes the ability to build capacity throughout the province.

Rather than focusing on centralization at Queen's Park, regional hubs offer an alternate approach that concentrates on deriving the greatest total value and achieving savings objectives while also supporting regional economic development. Provincial initiatives to centralize procurement would be administered by regional hubs and through regionally awarded contracts with support by provincial/national agreements for commodities which are not tied to a regional supplier base. The procurement hubs would be established and administered within the regions they represent, enabling effective supplier/buyer relationship development to occur.

The government would mandate public buyers to use a blended portfolio of national, provincial, and regional suppliers to select a contract which derives the greatest "total value" for that agency where total value is defined as the balanced consideration of price, regional economic impact, and other important factors including but not limited to sustainability and cultural inclusion.

Positive models of this approach are demonstrated by the Lakehead Purchasing Consortium and other successful regional broader public service cooperatives and provide proof that regional contract awards are as, or in some cases more effective than, singular large provincial agreements. As an example of the strength of regionalized procurement, the City of Thunder Bay recently closed a procurement for confidential waste paper shredding services where a local company provided a price lower than a provincial agreement. Bigger is not always better!

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<sup>117</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2019/03/creating-efficiencies-across-government.html>

Investing in regional procurement hubs can also support investments in Indigenous businesses, which have long been neglected in Canada's economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce's report on regional economic development, *The Great Mosaic*, recommends that the provincial government prioritize economic reconciliation with Indigenous communities. Part of the solution is to encourage more Indigenous involvement in provincial supply chains, either by incentivizing those with government contracts to include more Indigenous suppliers in their own supply chains, or by including Indigenous suppliers in those contracts directly.<sup>118</sup>

Implementing a regional approach to procurement centralization with a focus on achieving the greatest total value provides opportunity for small- and medium-business, Indigenous suppliers, and regional economic development.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement regional procurement hubs that mandate public buyers to use a blended portfolio of national, provincial, and regional suppliers to derive the greatest total value for purchases; and,
2. Define total value as the balanced consideration of price, regional economic impact, and other important factors including but not limited to sustainability and cultural inclusion.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>118</sup> "The Great Mosaic," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2019, pg. 21.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE/TRANSPORTATION**

### **A. Essential Service Designation for Provincially Funded Transit Services**

Authored by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

#### **Issue**

A broken arbitration system coupled with transit labour disputes are holding Ontario businesses and taxpayer's hostage. A two-pronged solution that begins with mending the arbitration system and is followed by designating provincial transit an essential service will preserve the economic stability, competitiveness and health of our province in these uncertain times.

#### **Background**

The labour arbitration system in Ontario is badly broken. Municipalities, taxpayers and businesses are paying hundreds of millions of dollars in wage settlements resulting from binding interest arbitration.

Arbitration law governing essential services in Ontario sets out five criteria which arbitrators and arbitration boards must consider when making interest arbitration decisions, including the employer's ability to pay and the economic situation in Ontario and the municipality. In most of the interest arbitration awards for emergency services in 2010, arbitrators/arbitration boards failed to establish that these criteria were considered, resulting in arbitrated settlements that typically cost employers more. "Arbitrated settlements are often based on comparisons to provincial, not regional services and to comparative professions rather than other regional workers. As a result, emergency services costs are rising faster than other municipal services, the cost of living and the rate of inflation.

Binding interest arbitration attempts to balance the loss of the ability to withhold services (through lockout or strike) with fair compensation. The arbitration process, must also balance the economic realities of the region and the employers' ability to pay. In its absence, the cost of transit goes up, and that increase is passed along to taxpayers in the form of higher fees, higher taxes or cuts to other services.

A two-pronged solution will create a sustainable, efficient and reliable regional transit system that enables the province to remain economically competitive while contributing to growth and innovation. The first part of the solution is the repair of the labour arbitration system. The labour arbitration system must be fixed (see Kitchener-Waterloo resolution for more on arbitration) to actively consider a municipality's ability to pay and provide a rationale for the award is key to mending the current system and making settlements more affordable to taxpayers and businesses. Second, transit in the province must be designated an essential service. Transit strikes prevent workers from reaching their destination, cost employers millions, and prevent small businesses from functioning. For example, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) strike of 2008 cost the city \$50 million a day and affected approximately 1.5 million riders, while the London Transit strike of 2008 cost that community an estimated \$132 million dollars. The three-month York Region strike in 2011-12 was the longest transit walk-out in Ontario history, and affected more than 44,000 commuters daily, costing millions of dollars in lost productivity.

All cities are driven by economic competitiveness of which good mobility systems are a key feature. In large regions, such as the GTHA, London, Ottawa and Windsor, it is imperative that transit functions smoothly, reliably and consistently. There are now about the same number of jobs in neighbouring GTA municipalities as there are inside the City of Toronto. Ridership on municipal transit systems serving Ontario's 15 largest urban centres was expected to increase to 833 million trips by 2013. As the Region's population grows, with the GTHA in particular reaching 8.6 million by 2031, more people will be dependent on transit. In addition

to the Toronto example, many other Regions throughout Ontario have been impacted by striking transit workers, or the threat of a strike or lockout.

In 2012, York Region Residents and Businesses were impacted by a three-month transit strike that impacted 60% of its operations. The reduced level of local transit service had a tremendous impact on riders and businesses, as well as the ridership and operational costs of the Regional Government.

Essential service designation for transit in the GTHA would keep busses running, people moving and enable much-needed economic growth in these financially uncertain times.

Acknowledging the centrality of transit to economic vitality, in 2011 the City of Toronto declared the TTC an essential service. However, the TTC is one of nine transit providers in the region. The interconnectedness of our economies and the increasing prevalence of intra-regional commuting patterns highlights the need for uniform status across all systems in the region. Communities, led by local chambers of commerce and Metrolinx have implemented transit incentive programs such as SMART COMMUTE to encourage ridership in the business community. These initiatives are jeopardized by transit labour disputes that force people back into their cars, increasing congestion on roads and making goods movement a challenge. Ensuring stable labour relations and uninterrupted service provision reinforces our collective economic, environmental and health priorities.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

- A. Subject to the reform of the arbitrations system as advocated for by the OCC designate all provincially supported transit in Ontario an essential service, ensuring a stable, healthy and competitive business environment.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



## **B. Goods and People Movement Long-Range, Multimodal, Integrated Transportation Plan**

Authored by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario's transportation system is crucial to the economic well-being of Ontario and to the country as a whole. The efficient movement of goods and people, within Ontario and into the U.S. directly, affects business and impacts Ontario's ability to compete with other jurisdictions.

To help facilitate the movement of goods and people, transportation planning at the local, regional and provincial levels is critical. At the present time, Ontario does not have a province-wide transportation plan, and current regional plans do not adequately address the inter-regional movement of goods and people.

A province-wide Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is needed to address the movement of goods and people between regions and across borders.

### **Background**

Ontario is a vast province with diverse regions (economic and otherwise) facing unique transportation challenges. For example, many areas in Northern Ontario require additional transportation capacity to help facilitate goods movement to attract business investment and diversify local economies.

In Southern Ontario, particularly in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), explosive suburban labour force in the goods movement corridors, coupled within inadequate investments in transportation infrastructure, has led to crippling congestion. To address unique regional issues, while regional transportation plans, such as The Big Move, have been developed, there is a lack of province wide focus

Ontario's various regions do not exist in isolation. Regions and economic clusters throughout the province are unique and are interconnected. For example, in the auto manufacturing cluster in Southern Ontario, there may be, steel parts sourced from plants in Hamilton, Sarnia or Pittsburgh, with electrical components manufactured in Toronto and final assembly occurring in Windsor or Markham with eventual shipping to markets across Canada and Northeastern United States. Facilitating the efficient movement of these goods between regions is critical for economic sustainability, increased investment and economic growth. The need is made more urgent by increasing value of trade across the North America advanced manufacturing value chain.

Competing jurisdictions in the U.S. have recognized the need for integration of transportation networks between regions. High-level transportation planning is common in the U.S., with state-wide transportation plans being required by Federal law. State-wide transportation plans span 20 to 30 years in outlook, are updated every five years, and plan for the integration of all modes of transportation. The plan is critical for the future of the Ontario economy as The province's multimodal transportation system moves over \$1.3 trillion in goods per year which constitutes 49% of Canada's total international trade (across all modes) and almost 70% of road trade with the U.S.

We believe a province-wide LRTP will contribute to employment and economic growth by:

- Improving linkages between transportation modes and between freight hubs, which make up over 70% of Goods Trade in Ontario
- Enabling the province to effectively develop and implement policies that improve and better utilize Ontario's extensive network of road, rail, marine and airport facilities; and
- Placing Ontario on a level playing field with competing U.S. jurisdictions.
- Enhance the ability of businesses in Ontario to latch onto North American manufacturing value chains.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Develop a 30-50 year, province-wide LRTP, to be completed by the fall of 2020.
2. The LRTP should include:
  - a. Stakeholder consultation;
  - b. Short, medium and long-term planning and investment objectives spanning 30-50 years;
  - c. Comprehensive mapping out of the multi modal connections that facilitate goods and people movement throughout the province;
  - d. Pathways for integration with Municipal Official Plans and regional growth plans (e.g.: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe)
  - e. A provincial maritime strategy
  - f. A multimodal strategy surrounding airports, building on the work of the Southern Ontario Airport Network.
  - g. A financing plan for transportation improvement projects; and
  - h. Quick wins to improve connections between regions and trade corridors.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

### **C. Develop a Provincial Long Term Broadband Strategy**

Submitted by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, Ajax Pickering Board of Trade, Whitby Chamber of Commerce, and Richmond Hill Board of Trade

#### **Issue:**

Now that high speed broadband internet is considered to be an essential telecom service by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and the Government of Ontario, the Province has a responsibility of ensuring that all Ontarians have equitable access to reliable, affordable and quality service in order to fully participate in the digital economy.

#### **Background:**

In 2017 the Government of Ontario officially endorsed the CRTC's declaration that high speed internet service is an essential service and committed to developing a provincial broadband strategy in 2018. According to the Rural Ontario Institute's (ROI) *2017 Rural Ontario Foresight Papers* on broadband, there are three factors that should be addressed in the broadband strategy: infrastructure, digital literacy and affordability

Access to broadband infrastructure is predominantly an issue in rural and remote areas. The CRTC has determined that a universal standard of 50 MB download speed is the minimum of "what is currently available to the vast majority of the population and what is likely to be required in the future for Canadians to have new and creative ways to participate in the digital economy."<sup>119</sup> The ROI paper points out that as many as 19%<sup>120</sup> of households in rural and remote areas of the country, including areas of Ontario, reach speeds of less than 5 MB. While there are varying opinions on what the minimum speed criterion should be, it is argued that "small businesses and employees working remotely need higher speeds to use the business tools and applications that are offered online" and that "...the lack of availability of higher speeds constitutes a barrier to attracting businesses and investors into their communities."<sup>121</sup> High speed internet access may be even more important in rural and remote areas where residents cannot access government programs, health and education services, job opportunities or consumer goods and services locally. It's also a key tool enabling farmers to practice modern "precision farming".

Millions of dollars have recently been invested in Ontario's broadband infrastructure. In 2016, \$288 million was committed by all levels of government and the private sector to Phase I of the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology Project, which plans to connect more than 350 communities to high speed internet.

Despite such large investments, rural, remote and last mile homes still lack adequate access primarily due to financial reasons. Fibre to the Premises is considered to be the most viable long term infrastructure investment, technologically speaking, but it is too costly to build to low density areas. 5G wireless technologies are also costly, have a limited range and are considered to be unsuitable for some rural communities. At the same time, rural municipalities that have a declining tax base and a rapidly expanding infrastructure deficit do not have the spare funds to build and maintain their own fibre networks, particularly to the last mile.

Long term infrastructure planning should take into consideration evolving technologies, increasing speeds and demand, maintenance costs and ownership rights and responsibilities. Access to infrastructure could be

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<sup>119</sup> Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-496 (article 79) <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-496.htm>

<sup>120</sup> Rural Ontario Institute, Rural Ontario Foresight Papers 2017: "Broadband Infrastructure for the Future".

<sup>121</sup> Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-496 (article 68) <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-496.htm>

increased by setting provincial building code standards that require high speed connectivity to the premises, requiring wholesale access to existing networks and finding creative interconnection solutions.

In addition to infrastructure, Ontarians need the skills and literacy to participate in the digital economy. The provincial government recognized this by appointing a new Minister Responsible for Digital Government and a Chief Digital Officer. They are responsible for improving online access to government programs, advancing digital literacy and developing a Digital Government Action Plan. All of these efforts should be aligned with the government's broadband strategy.

Affordability is another factor that limits some Ontarians ability to participate in the digital economy. Low income residents who must choose between food and shelter costs and high speed internet are much less likely to access government services and online courses or be participants in the online economy. According to the CRTC,<sup>122</sup> affordability constraints may make it even harder for them to overcome social economic challenges. It is essential that Ontario's broadband strategy ensure that high speed internet is affordable for all.

### **Recommendation:**

That the Government of Ontario

1. Include the following goals in its new broadband strategy:
  - Ensuring that all Ontarians have affordable access to high speed broadband internet through ongoing funding for operating and capital expenditures with plans for upgrades as new technology emerges;
  - Communicating existing broadband availability, access standards and upgrade plans across the province;
  - Establishing speed and reliability targets that align with the CRTC's targets and are re-evaluated according to a set schedule to ensure international comparability;
  - Recognizing the roles of other non-governmental agencies and the unique needs of different regions and communities;
  - Actively seeking out private sector investment and alternative funding sources for last mile connectivity;
  - Advancing e-commerce and e-service literacy for all;
  - Amending the provincial building code standards to ensure that new and modified buildings include provisioning for physical internet access where practical; and
  - Identifying and removing any hurdles around building, wholesaling, leasing and ownership of broadband infrastructure.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>122</sup> Reza Rajabiun, David Ellis, Catherine Middleton, Literature Review: Affordability of Communications Services, March 2016 <https://www.ryerson.ca/~cmiddlet/ourresearch/lit-review-for-crtc-2016-affordability-rajabiun-ellis-middleton.pdf>

## **D. Providing transportation for small communities to help Small Businesses move and employ people.**

Authored by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Businesses in small communities without public transportation often suffer from the inability to attract talent for employment positions, hindering their productivity and growth.

### **Background**

Small communities (less than 50,000) in Ontario struggle with a lack of public transportation to move people, leading to a shortage of willing labour for positions in local businesses. The assumption that people in these communities have access to a personal automobile has created a bottle-neck in productivity for businesses. Further, retail and service-based businesses are becoming less accessible to our aging population with a lack of public transportation options.

The Canadian Rural Partnership, a federal government initiative that helps coordinate programs, policies and activities in small, rural communities has reported the decrease in transit options in these communities.

Small communities often have limited budgets and ridership to warrant full-blown public transit systems. The most typical needs for transit are for people without access to a personal automobile to attain employment and fulfill basic needs such as shopping and healthcare services.

In 2017, the Town of Innisfil lead the way with a partnership between the town and Uber and Barrie Taxi, providing subsidized trips for people travelling to specified destinations. This program cost riders between \$3 and \$5 per trip, and by the Council's estimate has saved Innisfil approximately \$200,000 in a 4.5-month period. Other communities in Southern Alabama and Nova Scotia have had success with chartered buses providing transit for commuters. While these programs provide short-term relief, it is an interim solution to a larger transit problem in small and rural communities.

There have been instances of businesses in small communities in Ontario turning away new projects and reducing shifts due to a lack of labour with access to transit.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Develop a process for connecting business partners with municipal and regional and non-traditional (i.e. Uber & Lyft) transportation partners in neighbouring communities with resources that can be mobilized to provide relief for small businesses.
2. Provide funding for programs that connect and help businesses employ people outside of their community.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **E. Amend the Ontario Labour Relations Act To Enable Fair And Open Tendering For Public Infrastructure Projects**

Authored by the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Co-Sponsored Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, and Mississauga Board of Trade.

### **Issue**

The current Labour Relations Act is preventing some municipalities and public entities from openly tendering and procuring construction projects, which reduces competition and increases construction costs. Should a Municipality or School Board challenge their designation as a “business” the process is expensive, cumbersome and lengthy.

### **Background**

Language in the Labour Relations Act allows municipalities and school boards to become certified “construction employers,” which ties all of the municipalities’ construction work to a particular union (or small group of unions) and its bound contractors. As a result, up to 70 percent of the industry is unable to compete for work on publicly owned and publicly funded projects, inflating construction costs by as much as 30 percent. In 2012, approximately \$942 million worth of municipal construction work in Ontario was subject to restricted tendering.

The economic and budgetary implications for the public sector as a result of restricted tendering practices are substantial. According to comparative analysis from countries around the world on major infrastructure projects, the potential cost savings from an open tendering process indicates that construction costs fell by an average of 20 to 25 percent as the number of bidders increased from two to fifteen. A recently released academic study by Cardus<sup>123</sup> modeled the impact of a closed tendering environment in the City of Hamilton by projecting that:

- The gap between the winning bid and the next highest bid in Hamilton (restricted since 2005) was more than twice – 105% — as wide as that in neighbouring municipalities (like Halton or Brant) that had open tendering.
- Comparing the gap between the winning bid and the average (mean) bid in open and closed municipalities, the difference was 114% wider; the gap for the highest bid was also wider: 155%.
- The Participation of vendors in the newly restricted environment shrunk by over 83%.

Therefore, a change to the Ontario Labour Relations Act would improve the value and impact of provincial and federal infrastructure investments. To achieve these objectives, the government of Ontario must modernize the labour law to ensure fair and open tendering of public infrastructure projects throughout Ontario. A fairer tendering process, encourages competition, decreases costs and supports fiscally responsible infrastructure investment.

Furthermore with the implementation of Bill 148 municipal costs are rising across many of the operational costs centers. There has been increasing pressure on Municipal budgets to pass these costs on to property owners. In many communities, such as Sault Ste. Marie, economic conditions are challenged, demographics are shifting, populations are shrinking and property assessment in some sectors are declining threatening their ability to maintain competitive tax burdens.

Adding to the challenges Municipalities are limited by the Municipal Act in their ability to generate revenue to offset the costs of delivering services to the tax payer. This by its own should be of substantial consideration when assessing whether a municipality is to be defined as a business, which is defined by risk taking, market

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<sup>123</sup> “Up, Up, And Away: The impact of Restrictive Tendering”. Cardus (2017)  
<https://www.cardus.ca/research/workandeconomics/publications/5163/up-up-and-away/>

forces, competing for capital and generating a return on investment that can be distributed to owners and/or shareholders, as well as reinvested in capital investment to support growth and sustainability.

There are several municipalities in the Province of Ontario that are currently impacted by closed tendering rules, including but not limited to Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Kitchener Waterloo, Toronto and Mississauga.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Immediately amend the Ontario Labour Relations Act to clarify that municipalities and school boards are not construction employers.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **F. Encouraging Municipal Government Collaboration to Address Transit Needs and Gaps**

Authored by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by Milton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The lack of adequate or any transit options in small and rural communities impacts business competitiveness and the mobility of residents. Greater collaboration between adjacent municipalities with and without adequate transit solutions could help address transit gaps by extending or building on existing transit systems.

### **Background**

Public transit in small towns and rural communities is often either insufficient or non-existent. Limited mobility negatively impacts business productivity by hindering its talent pool and potential for growth. Limited and/or insufficient transit puts communities at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining industry and investment. Access to affordable, public transit would allow local businesses to remain competitive, and residents to maintain independence with access to healthcare providers, employment and community hubs.

For example, Toronto Premium Outlets, located in Halton Hills, is a very popular shopping destination, attracting tourists from around the world. Located directly off of Highway 401, they employ over 900 full-time workers. During peak seasons, Toronto Premium Outlets employs over 2000 workers, the majority of which reside in the neighbouring municipalities of Brampton, Milton and Mississauga. At any given time, as many as 50% of all employees at the mall are part-time workers, many of whom are students. Transit from both Brampton and Milton terminate approximately five kilometers from Toronto Premium Outlets. Consequently, workers must drive to work, be dropped off, take a taxi or a ride hailing service like Uber, which is costly and contributes to congestion on the 401, Steeles Avenue, and the Trafalgar Road.

Since it is not feasible for every municipality, especially more rural and/or remote communities to invest in community-wide public transit nor for the province to directly subsidize every municipality's transit needs, the Government of Ontario is encouraged to put in place the necessary policies, infrastructure and/or funding to make it feasible for neighbouring municipalities to develop and implement innovative solutions that address transit challenges and gaps that exist across municipal boundaries.

Encouraging or building on existing cross-municipal collaboration adjacent municipalities may opt to extend existing transit systems to service a wider geographic region, specifically into regions that lack transit options and service key employment zones. Addressing cross-municipal transit needs has spillover benefits for surrounding municipalities and economies as workers, commuters, and residents of both, can travel more seamlessly between regions and be significantly better connected.

Municipal government collaboration on current transit gaps in regions lacking transit options, would address the last-mile problem facing residents and commuters, and provide a more cost-effective alternative to owning a personal vehicle.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Put in place the necessary policies to encourage and streamline transit project collaborations between municipalities and regions. Example: Work with insurance companies to understand and support extensions of transit service into adjacent municipalities.
2. Put in place the necessary infrastructure and/or funding that make it feasible for municipalities and/or regions to identify transit gaps and build on or extend existing transit service across municipal



boundaries into adjacent municipalities that lack adequate transit options.

3. Urge the federal government to invest in transportation plans, including multi-municipality or regional plans.
4. Expand the Community Transportation Grant Program (announced January 25, 2019) to encourage and specifically support this kind of municipal collaboration.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **G. Enhancing Highway Connectivity**

Authored by the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Orillia Chamber of Commerce, Oro-Medonte Chamber of Commerce, Whitby Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Connecting Highways 400 and 404 is critical to supporting economic development in Ontario.

### **Background**

Highways 400 and 404 serve as backbones of Ontario's economy, together carrying all North/South traffic across the province.

The current lack of connectivity between these two highways is limiting Ontario's economic productivity. Whenever there is an accident that closes down the 400, all North/South movement of goods and people is disrupted for several hours.<sup>124</sup>

Congestion along Highway 400 is likely to increase considerably by 2041 as Simcoe and York regions experience explosive population and employment growth.<sup>125</sup> Appropriate transportation infrastructure is needed to support regional economic growth.

The Highway 400-404 Connecting Link is a proposed 16.2 kilometre, four-lane highway extension.<sup>126</sup> The project would result in a significant economic impact through reduced traffic congestion, more efficient transport of goods and services, faster access to airports, back-up options for emergency shut downs, and new employment and investment opportunities.

The reduction in delay costs associated with accidents alone would be significant, with each hour of delay costing an estimated \$25 per car and hundreds of accidents occurring along the 400 each year.<sup>127</sup>

The Connecting Link has passed Ontario's Environmental Assessment process. Prioritizing its completion is fundamental to Ontario's economic development.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Complete the extension of Highway 404 to intersect with Highway 400 in Simcoe County by 2022.
2. The extension of Highway 404 should not be tolled.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>124</sup> Freeman, J., 2017, "Frustrated drivers trapped for hours after Hwy. 400 shut down for chemical spill,"

<https://www.cp24.com/news/frustrated-drivers-trapped-for-hours-after-hwy-400-shut-down-for-chemical-spill-1.3511876>.

<sup>125</sup> "Highway 400-404 Connecting Link," [http://www.eastwillimbury.ca/Government/Highway\\_400-404\\_Connecting\\_Link.htm](http://www.eastwillimbury.ca/Government/Highway_400-404_Connecting_Link.htm).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Huen, K., Tighe, S., and McCabe, B, 2005, "Incorporating User Delay Cost in Project Selection: A Canadian Case Study," <http://www.civil.uwaterloo.ca/cpatt/AISIM/PAPERS/Paper%20-%20Huen,%20Ken.pdf>.

## **H. Improve Ontario's Transportation System with Better Quality Roadways**

Authored by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Premature and repetitive road maintenance creates traffic congestion, increased truck fleet maintenance and repair costs, as well as increased carbon emissions. By improving and enforcing standards for quality asphalt, these economic and environmental costs can be reduced.

### **Background**

According to the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, an audit conducted by the Ministry of Transportation in 2000 found “significant problems throughout the province with pavement cracking years before it was expected to, resulting in increased cost to taxpayers for highways having to be repaired or repaved sooner than expected, and increased inconveniences and time lost for drivers due to more frequent road work.”<sup>128</sup> Poor quality asphalt that cannot withstand Ontario's winter conditions was found to be the cause. Since 2007, the Ministry has “in essence, allowed the Ministry's suppliers to determine the quality of materials that they would supply, even though premature cracking would result in additional revenue for the industry as a whole and incur additional costs for taxpayers.”<sup>129</sup>

As noted by the Auditor General, poor-quality asphalt contributes to additional costs to taxpayers. Repairing cracked pavements alone has almost tripled the Ministry of Transportation's budget since 2007 from \$45 million to \$125 million per year. Damaged asphalt costs the transportation industry as well. It can cause increased roll resistance, adding to fuel costs, and premature deterioration of vehicles, which increases repair and maintenance costs. Traffic congestion is worsened due to continuous road repairs and resulting traffic delays, which impacts the ability and increases cost of companies offering “Just in Time Delivery”. Overall highway safety and efficiency is degraded.

Higher asphalt standards and quality testing are needed. The Ministry of Transportation plans and budgets for paving of highways every 15 to 20 years, but the Auditor General reports there are numerous instances of Ontario highways being replaced in five to eight years and premature cracks being found as early in the first year. This was tracked by Ministry staff in its Central Region, however typically the Ministry does not measure the performance of asphalt. Its Pavement Condition Index measures only current conditions, not how often it cracks or is in need of repair. Since 2007, the Extended Aging test was recommended for implementation, but only started being phased in in 2015, giving the construction industry time to adapt.

The Government of Ontario could save money, improve highway safety, reduce congestion and support transportation efficiency by establishing and enforcing minimum asphalt standards and measuring asphalt performance.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Encourage the Ministry of Transport to work with the transport industry to improve the quality of roadways in Ontario.
2. Improve and enforce minimum asphalt standards for all paving contracts taking into consideration the impacts of weather conditions for each region.

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<sup>128</sup> 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, Chapters 3 and 4.  
[http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en16/v1\\_310en16.pdf](http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en16/v1_310en16.pdf).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

3. Work with industry to review and update the Pavement Condition Index to include lifetime performance metrics.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **I. Investing in Northern Ontario's Highway Infrastructure**

Authored by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Co-sponsored by Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Brantford Brant Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Northern Ontario suffers from an infrastructure deficit. Continuing investment to complete the four-laning of Highway 69 (Highway 400 North) should be the first step to rectifying a critical infrastructure shortage that has limited Ontario's economic potential, ability to attract and retain workers, and connectivity both within the province and across Canada.

### **Background**

Highway 69 is the main connective road between Northern and Southern Ontario. It connects Highway 400 North with the City of Greater Sudbury (the largest municipality in Northern Ontario), where it meets Highway 17 West headed toward Sault Ste. Marie and further on to Western Canada. It acts as the funnel for Southern Ontario people, businesses, and tourists heading North and vice versa. Moreover, it is an integral link in the Trans-Canada Highway, connecting the Greater Toronto Area and Northern Ontario to Western Canada.

Despite its importance, the Highway still suffers from a lack of necessary investment to realize its full economic potential. The Highway, between Highway 559 north of Parry Sound to Highway 607 south of Sudbury, is an 81 km stretch of narrow, hilly, winding two-lane road that offers little maneuverability. In recent years, work commenced on the four-laning of a 14 km stretch of Highway 69 from Highway 607 to Highway 522, and it is expected to be completed by 2020. Plans to expand Highway 69 were originally announced in 1991, however, since that point, the project has been paused, modified and forgotten by successive provincial governments.

The provincial government should commit to completing the four-laning of Highway 69 to:

- first and foremost, unlock Ontario's economic potential;
- reduce highway closures due to accidents (often with fatalities) and inclement weather;
- help businesses who depend on this highway get their goods to market;
- improve Ontario's inter- and intra-provincial connectivity; and
- reverse Northern Ontario's declining population trends.

### **Unlocking Ontario's Economic Potential:**

Investment in highway infrastructure has long been recognized as a viable method of creating good-paying, middle class jobs. Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure would create well-paying jobs that would contribute not just to local communities, but to the province's economy as a whole, during the project and for many decades after. A 2011 study by the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers found that every \$1 billion in highway investment could support 13,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs.<sup>130</sup>

Even while Ontario's economy has improved significantly over the past few decades, most of those gains have remained contained in Southern Ontario and have not been realized in the North. In 2016, the Northern Policy Institute estimated that Northern Ontario has seen six years of negative GDP growth since

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<sup>130</sup> <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/otps/pubs/impacts/>

2000, while Southern Ontario only saw two.<sup>131</sup> Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure can help revitalize regional economies, which in turn can help unlock Ontario's economic potential.

Whether due to weather conditions or fatal collisions on the narrow, undivided road, Highway 69 is often closed for extended periods of time, adding hours to commutes and disrupting reliable access to and from Northern Ontario for businesses, residents, and tourists.<sup>132</sup> A safer and more reliable Highway 69 would have a positive impact on regional and provincial productivity by improving ease of access and mobility and reducing the time it takes to transport materials or finished goods, especially for businesses reliant on "just in time" delivery to achieve maximum productivity efficiencies. Four-laning Highway 69 would have a positive cascading effect on not just the economies around the Highway, but all of Ontario.

#### Improving Ontario's Inter- and Intra-Provincial Connectivity:

Successful inter- and intra-provincial trade is foremost dependent on the existence of a safe, reliable, and convenient highway network that allows passengers, heavy transports, and tourists to travel across the province and country. The Highway was originally designed at a time when the majority of freight traffic was still being transported by railway, and the two-lane highway cannot accommodate the increased heavy transport traffic. Frequent highway closures due to accidents, which often result in fatalities, can have a significant adverse impact on commercial activity, act as an economic and tourist deterrent, and are unsafe for drivers. Completing the four-laning of Highway 69 will help improve traffic flow, safety, and reliability for drivers and improve access for passengers driving on the highway. In its current two-lane state, the Highway negatively impacts residents, businesses, and the supply chain of the entire province.

#### Reversing Northern Ontario's Declining Population Trends:

A 2018 study commissioned by the City of Greater Sudbury estimated that Greater Sudbury is the only major urban centre in Northern Ontario expected to grow its population by 2046; every other Northern Ontario city of comparable size has been experiencing either declining or stagnant population growth since 2001.<sup>133</sup> It is difficult to attract and retain people and investment to Northern Ontario when safe and convenient transportation to Southern Ontario and other parts of Canada is inadequate. With the federal government's changes to aviation regulations risking reduced flight service in Northern Ontario, and little to no passenger rail service, building a robust highway connecting Northern and Southern Ontario is not only critical to the region's economy but to the sustainability of Northern Ontario's communities as well. The province cannot afford to neglect such alarming trends in Northern communities, as they are critical to Ontario's economy.

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Commit to investing in Northern Ontario's transportation infrastructure, namely by announcing an expeditious completion timeline for the four-laning of Highway 69;

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<sup>131</sup> <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/article/getting-the-small-things-right-how-data-suppression-distorts-northern-realities-9167.asp>

<sup>132</sup> <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1471-2458-12-1125>

<sup>133</sup> [https://vmcdn.ca/files/sudbury/pdfs-for-web/planningcommittee\\_agenda\\_180409\\_16\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://vmcdn.ca/files/sudbury/pdfs-for-web/planningcommittee_agenda_180409_16_full_report.pdf)

2. Adopt the recommendations of the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy, which include the need for connected, safe and reliable transportation systems in the region; and
3. Consider traffic volumes in relation to the rate of accidents, injury, deaths, economic advantage, and regional and northern development, as well as the potential for increased traffic volumes and economic benefits of increased volumes, when highway upgrades and improvements are studied.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **J. Empower all Municipalities to Build and Maintain Essential Infrastructure**

Submitted by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario municipalities are faced with a growing infrastructure deficit. Although the Province provides relief through a number of programs, the administrative burden to apply and subsequently report is cumbersome and the funding is inadequate in relation to the demand of a municipality's ability to pay.

### **Background**

Nearly 50% of Ontario's core infrastructure, such as bridges, roads, water systems and public transit systems, is owned by municipal governments.<sup>134</sup> They are essential support systems for our quality of life and research shows that modern, safe and efficient infrastructure increases productivity and competitiveness.

Most of Ontario's infrastructure was built in the 1950s and 1960s with modest investments and repairs in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2007 the average age of all public infrastructure in Ontario was 15.4 years,<sup>135</sup> and the municipal infrastructure deficit was an estimated \$60 billion.<sup>136</sup>

Roads, buildings and sewers built more than 50 years ago will not be capable of withstanding the increasing frequency of weather events caused by climate change. For example, water damage is now the number one cause of home insurance losses because aging sewers are incapable of handling the new, higher levels of participation.<sup>137</sup>

Municipalities have been unable to maintain adequate infrastructure for many reasons including downloading of responsibilities onto lower tier governments in tandem with reduced transfer payments from the Province, increasing costs and a limited number of revenue tools. Needs vary depending on the size of a municipality as well. Yet, investment in infrastructure would help grow local economies. Research shows that every \$1 billion invested in infrastructure creates 16,700 jobs and boosts GDP by \$1.14 billion.<sup>138</sup>

The Government of Ontario provides communities with access to predictable, formula based funding through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF), Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), and the Gas Tax for Transit, as well as application-based funding through Connecting Links. In 2020 these programs will direct less than \$1 billion towards closing the \$60 billion infrastructure gap. For some municipalities, this assortment of programs is inequitable and inadequate. The administrative burden is high, meaning that additional funds must be spent on operational costs; allocation formulas change; and because communities must compete via resource-intensive application processes, there is little correlation between need and the provision of funding.

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<sup>134</sup> Ontario Road Builders' Association. 2016. "Municipal Infrastructure Deficits." <https://orba.org/municipal-infrastructure-deficits/>.

<sup>135</sup> Mychèle Gagnon, Valérie Gaudreault and Donald Overton. 2007. *Age of Public Infrastructure: A Provincial Perspective*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2008067-eng.htm>.

<sup>136</sup> Rural Ontario Municipal Association. 2017. "Municipal Infrastructure." <https://roma.on.ca/ROMA-Content/Backgrounders/2017/MunicipalInfrastructure.aspx>.

<sup>137</sup> Insurance Board of Canada. 2012. *Telling the Weather Story*. [http://assets.ibc.ca/Documents/Studies/McBean\\_Report.pdf](http://assets.ibc.ca/Documents/Studies/McBean_Report.pdf).

<sup>138</sup> John Brodhead, Jesse Darling and Sean Mullin. 2014. *Crisis and Opportunity: Time for a National Infrastructure Plan for Canada*. Canada 2020. [http://canada2020.ca/crisis-opportunity-time-national-infrastructure-plan-canada/#note\\_0](http://canada2020.ca/crisis-opportunity-time-national-infrastructure-plan-canada/#note_0).



## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Consult municipalities on opportunities to reduce the administrative burden associated with infrastructure programs and improve the predictability of long-term funding.
2. Link funding to asset management plans to encourage strategic planning and economic development.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **K. Regional Transportation Fare Integration**

Submitted by: Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Toronto Region Board of Trade and Vaughan Chamber of Commerce; Co-sponsored by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and Mississauga Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Connectivity in modes of transit is essential to the success of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Regional Transit Plan. A crucial element of this connectivity is a one-card fare integration system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Although progress has been made in the process of fare integration, there is still more that must be done. To ensure a seamless transportation network, and to build further momentum across the wider region for fare integration, GO Transit needs to be integrated with the Toronto Transit Commission, Durham Region Transit, and other municipal transportation services. This issue must be addressed as soon as possible, to keep up with the needs of the growing population and visitors to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

### **Background**

We applaud the federal, provincial and municipal governments for making their largest-ever investments to help fund transit infrastructure within the GTHA. The present transportation system is widely viewed as inadequate and traffic congestion is now a cross-regional issue that affects all municipalities and residents in the GTHA and beyond. The ability of businesses to move people and goods, of commuters to get to work and home, of visitors to travel in and through the GTHA, and the vitality of the regional economy are dependent upon an efficient regional transportation network. This is important to both the region and the province: GO Transit and the municipal transit agencies that connect to it serve two-thirds of Ontario's population (approximately 10 million people).

Network connectivity needs to be the backbone of the regional transportation plan; transfers between municipal transit systems should be easy and efficient. Connectivity must not stop at any particular municipal boundary; rather it should be continuous throughout the GTHA and be based on an integrated fare system which incorporates "smart" card technology.

GO Transit and the nine municipal transportation agencies in the GTHA have already made progress on fare integration. Currently, GO Transit has signed co-fare agreements (allowing for discounting of fares when transferring from one transit agency to another) with eight municipal agencies. The PRESTO fare card allows users of more than one transit agency to get an immediate discount when they transfer between GO and one of the participating agencies. In addition, all the 905 transit operators (except Milton) have agreed to accept each other's transfers without additional fares.

While the TTC currently offers a co-fare, that discounted rate for PRESTO users will expire on March 31, 2020. This will once again increase costs for commuters and create incentives for people to drive and increase the wider region's traffic problems.

To illustrate the cost implications to commuters: a person commuting from their home, to the Ajax GO Station and on to York University would have to pay Durham Region Transit (DRT) a cash fare of \$3.75, GO Transit \$9.65, and then pay the TTC \$3.25, for a total of \$16.65 /per trip, an increase of 73% over what they would pay were the cost integrated into a single GO Transit fare. Alternatively, they could use a PRESTO card to pay DRT a co-fare of \$0.80, GO Transit \$8.12 and then tap their PRESTO card again at the TTC to pay \$1.60, for a total of \$10.52/per trip, an increase of 30% over what they would pay for a fare integrated into the GO Transit fare.

The implementation of a regional fare integration system is integral to the creation of a sustainable, attractive and efficient transportation network. The benefits of the move to a smart card system will support the development of further infrastructure and will make the regional transportation network more customer-friendly, leading to greater use of the network and ultimately assisting in the alleviation of regional congestion and gridlock.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Through Metrolinx, implement a fully integrated fare system at the earliest possible opportunity for the GTHA regional transportation system including GO Transit and all municipal agencies, which will make for a more customer-friendly, seamless, and affordable transit network, and help alleviate wider-region traffic congestion and gridlock.
2. Facilitate the equitable distribution of fare dollars collected by an integrated fare system among the participating regional transit operators and Metrolinx.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **L. Support for Metrolinx Big Move and ‘Next Wave’ Priority Projects**

Submitted by: Richmond Hill Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Over the past 20 years, there has been tremendous population and business growth throughout the Greater Toronto – Hamilton Area (GTHA), particularly in the 905. In fact, York Region is now one of Canada’s fastest-growing large urban municipalities with nearly 1.2 million people and approximately 25,000 new residents moving there every year. Notwithstanding the many positives that result from urban intensification, increased traffic congestion typically accompanies population growth if infrastructure investments do not keep pace, as they have failed to do in the GTHA and beyond. The average round-trip commuting time in the GTHA is now 84 minutes and many residents grapple with far longer travel times to work as a red-hot housing market necessitates more first-time home-buyers to look beyond local markets. In fact, traffic congestion is estimated to cost the economy in the range of \$7.5 Billion to \$11 Billion per year, according to a study by the C.D. Howe Institute.

This level of traffic congestion, and lack of alternative transportation infrastructure, impacts not simply those directly commuting to and from the GTHA. Lack of public transit options leads to less choice for commuters and ultimately increased vehicular traffic, which results in costs to business supply chains such as movement of goods delays.

Failure of our transportation infrastructure to keep pace in the face of unprecedented growth also affects tourists and visitors to the wider-region and contributes to air pollution and carbon emissions. Recent investments by all levels of government in public transit, including the extension of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension to Vaughan and construction of VIVA-YRT bus rapidways are welcome additions to the transportation network in York Region. It is clear that to maximize these investments in public transit infrastructure, support must be given for the Metrolinx Big Move transportation plan and ‘Next Wave’ priority projects including the Yonge North Subway Extension and the Relief Line in the context of the regional transit network.

### **Background**

Transportation and transit infrastructure is critical to the success of our region, our province and our country. For that reason we must focus on the big picture. Municipal boundaries act as transit boundaries that prevent effective movement of passengers. Transit policies and routes should be planned based upon population growth and need, not on municipal boundaries. The busiest subway in Canada, the Yonge North-South line, has not been expanded since the 1970’s. This despite the fact that York Region is one of the fastest growing areas in Canada contributing to some of the longest commute times in North America. To entice people out of their vehicles and alleviate traffic congestion, the Yonge North Subway Extension has become the top priority of the Regional Municipality of York and each of the nine municipal governments in York Region. In fact, transportation is the top local issue for the vast majority of York Region residents.

The Yonge subway extension and Relief line will complement investments made in our existing transit network and help connect the GTHA by integrating with neighboring transit options. They will also maximize the recent investments in GO Transit, VIVA-YRT, Eglinton Crosstown LRT, UP Express connectivity to Pearson Airport, and the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension. They will ensure for greater connectivity with surrounding communities.

Already included in the Metrolinx Big Move and identified as 'Next Wave' Priority Projects, developments of this magnitude will lead to new business and job creation, intensification, and the attraction of more affordable housing as well as significant environmental benefits. In fact, by eliminating the need for 2,500 bus trips that currently service a stretch of Yonge Street each weekday, the Yonge North Subway Extension has significant potential to reduce carbon emissions and eliminate up to 28 tonnes of GHG each workday. Notably, the Yonge North Subway Extension has already received \$55 million from the Province for preliminary engineering and design, a notable investment that should be maximized.

In June 2019, the Ontario government unveiled a new transit plan for the Greater Toronto Area which included a number of new subway projects including the Yonge North Subway Extension. However, this project still requires significant funding from all levels of government to become reality.

As populations continue to grow and densities rise throughout the GTHA and beyond, there is an urgent need to create connected infrastructure for future generations that ensures for the greatest range of mobility options. Projects of this size and scope require the financial support of all levels of government, over an extended duration of time. The longer we wait, the more expensive projects of this magnitude become.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the Regional Municipality of York and the City of Toronto to:

1. Together, commit the dedicated revenue and begin the construction required as soon as is feasible for Metrolinx Big Move and 'Next Wave' Priority Projects, including the Yonge North Subway Extension, given the benefits to the GTHA and wider-region for current and future generations.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **M. An Economic Connection**

Submitted by the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce, The Brockville & District Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The provincial government has pledged to assist in helping to connect all Ontarians online. Underserved areas, particularly in rural communities that harbour large agri-business, the broadband gap is significant. The provincial shortfall hinders young entrepreneurs, home-based business and primarily, the food producers throughout the entire province.

### **Background**

The impacts of the escalating broadband shortage are multi-layered. High speed has been confirmed as a “basic telecom service” by the CRTC. Now, the fast-track must begin, ensuring all Ontarians have access to it. Without it, entrepreneurs who live outside of major centers through choice and circumstance will suffer and our economy will not meet its potential. Allan Thompson, the chairman of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, said “broadband services should be treated the same as the provision of clean water, electricity, health care, education and postal services”.

Moreover, the agri-food industry is ever more reliant on technology, featuring every facet of its operation including livestock data, commodity pricing, crop research and monitoring devices. It is as hi-tech as any thriving, front-line industry.

As an example, Doug Knox, vice-president of the Guelph-based Agri-tech accelerator Bio enterprise, points to the growth of “precision” agriculture. He says, “farmers can now use sensors to extract information about everything from soil content to the growth stage of their crops, which helps to make data-driven decisions about fertilizing and planting”.

Knox works in precision agriculture and says “access to data can have a big impact on farmers' crop yields. The problem comes in having to download all that data, which could take hours with a bad connection, Knox said. The time lag is so severe that Knox said many farmers simply choose not to implement these technologies, which can affect their farm's output”.

Still, any monetary investment by the government and private sector can be balanced by economic benefits. Many communities need this digital foundation to grow and prosper. Today’s technology is essential for communications, employment, education, healthcare, doing business and ensuring critical safety networks. Despite the widespread availability of information, some public services in rural, remote and First Nations communities are unable to provide adequate access due to limited or no broadband availability. Increasing broadband investment will help ensure Ontarians have access to the digital resources no matter where they live.

To close the remote/rural and urban digital divide and in order to meet this objective, existing infrastructure across Canada needs to be upgraded and new infrastructure needs to be built. This will require a great deal of time and money and a collective effort from all levels of government and the industry. The CRTC has established a \$750 million Fund to help provide all Canadians with access to broadband Internet and mobile wireless services: The Broadband Fund.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Support the CRTC determination that broadband is a Basic Telecom Service.
2. Ensure funding for broadband is accessible to both large and small telecom companies. Many smaller providers have the expertise and existing facilities to leverage so that maximum return on investment is achieved.
3. Maximize the potential of the federal Broadband Fund by applying for investment that target the most underserved areas first.
4. Make the CRTC the sole regulator of access to the support structures of provincially regulated utilities.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **N. Provincial Transportation Network Connectedness Enhancement – Ensuring that an alternate highway option is always available from Sudbury to Toronto (Specifically the missing piece between Highway 11 and the Bradford Bypass)**

Submitted by: Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Paris & District Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Hill Board of Trade, and Markham Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Major highway transportation between Barrie and the GTA is currently limited to highway 400. From Newmarket South there are several East West connections between Highway 400 and Highway 404 allowing for alternative North/South major highway options. The need for improved North/South transportation flows has already been assessed and deemed important. The Highway 400 - Highway 404 connecting link (also known as the Bradford Bypass) has received environmental assessment approval and has been added to the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan.<sup>139</sup> The 400-404 connecting link will provide some relief, specifically to the Bradford and Newmarket areas by adding an additional connection point between highway 400 and highway 404. A significant bottleneck will continue to persist however North of the proposed Bradford Bypass to the Highway 11/400 interchange.

### **Background**

It is estimated that "By 2041, the combined population of York Region and Simcoe County will be approximately 2.6 Million People (equal to the current population of the City of Toronto)"<sup>140</sup> Simcoe County is expected to reach a population of 796,000 and employ 304,000. To facilitate this forecasted growth to population and business, improved transportation infrastructure must be put in place.

In August of 2016 a letter was sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs urging the inclusion of the 400-404 Highway Extension in the growth plan. This letter appears to have had influence as the Bradford Bypass is now visible on the growth plan map.<sup>141</sup> This letter was signed by: Wayne Emmerson, Chairman, The Regional Municipality of York; Virginia Hackson, Mayor, Town of East Gwillimbury; Margaret Quirk, Mayor, Town of Georgina; Tony Van Bynen, Mayor, Town of Newmarket; Gerry Marshall, Warden, County of Simcoe; Terry Dowdall, Deputy Warden, County of Simcoe; Rob Keffer, Mayor, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury; Gord Wauchope, Mayor, Town of Innisfil.<sup>142</sup>

Estimated Financial Impact to the Province: There will be significant positive financial impact to the Province from this project, including, but not limited to:

- Faster travel times
- Back-up options for emergency shut-downs and logistics
- Increased access to airports, jobs

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<sup>139</sup> A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (page 92): <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-greater-golden-horseshoe-place-to-grow-english-15may2019.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> Highway 400-404 Connecting Link, Making the Connection. County of Simcoe Transportation Engineering document: [https://www.simcoe.ca/TransportationEngineering/Documents/400-404%20Quick%20Facts\\_V4.pdf](https://www.simcoe.ca/TransportationEngineering/Documents/400-404%20Quick%20Facts_V4.pdf); <https://www.simcoe.ca/connectinglink>

<sup>141</sup> A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (page 92): <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-greater-golden-horseshoe-place-to-grow-english-15may2019.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> Letter to Minister Mauro on August 12, 2016 regarding Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review and the Highway 400-404 Connecting Link <http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/Assets/5+2015+Government/404+connecting+link/Letter+to+Minister+Mauro.pdf?method=1>



- Efficient transport of goods and services

From the general user perspective, the estimated financial impact to traffic delays is estimated at \$25/car/hour.<sup>143</sup> According to the Ontario Provincial Police, in 2014 there were 882 crashes on Highway 400 between Canal Road and Duckworth Street.<sup>144</sup> Each of these incidents would cause delays to drivers, whether they be single lane reductions or full highway closures.

The extension is 47 kms of a 4 lane highway. A four lane highway costs \$6.7M/km<sup>145</sup>, therefore the approximate cost of the extension would be in the neighbourhood of \$315M. Even with very conservative estimates, this would be met in user-delays alone in under 4 years, and the benefits would last decades:

103,000 vehicles/day<sup>146</sup> = 4,292 vehicles/hour

\$25/vehicle/hour \* 4,292 vehicles/hour = \$107,300/hour

882 crashes/year, estimating 1 hour delay per crash = \$107,300/hour \* 882 = \$94,638,600

The estimated economic benefit to Ontario of improved transportation accessibility has not been measured but is likely in the Billions, as unexpected shipping delays can not only lose customers, but longer supply chains also increase inventory levels and carrying costs related to financing and warehousing<sup>147</sup>. Adding the 400-404 Highway Extension will give Ontario manufacturers a means of remaining competitive in the current economy.

Without a solution to the single highway access to this part of the province, the number of vehicles per hour will go up proportionally as population density increases in this region, resulting in more lost productivity from every incident, and perhaps a stall in the current growth in the region's manufacturing segment due to the economic cost of delays.

## Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Link the Bradford Bypass (Highway 400 - Highway 404 connecting link) to Highway 11 on the West side of Lake Simcoe parallel to Highway 400.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

<sup>143</sup> *Incorporating User Delay Cost in Project Selection: A Canadian Case Study* by Ken Huen, M.A.Sc. Candidate (now P.Eng); Susan Tighe, Ph.D., P.Eng; and Brenda McCabe, Ph.D., P.Eng (page 7):

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bd21/6069cbd83e450391311ddf691d5ace02bc20.pdf>

<sup>144</sup> *Hwy. 400 crash stats in line with average*, article in The Barrie Advance by Janis Ramsay <https://www.simcoe.com/news-story/4445261-hwy-400-crash-stats-in-line-with-average/>

<sup>145</sup> Parametric estimating guide, 2011 by Statulevicius, Kai; Sosney, Paul; Wood, Kathy (page 18):

<https://www.library.mto.gov.on.ca/SydneyPLUS/Sydney/Portal/default.aspx?component=AAAAIY&record=34bc157f-2277-4728-90f0-abb32b51dfe8>

<sup>146</sup> Provincial Highways Traffic Volumes 2016 | King's Highways / Secondary Highways / Tertiary Roads; (page 32): [http://www.raqs.mto.gov.on.ca/techpubs/TrafficVolumes.nsf/fa027808647879788525708a004b5df8/f51986ea499a13b08525745f006dd30b/\\$FILE/Provincial%20Highways%20Traffic%20Volumes%202016%20AADT%20Only.pdf](http://www.raqs.mto.gov.on.ca/techpubs/TrafficVolumes.nsf/fa027808647879788525708a004b5df8/f51986ea499a13b08525745f006dd30b/$FILE/Provincial%20Highways%20Traffic%20Volumes%202016%20AADT%20Only.pdf)

<sup>147</sup> *Is Your Supply Chain Ready for the Congestion Crisis?* by George Stalk and Jr.Petros Paranikas <https://hbr.org/2015/06/is-your-supply-chain-ready-for-the-congestion-crisis>

## **O. Reducing Traffic Congestion on Ontario Highways Due to Vehicular Accidents**

Submitted by: Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Woodstock District Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Traffic congestion negatively affects the economy in numerous ways. People are frequently late to work when they are stuck in traffic, resulting in lost productivity and stress. It prevents deliveries from arriving on time, which can delay production, and congestion wastes fuel and causes vehicle emissions, thus increasing the cost of transporting goods and overall pollution levels.

### **Background**

While vehicular accidents occur everywhere, they cause less traffic delays and highway closures in some jurisdictions than others based on the response systems that governments have in place. The state of Georgia's Department of Transportation (GDOT) has implemented measures to minimize closures and delays on metro Atlanta highways. For more than 10 years, GDOT has paid private wreckage companies in metro Atlanta a \$3,500 bonus to clear truck accidents in 90 minutes or less. Since the Towing, Recovery and Incentive Program (TRIP) was launched, the average time to clear an accident plummeted from 4.5 hours to less than two, prompting GDOT to consider expanding the program across the state of Georgia.<sup>148</sup>

The agency also works to keep traffic moving by using cameras to monitor highway conditions, and dispatches Highway Emergency Response Operators (HERO) units to help drivers, clear debris, and direct traffic after accidents occur. These efforts have a measurable impact because a least 50 percent of traffic congestion in the Atlanta region is caused by accidents.<sup>149</sup>

Florida has similar programs in place under its Open Roads Policy, which sets the goal of clearing major highway incidents and truck crashes across the state in 90 minutes or less. The Rapid Scene Clearance (RISC) is a program put in place under this policy which, like Georgia's, provides financial incentives to qualified and participating heavy duty towing service providers. In addition to financial incentives of a \$600 to \$3500 bonus for meeting response and clearance deadlines, the program is successful because its tow operators must meet equipment and training standards to be eligible to participate. This is in contrast to systems in use elsewhere, where heavy-duty tow operators are called without consideration of their capabilities. The operators do not participate in a RISC-type program and so are not contractually obligated to meet training and equipment standards.<sup>150</sup>

Such efforts are part of Traffic Incident Management (TIM) quick clearance programs, which is the practice of rapidly and safely removing temporary obstructions from roadways in order to increase the safety of incident responders by minimizing their exposure to adjacent passing traffic, reduce the probability of secondary incidents, and relieve overall congestion. Quick clearance practices can result in many benefits for drivers, responders, and the environment, including decreases in:

- non-recurrent congestion delay;
- secondary incidents, including those involving responders;

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<sup>148</sup> David Wickert, 2019, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/gdot-tackles-truck-accidents-metro-atlanta-highways/ZXuWYCvFpBb9aaJihOixjL/>.

<sup>149</sup> Wickert, 2019.

<sup>150</sup> CAA, 2018; Traffic Incident Management, Florida Department of Transportation, <http://www.floridatim.com/Overview.htm>.

- response time to traffic incidents and other emergencies;
- vehicle fuel consumption;
- vehicle emissions;
- motorist stress levels;
- aggressive driving behavior;
- freight movement impacts in the region;
- regional economy impacts;
- local tourism impacts; and
- future potential land use impacts.<sup>151</sup>

While major urban areas in Canada typically have TIM practices in place, such as Ontario's COMPASS Transportation Management Centre, they are often not used to their full potential. A 2018 [CAA report](#) highlights additional solutions for non-recurrent traffic congestion based on examples of TIM programs in other jurisdictions. A key example is:

- **Freeway service patrol**, such as Florida's Road Rangers program and Maryland's Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART). Freeways are routinely patrolled by personnel who are trained and equipped to perform minor repairs, assist motorists, remove debris, provide fuel, provide first aid, push vehicles out of travel lanes and assist emergency services. Such programs reduce incident duration and prevent secondary crashes, thus decreasing congestion. For every dollar spent, freeway patrol systems bring in \$6 to \$28. A similar program, the Highway 407 ETR Highway Safety Patrol, is in place in Ontario on a smaller scale.<sup>152</sup>

Ontario could therefore benefit from similar practices given the high traffic volume on its highways, especially in the Oxford County area. Approximately 60,000 trucks pass the 401/403 junction in Woodstock each day. Additionally, Drumbo/Innerkip Exit 250 is among the worst stretches on the 401 for accidents. Inspector Tony Hymers, Oxford OPP Detachment Commander, has articulated a need for an accident reporting centre in Oxford County, similar to those in the City of London, Chatham-Kent, and the Collision Reporting Centres of Toronto, which are used to report property damage-only accidents. This gets cars off the road quickly.<sup>153</sup>

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement a proof of concept vetting program to create a pool of qualified towing companies that can be called to accidents, as well as an incentive program for contractors to clear accidents in 90 minutes or less. Test this program along the 401 from Oxford County to the westerly

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<sup>151</sup> Traffic Incident Management Quick Clearance Laws, 2008, US Department of Transportation, [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop09005/role\\_relevance.htm](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop09005/role_relevance.htm); Traffic Incident Management. FHWA, [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/eto\\_tim\\_pse/about/tim.htm](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/eto_tim_pse/about/tim.htm).

<sup>152</sup> Traffic Incident Management: Volume 1, 2018, CAA, <https://www.caa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/18-CAA-Infrastructure-Papers-TrafficIncidentMgmt-ENG-pdf>.

<sup>153</sup> Traffic Services Collision Reporting Centres, Toronto Police Service, <https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/traffic/crc.php>; Collision Reporting, Chatham-Kent Police Service, <https://ckpolice.com/collision-reporting/>.

termination of the 401 in Windsor for 18 months and report on its effectiveness. If it proves to greatly reduce congestion, implement the program for all 400 series highways.

2. Create a proof of concept accident reporting centre in Oxford County covering the areas in Oxford along the 401 and 403. After 18 months report on its effectiveness. If it proves to be effective, establish reporting centres in jurisdictions along the 400 series highways.
3. Implement a temporary highway patrol service, through which roving vehicles patrol congested and high incident areas and provide direct service to motorists in distress, from Toronto to Waterloo Region along the 401 for 18 months and report on its effectiveness. If it proves to reduce congestion, implement the program permanently.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## HOUSING

### A. Land Use Planning, Housing Affordability and Talent Attraction

Authored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

#### Issue

Provincial land use planning policies and their impact on housing prices are leading to concerns over the ability of Ontario businesses and municipalities to attract talent and investment.

#### Background

There is a rising concern over the cost of Ontario housing and the ability to attract skilled talent for current and future employer requirements.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade in collaboration with the Toronto Real Estate Board and Environics recently surveyed over 800 individuals between the ages of 18 and 39 living in the Greater Toronto – Hamilton Area regarding their insights on the housing market.

Four of five respondents indicated that high rents and home prices are impacting their capacity to save for retirement while a further 65 percent agreed that shelter costs prevent them from adequately addressing their debt. Over 80 percent of respondents were **not** interested in purchasing a condominium unit.

A November 1, 2017 Toronto Star<sup>154</sup> article indicated the Toronto Region Board of Trade initiated the survey in response to their member concerns regarding talent retention, the supply of appropriate housing, and the perceived prospects of home ownership. The issue is not a crisis however demands government attention if Toronto is to continue to attract and retain globally competitive employers and employees. The average price of a re-sale home in the Toronto region in August 2017 was approximately \$732,000, rising to \$775,546 in September.

Concern on housing is not restricted to southern Ontario. A CBC report<sup>155</sup> from April 2017 indicated that a six percent increase in Sudbury prices from 2016 is squeezing many young families and downsizing seniors out of the market.

Last March the Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA) and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) issued a media release urging “the Provincial Government to create a housing experts task force to provide ideas for increasing housing supply in Ontario, thus alleviating the growing home affordability challenges facing Ontarians.” The two organizations noted that population growth and a strong economy in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) has created a high demand housing market where supply is critically low and home prices are out of reach for many families and first time home buyers.

The OHBA and OREA provided a series of proposed measures to address the housing supply issue in Ontario including:

- Fixing the current “One Size Fits All” Growth Plan by allowing local municipalities more flexibility in creating choices in housing apart from high-densities across the downtown core areas:
- Addressing the “Missing Middle” of the housing supply - there exists a huge opportunity to modernize outdated zoning laws and build the “missing middle” of the housing supply in existing communities that are connected to transit and closer to jobs. This includes laneway housing and other multi-unit structures;

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<sup>154</sup> How Toronto’s housing costs are hampering the city’s ability to attract talent. Tess Kalinowski. The Toronto Star. November 1, 2017

<sup>155</sup> Hefty housing price jump squeezing out some buyers in Sudbury. CBC News. April 28, 2017

- Targeting infrastructure to support new housing supply and starting the process of moving homes to the market for buyers at an affordable price.

A September 2017 report from the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario (FRPO)<sup>156</sup> noted that rental demand in Ontario has reached a multi-decade high, driven primarily by robust economic and population growth, job creation, and a decline in home ownership and affordability. At the same time, supply growth for rentals has been almost entirely comprised of secondary units offered by investors in the condominium market.

The report concludes that the factors supporting growth in rental demand are projected to strengthen over the decade while supply will be restricted due to the recently introduced policy to extend rent controls affecting purpose built construction and condominium investors. Market trends clearly require a policy approach that promotes new rental development and continued investment in purpose built units and condominiums.

An October 20, 2017 media release from a coalition of construction and environmental groups including the OHBA, Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) and the Canadian Environmental Law Association indicated a widespread concern with the rush to dismantle the Ontario Municipal Board and pass Bill 139 (which received Royal Assent on December 12, 2017).

The OHBA has indicated that proposed reforms will undermine evidence-based land use planning and decision making across the province and will reduce the appeal rights for developers, ratepayers other stakeholders. The correspondence further argues the changes will have a negative impact on transparency, accountability and fairness over the way Ontario communities are planned and built.

The requirement to seriously review the land use planning system in Ontario was demonstrated by a December 2017 article in the Financial Post<sup>157</sup> where it was noted that Mattamy Homes, North America's largest private residential homebuilder, is escalating investments in the United States as "regulatory excess" sends land prices and frustration skyrocketing in Ontario.

The article further indicates that a push to curb sprawl has pinched supply and sent prices soaring. Mattamy CEO Peter Gilgan stated that there is a "complete fabrication" around how much land is available for development and the current approval process is untenable.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Initiate an economic analysis on the potential impact of rising housing prices on talent and investment attraction in Ontario;
2. Not proceed with the further implementation of the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act until the aforementioned analysis is complete;
3. As proposed by the Ontario Home Builders' Association and Ontario Real Estate Association, allow municipalities more flexibility with respect to density requirements in downtown urban core areas.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>156</sup> Ontario Rental Market Study: Measuring the Supply Gap. Prepared for the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario by Urbanation Inc. September 2017

<sup>157</sup> Regulatory overkill is driving Canada's biggest homebuilder south. Financial Post. December 19, 2017

## **B. Maximizing Growth in Built Areas**

Authored by the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce Co-sponsored by the Kawartha Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Brantford-Brant Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

In many Ontario communities, historic downtowns are a source of pride and joy. However, these downtown buildings often leave unused space on the table. This resolution offers a potential solution to help property owners, municipalities, and the province to maximize the use of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor spaces on Main Street, Ontario.

### **Background**

There is potential that there will be no complete agreement on how to accomplish this goal as many of the buildings are in private ownership. That said, the ability of the municipality and an owner to understand the full scope of a renovation or upgrading required of a building is imperative as cost, or the potential not to see a return on investment is high.

In the Places to Grow Act, there is great focus on density requirements. For a downtown such as Peterborough the requirement is 150 residents per hectare. Yet with older, sometimes heritage-designated, buildings in Ontario downtowns there are constant challenges to realizing redevelopment and infill of these spaces.

The Community Improvement Plans provide an incentive framework to address some of these concerns, however in many cases these programs tend to be overextended or see limited uptake because costs of renovations can easily outpace the incentive. Many communities have façade improvement programs, brownfields tax assistance programs, energy efficiency programs and, in Peterborough, there is even a Residential Conversion and Intensification Grant Program that provides property owners with a grant of \$10/square foot renovated as part of a Community Improvement Plan.

These programs do not adequately address the challenges most commonly faced by businesses in these core areas which are regulatory requirements that are substantially higher than when the buildings were first constructed. Ontario's Building Code, the Fire Code, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Municipal by-laws tend to make the costs of restoration exorbitant for most businesses. Many businesses do not even seek advice for fear of having their buildings closed unless costly upgrades are made to meet these requirements.

Creative approaches require architects, engineers, planners, and municipal officials to work with businesses to derive viable solutions for redevelopment. This is not something that should be done on a piecemeal basis but as an extensive program that involves systematic analysis of the key challenges and a targeted response from each municipality.

The benefits of upgrading or development of these types of units are numerous, in that, they could be used for commercial space, high end or affordable housing, help infill urban areas and become economic catalysts for continued development. The challenge is encouraging development that is not punitive on property owners, but results in buildings that are safe and occupied.

In the provincial Fall Economic Statement, the government announced a Main Streets program to potentially assist with façade improvements and digitization of central urban areas. \$40 million was set aside for this venture to "help strengthen communities' promotional, planning and implementation activities, as well as providing direct business support for capital improvements, enhanced digital capabilities and improvements to energy efficiencies." While welcomed, there is a missed opportunity to use the allotted funds to truly understand the cost of renovating older buildings in a downtown core as well as the impact of having a significant amount

of square footage be unoccupied. In order to strengthen our built areas there needs to be a good understanding of the current infrastructure needs and capabilities.

As such, this resolution proposes that the Main Streets Fund be used for a pilot project that allows private building owners and municipal officials to assess, without punitive action, the needs of a building or series of buildings in a downtown core.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Designate the Main Streets Fund to be used to for a pilot project that allows private building owners and municipal officials to study and assess, using an independent consultant and without punitive action, the needs of a building or series of buildings in a downtown core.
2. Allow for a renovation plan or commitment to be worked out that is agreeable to the property owner and the municipality.
3. Allow for a balanced approach to intensification and heritage preservation that takes into consideration a community's current building stock and its ability to function in a contemporary economy.
4. Allow for intensification districts just outside the core, but within the designated built up area that can be developed in tandem with the Urban Growth Area and not impact the current intensification numbers.
5. Study the effect of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act has on the viability of the intensification projects of existing buildings.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



### **C. Reinvest in Our Communities – Ontario version of the Michigan Community Revitalization program**

Authored by the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce Co-sponsored by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and Kingston Chamber of Commerce

#### **Issue**

Ontario has taken small steps in the right direction addressing reusing, repurposing blighted, functionally obsolete buildings or property – some of which could be historic buildings.

Some of this has been done under the Community Improvement Plan or “CIP” legislation as it is widely known, which provides some cost relief. While many believe it’s a small step in the right direction, more aggressive action can be taken at the Provincial level to generate and accelerate private investment and community revitalization – a key government goal.

The State of Michigan, which is similar to Ontario’s size in terms of population, size and economy and is Ontario’s neighbor, largest trading partner and friendly competitor, has been aggressive in participating in reinvestment in their communities. Michigan, in a non-partisan way, has had success using its Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) in part to help revitalize communities. It is an opportunity to look at successful best practices.

Under the MSF, they set up the Michigan Community Revitalization program, which for eligible properties, the State will participate up to \$10 million for loans and up to \$1.5 million in grants not to exceed 25% of the investment.

#### **Background**

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, through its chamber network in Michigan, has observed success in the Detroit revitalization over the past number of years and the MCR plan has been a factor in its success. Many communities across Ontario have similar blighted, functionally obsolete buildings or properties in communities and neighborhoods that would benefit from a similar fund set up here. This would also aid in urban re-intensification – a goal of the government of Ontario.

Some of our older, historic, industrial or dilapidated real estate is suffering. Costly revitalization, legacy issues and many regulations has led to lack of demand for many of these properties and are a significant problem for cities and towns across Ontario.

A similar community revitalization program in Ontario that could aid private sector commitment and investment can be created as a community reinvestment program similar to what they have in Michigan.

It would contribute to Ontario’s job creation, foster redevelopment of functionally obsolete or historic properties, reduce blight and could protect the natural resources of Ontario.

For the program to be successful, Ontario can borrow and adapt many of the concepts and ideas from Michigan.

#### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Authorize the appropriate Ontario government officials to meet with Michigan officials to provide the needed background and process for setting up such a fund for Ontario.
2. Create a community strategic fund similar to that of the Michigan Community Revitalization program to address properties deemed as blighted, functionally obsolete or historic resource sites

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **D. Taking a Principled Approach to Growth and the Planning Process**

Authored by the Oakville Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Growth presents a tremendous opportunity for Ontario, however this growth will require navigating complex planning challenges. The Province must take this opportunity to create a streamlined and integrated planning framework to accommodate this growth and maximize the economic growth potential of this province. Impacts on the business community must be considered.

### **Background**

In recent advocacy surveys, Oakville Chamber members have identified four pillars of policy priorities, Business Competitiveness, Transportation, Recruiting and Retaining Talent and Innovation.

Taxation, and red tape remain barriers to business success and the cost of housing and getting employees to and from work have been cited by Chamber members as challenges to attracting and retaining talent.

Growth and the planning process are integral to each of these four pillar priorities. The Ontario government is currently conducting a review of the Places to Grow Plan, the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement as well as the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT).

These reviews must ensure that the impacts on population growth, housing affordability, infrastructure productivity, the labour market and the regional economy are directly considered in growth management and are fostered and supported in the planning of our communities. A new innovative business friendly approach must be encouraged and facilitated by all levels of government to ensure the success of our business communities.

Over the next few decades, the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is expected to experience incredible growth. Ontario has been, and continue to be, one of the fastest growing jurisdictions in North America. By 2041, the population is projected to grow by 50 percent, to 13.5 million, in the GGH alone.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, the number of jobs in the region is expected to grow from 4.5 million to 6.3 million.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) released a benchmarking report examining the implications of the new LPAT on housing and growth targets for Ontario.

According to the report released by RCCAO (December 2018), The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) is at risk of missing provincial population targets. This would potentially result in 7,200 fewer new homes being built each year until 2041.

If current rates of construction continue, up to 165,600 homes are at risk of not being built over the next 23 years. That's equal to an annual loss of \$1.95 billion in GDP from residential construction activity if various constraints continue to inhibit the goals set by the provincial growth plan, Places to Grow.<sup>159</sup>

Similarly, infrastructure plays a critical role supporting the economic and demographic growth of a region. Investment in infrastructure assets such as roads, and transit is required to meet the needs of a growing population. In addition, infrastructure is crucial to attract and retain industry and employment by providing the ability to move goods and services.

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<sup>158</sup> Brad Graham and Tom McCormack, "Improving the Growth Plan: A commentary," September 2015 [http://ohba.ca/system/documents/documents/340/original/improving\\_the\\_Growth\\_Plan\\_PDF.pdf?1441817423](http://ohba.ca/system/documents/documents/340/original/improving_the_Growth_Plan_PDF.pdf?1441817423)

<sup>159</sup> The GTHA's Housing Stock: Benchmarking Ontario's New LPAT System, An independent research study prepared for the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) BY: CANCEA – Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, DECEMBER 2018, [http://rccao.com/research/files/RCCAO\\_LPAT\\_REPORT\\_2018.pdf](http://rccao.com/research/files/RCCAO_LPAT_REPORT_2018.pdf)

Since 2011, infrastructure investment in Ontario (as a percentage of GDP) has fallen or remained flat. In fact, it was below 3.0% for the 2015 – 2017 period, falling below 2.5% in 2016. It remains considerably below the target of 5.1% of GDP identified in the 2011 report. The lower levels of infrastructure investment are making it harder to achieve greater GDP growth in the long-term. To achieve maximum growth over the next 50 years, the average level of infrastructure investment will now have to increase to 5.4% of GDP.<sup>160</sup>

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Continue to undertake significant reviews of the Places to Grow Plan, the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement as well as the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, with a view to further reducing red tape and ensuring the tools are in place to facilitate economic growth and support all our communities.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>160</sup> Infrastructure Update 2018: Ontario Infrastructure Investment – Federal and Provincial Risks & Rewards  
[http://rccao.com/news/files/RCCAO\\_Infrastructure-Update-2018.pdf](http://rccao.com/news/files/RCCAO_Infrastructure-Update-2018.pdf)

## **E. Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act**

Submitted by: Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Quinte West Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario's provincial government regulations within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) enable tenants to take unfair advantage of the system. Other provincial residential or landlord tenant acts are more equitable, thereby making it more attractive for investment in that province.

### **Background**

It is our view that Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) should be changed to make it more equitable for landlords and property managers. The existing Act does not hold tenants accountable to their rental responsibilities; instead it places unnecessary financial burdens and excessive delays on landlords and property managers, and on our municipal court system. The processes in Ontario's RTA we would like to recommend changes to are in the areas of: 1) Reducing Statutory Delays; and 2) Dispute Resolution Officers at Residential Tenant board offices.

Although non-payment occurs in only 3% of cases for Ontario residential rental units the percentage is drastically higher in rental units priced under \$1,000. The current provincial government acknowledges that there is a massive shortage of affordable housing options in Ontario. A major deterrent for Real Estate investors to create affordable rental units is the inequity of the RTA. Making the Act more equitable will go a long way in attracting investment in our province in this sector and will eliminate the need for the government to get into the bricks and mortar business of providing affordable housing options. Harry Fine, a former adjudicator at Ontario's Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), who now works as a paralegal, said "once problem tenants get their hands on the keys, it's easy for them to exploit the system and drag out the eviction process. The legislation has to change. Many landlords criticize the board, but the problem is Ontario's rental regulations. The biggest problem with it is the amount of time it takes to get an eviction and how easy it is to create delays."<sup>161</sup>

#### *Reducing Statutory Delays*

Currently in Ontario if a tenant has not paid their rent, it is the landlord's responsibility to pay a \$170 filing fee and schedule a hearing after waiting 14 days before being able to file with the board. In British Columbia, if the rent is not paid, the onus is on the tenant to pay a \$50 filing fee to dispute an eviction. It is our opinion that British Columbia's Act places the responsibility in the right place: by making the tenant accountable for the expenses incurred to schedule a hearing when it is THEIR rent that has not been paid. Ontario's current process places unnecessary financial burdens on landlords and wastes valuable administrative time and associated costs: a tenant often does not attend a hearing nor are they likely to have a receipt proving their rent was paid when it wasn't. Currently a landlord needs to wait 14 days to file with the board, 30 days to get a hearing date, 3 days after the hearing to get the order, 11 days before filing with the sheriff and 3 days before the sheriff evicts the tenant. This amounts to 61 days to evict a tenant and the landlord losing 1 to 2 months of rent assuming the tenant paid a last month's rent deposit.

According to a January 9, 2020 press release, "Ombudsman Dubé announced a systemic investigation into serious delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), the administrative tribunal that resolves residential

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<sup>161</sup> CBC News September 24, 2016 Ontario Landlord Tenant Board needs new rules to evict problem tenants faster, John Rieti <http://www.cbc.ca/beta/news/canada/toronto/ontario-landlord-rules-1.3777339>

tenancy disputes. The investigation will focus on whether the government is taking adequate steps to address delayed hearings and decisions.”<sup>162</sup>

#### *Dispute Resolution Officers at Residential Tenant Board offices*

In Ontario the Dispute Resolution Officers are at the Courthouse the day of a scheduled hearing to assist with settling an issue before it is heard by a judge. However, in British Columbia, evidence can be presented by both the tenant and landlord to a Dispute Resolution Officer, and a binding ruling can be made by the Officer. This presentation can be done at a government office or by telephone conference call. This BC process avoids scheduling a hearing and using up unnecessary, valuable court time and tax dollars.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Amend the RTA to reduce statutory delays by the following ways:
  - a. Amend section 59. (1)(b) of the RTA to allow the landlord to give the tenant a notice of termination (i.e. issue and L1) within 5 days effective on the fifth day of termination, rather than the 14th day.
  - b. Provide the Landlord Tenant Board with the one-time financial resources necessary to reduce the average hearing wait time from one month to one week and the necessary performance structure be put in place to ensure its success.
  - c. Amend the RTA to return to the previous practice of requiring the non-paying tenants to file applications.
  - d. Immediately stop the practice of preventing landlords from filing with the sheriff for 11 days after an order is issued and amend provincial laws (the Courts of Justice Act and the RTA) to explicitly allow private bailiffs to enforce Landlord Tenant Board orders and to require orders that have been previously stayed to be placed in priority sequence.
2. Shorten the dispute process by more effectively using the role of a Dispute Resolution Officer at the Residential Tenant Board office. This will avoid unnecessary court hearings. An order of possession can be obtained from a Dispute Resolution Officer at the Residential Tenant Board office thereby avoiding going to hearing to obtain such.
3. Provide the Landlord Tenant Board with the funding and support needed in order to provide, expand, and expedite virtual dispute resolutions and hearings.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>162</sup> “Ontario Ombudsman to Investigate Delays at Landlord and Tenant Board,” Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario, <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/resources/news/press-releases/2020/ontario-ombudsman-to-investigate-delays-at-landlord-and-tenant-board>.

## F. Addressing Housing Shortage by Updating the Approvals Process

Submitted by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

The current approvals process for housing developments is inefficient and directly contributes to the housing shortage in the province.

### Background

Successive governments have underinvested in Ontario's infrastructure, with the expected total investment over the next five years at 2.65% of provincial GDP – less than half the target investment (5.4%) for long-term growth.<sup>163</sup>

The trend of underinvestment in infrastructure has been a consistent trend going back to the 1960s and 1970s, at the same time as Ontario's population had been growing by 1.5 per annum since 1970<sup>164</sup>. Compounding the current housing issues is the fact that Provincial housing developments have stagnated, as demonstrated in chart 2.<sup>165</sup>

This underinvestment has been exacerbated by a slow approvals system, with over 100,000 proposed housing units across Ontario are waiting for development.<sup>166</sup>

Some of the most prominent reasons for this flawed approvals process are:

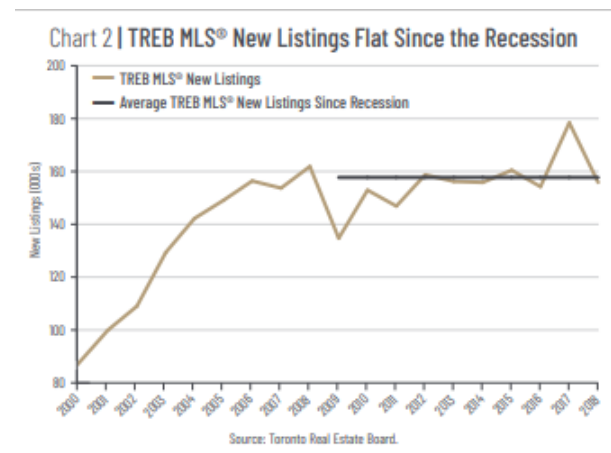
- Outdated processes: Including in areas such as zoning and building and planning permits.
- Poor communication and transparency, specifically pertaining to the relationship between municipalities and the Provincial government.
- No repercussions for municipalities missing targets for updating out of date zoning, resulting in a lack of accountability and no internal direction to solve the issue.

The government has taken steps to resolve these concerns through Bill 108; *The More Homes, More Choices Act 2019*, which includes provisions to develop more housing and mandates a reduction in decision making time. While these steps may address some of the issues, they do not provide the fundamental alterations required to fix the process.

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Have the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing conduct a full review of the current process to ascertain which areas can either be removed or streamlined. Specifically identify areas of the process (such as e-permitting) which can be moved to an electronic platform.



<sup>163</sup> <https://rccao.com/research/files/RCCAO-CANCEA-Infra-Bulletin-May-22-2019.pdf>

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/>

<sup>165</sup> [http://communications3.torontomls.net/auth2/mediafiles/Market-Year-in-Review/pdf/2019-YearInReview\\_interactive\\_2Col.pdf](http://communications3.torontomls.net/auth2/mediafiles/Market-Year-in-Review/pdf/2019-YearInReview_interactive_2Col.pdf)

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.amo.on.ca/AMO-PDFs/Reports/2019/Fixing-Housing-Affordability-Crisis-2019-08-14-RPT.aspx>

2. Develop a shared common data platform that will help the Province to establish a comprehensive e-permitting system where agencies and municipalities can link together. This can be used to streamline the application and approvals process to ensure there is no miscommunication between the Provincial and Municipal governments, while simultaneously allowing all parties to track applications.
3. Promote greater transparency in the process, possibly by legislative means or by commissioning a body in place of the OMB/LPAT. At minimum, there should be the aforementioned web-based system which gives both developers and buyers sufficient information to understand the process.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023



## **G. Addressing the Low-Income Housing Crisis**

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The chronic shortage of low-income/community housing is placing an excessive strain on municipal resources and the capacity of councils and staff to address additional issues across their portfolio of responsibilities mandated by the provincial government.

### **Background**

Ontario is the only province in Canada where community housing is a municipal responsibility. Community housing is generally defined as properties owned and operated by non-profit housing corporations, housing cooperatives and municipal governments/District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs). Municipalities across Ontario have continually stated this significant responsibility was never intended to be carried by the property tax base.

The crisis in community housing extends across Ontario to include northern, rural and large urban municipalities where there exists an aging, underfunded and inadequate supply of buildings. A sustainable funding model is required for operations and capital repairs beyond the requirement for new units to meet escalating demand.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has identified five major housing and homeless prevention priorities across Ontario. They include:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing;
- Creating a financially sustainable model for community housing;
- Expanding affordable housing options;
- Ending homelessness;
- Supporting people with their health care needs for successful tenancies.

An AMO report from August of 2019 proposes 63 recommendations to assist the municipal sector on meeting their housing challenges and are generally reflective of the five aforementioned broadly defined priorities.

The Ontario Community Housing Renewal Strategy from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing notes that when residents have adequate housing, they gain improved health, education and employment outcomes. When housing is affordable and in areas near transit, schools, and workplaces, people have the opportunity to manage their lives.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government:

1. Collaborate with the municipal sector to develop policies and work with stakeholders to increase the supply of community housing with an appropriate mix of affordable and market-rate buildings; and
2. Increase the efficiency of the provincial community housing system for long-term sustainability.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **H. Resolving Ontario's Housing Crisis to Support Economic Growth**

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce, Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, Guelph Chamber of Commerce, Port Hope & District Chamber of Commerce, Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The rising cost of housing is restricting economic growth opportunities across Ontario.

### **Background**

Businesses of all sizes in all sectors across Ontario are increasingly concerned with rising housing prices and the impacts on local business attraction and retention. An affordable housing market generally provides a stable workforce reducing employer costs for turnover and other related issues. Also, home ownership provides security for employees and improved workplace health and wellness.

The rising costs associated with both entry into home ownership and renting can also lead to higher wages which can be difficult to absorb for many Ontario employers. The current inflated market for rentals also impacts employers as employees moving to a new community are likely to initially rent, and a shortage of rental supply and housing prices can restrict the ability for assuming full time employment or home ownership.

Rural areas of Ontario have unique housing challenges, as rent can be lower than urban areas however hydro and other costs are higher. Public transportation is not available which limits the ability of employers to secure employees in lower wage occupations.

The Quinte and District Real Estate Board and Tillsonburg District Real Estate Board both tracked residential price increases of around 10 percent from 2018 to 2019. In Guelph, the average price increased from \$300,000 in 2010 to nearly \$600,000 by January 2020.

The Better Housing Policy Playbook released by the Toronto Region Board of Trade for the 2018 municipal election notes that a critical factor for attracting and maintaining talent and investment is a better supply of housing and housing options. There is a growing consensus the high cost of housing is driven by a growing shortage of supply.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) indicated in an August 2019 report that the housing crisis in Ontario is serious and widespread, cutting across all four corners of the province. The Ontario government's Housing Supply Action Plan also confirms that the province needs more housing and we need it now.

In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) net migration from other parts of Canada, natural population growth and immigration all add up to an average additional 115,000 residents annually.

The construction of new homes and apartments has fallen behind population growth, leading to an annual shortfall of about 10,000 units every year. The net result is high housing costs, renters unable to buy into the housing market, and decreasing vacancy rates.

According to BILD (Building Industry and Land Development Association), past efforts to balance the market such as a mortgage stress test and the GTA foreign buyer tax have attempted to slow demand. While demand-side policies marginally produce short-term results, the fundamental problems related to basic affordability remain unresolved.

Addressing the long-term challenge of housing in the GTA requires increasing the supply of new homes to meet demand and forcing the market into balance.

The key factors identified by BILD that are contributing to the current market are:

- A shortage of land for new development. Vacant land for housing in the GTA is estimated at 4.5 percent of total settlement lands, down from 6 percent in 2017;
- Multiple studies and reports are required to get approval for a new housing project, adding unwarranted costs;
- Excessive government fees including municipal development charges. Taxes and associated charges from all levels of government account for approximately 25 percent of the cost of an average home in the GTA;
- An annual population increase across the GTA at the above-noted 115,000 residents is creating a market where demand exceeds supply by an increasing margin.

Outside of the GTA, the median house price in Prince Edward County has increased from \$205,000 in 2008 to \$395,000 in 2018. In Kingston, the inventory of homes for sale in 2019 was the lowest in 30 years, combined with the lowest rental-vacancy rate in Ontario.<sup>167</sup>

Robert Hogue, senior economist at RBC Capital Markets, indicated a sharp rise in prices is primarily the result of the supply side not adjusting to demand.<sup>168</sup> David Wilkes, President and CEO of BILD, noted that housing supply issues extend back over a decade due to under built housing, neglected new infrastructure projects, and inattention to existing infrastructure.

In June of 2019, the Ontario Legislature passed Bill 108, The More Homes, More Choice Act. The legislation provides changes to a series of existing statutes to address and resolve the current provincial housing crisis. Municipalities and developers both expressed concerns around the province's inability to finalize regulations related to new provisions under Bill 108 and the impact on a volatile housing market.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Work with private developers and municipalities to ensure appropriate, available residential lands move to the market for development;
2. Expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects, eliminating any excessive regulatory costs;
3. Ensure the housing supply matches market demands; and
4. Complete the introduction of new regulations under Bill 108 to eliminate uncertainty at the municipal level of government and within the development sector.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>167</sup> Home Truths, Part 1. Why affordable housing isn't just a Toronto issue. David Rockne Corrigan. TVO, August 6, 2019.

<sup>168</sup> Doug Ford's fix for Toronto's housing crisis is easy. Just build more homes. Chris Fournier, Bloomberg News in the Financial Post. January 28, 2019

## **SKILLS**

### **A. Creating Pan-Canadian Training and Certification Standards**

Authored by the Mississauga Board of Trade

#### **Issue**

Each province and territory develops their own training standards and certification for various occupations, creating duplication and waste.

#### **Background**

Under the Canadian Constitution, education and training are the responsibilities of the provinces and territories (referred as jurisdictions). This has resulted in a distorted legacy, wherein each province and territory creates its own training and certification standards for various occupations. This is a costly duplication which also constrains labour mobility of both journeypersons and apprentices, negatively impacting on businesses and the economy, particularly when there are growing skilled shortages in many occupations.

Recent efforts at harmonizing existing training standards have created the “Red Seal” program which is an onerous, duplicative and expensive superstructure. The Red Seal program currently covers 55 trades across Canada, and to be eligible, a provincial/territorial certification must first be successfully completed. These provincial/territorial certifications can often be different from one province/territory to another, and having to “pass another test” limits many from attaining the national standard and benefits that go along with it.

As an example, given that electricity works the same across the country, it is counter-intuitive that variable training standards for electricians are required for different geographies. Other bi-lateral harmonization efforts between certain provinces seem to be a poor use of limited resources, when a national approach would be the best option. This is consistent with and supports the Internal Agreement on Trade and the Canadian Regulatory Harmonization Initiative.

#### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. In concert with other provinces/territories, migrate to developing Pan-Canadian training standards for various occupations where certification is required.
2. Address any unique geographical requirements for an occupation, by treating as endorsements over and above the Pan-Canadian training and certification standards.
3. Encourage individual provinces to take a lead in developing training and certification standards for a particular occupation. There would need to be a definitive time-line and a speedy resolution method to manage any dissenting viewpoints.
4. Consider alternatively, a third-party with relevant, world-recognized expertise, like the Canadian Standards Association, be contracted to develop the Training Standards on behalf of all the provinces.
5. Work with other provinces/territories and the federal government to harmonize the codes and regulations with which certified occupations must comply

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **B. Strengthening Labour Market Information for Business Competitiveness**

Authored by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce

Co-sponsored by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The province is currently operating in a data vacuum. Insufficient labour market information (LMI) limits effective funding, policy making, as well as program design and delivery.

### **Background**

Labour market information is a shared responsibility between federal, provincial and territorial governments. Although the federal government has retained the responsibility of being the primary producer of LMI, provinces have had a greater role in LMI following the devolvement of labour market programs to the provinces/territories that came as a result of bilateral Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA).

In Ontario, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) is the lead on LMI for the province. MAESD is in the process of launching a new site called Ontario Labour Market Information that provides information and reports on trends in the labour market. There also exists a network of 25 workforce planning boards across the province that address local labour market concerns, conduct research, and work with community partners in advancing issues pertaining to labour market development.

A primary concern for Ontario employers is the lack of available local and occupational level LMI. There are significant gaps in information on job vacancies across the province; currently data can demonstrate when a province is experiencing shortages but not precisely where labour is needed within regions or what specific skills are in demand. In Don Drummond's 2014 report on LMI, he cites that one of the biggest challenges is that labour market survey results are often only available on a provincial basis and are aggregated into a small number of industries, masking dissimilarities between individual occupations.

It is essential that Ontario advocates for better and more localized information. The federal government announced in Budget 2017, plans to develop a new LMI organization following the recommendation of the Advisory Council on Economic Growth, but it is not yet clear if this organization will provide LMI that is more local and granular. And while the federal government has indicated it will report LMI at the level of economic regions, this is often not detailed enough: economic regions are as large geographically as the province of Prince Edward Island and will not provide data at a local level. The example of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills Survey should be examined and advanced by the Province to the federal government. The most recent survey concluded in 2015 and gathered answers from more than 91,000 businesses across different sectors, giving the UK government local, reliable and timely information.

There is also a need to make provincial data more accessible. MAESD's new Ontario Labour Market Information site seeks to do this, but it is still under development. In order to ensure that this site does in fact make LMI more accessible, MAESD must ensure that employers are consulted throughout the development process and that the site is revised accordingly. Presently, information is not always coordinated or shared in an easily accessible and digestible manner for employers, job seekers, and decision makers. Effective development of this site should constitute a substantial step in the right direction.

Beyond a lack of internal collaboration in the province, there is insufficient intergovernmental coordination and sharing of information between the province and the federal government. The timeliness of data would be enhanced if provincial and federal governments were willing to extract LMI from the wealth of data already collected from Canadians for other purposes while ensuring the protection of private information. This includes evidence from income tax, employment insurance (EI) and social assistance purposes. Provinces do not have access to postal codes and National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes for EI recipients. This type of information regarding which regions and occupations are experiencing changes in

employment would allow Ontario to build more responsive training programs. This collaboration with the federal government and other provinces may be achieved through active engagement with the federal government's new LMI organization when it becomes operational.

Labour market policies and programs also suffer from a lack of common performance measures linked to employment outcomes. Based on existing metrics, it is difficult to evaluate program effectiveness. Both the Province and the federal government need to collaborate to establish a new governance framework to address deficiencies in the quality and sharing of information, and strive to adopt a common set of performance measures that can be applied to all government-funded employment services.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. work with the federal government, with input from the business and education sectors, on an intergovernmental strategy to establish a new governance framework to address deficiencies in the quality and sharing of LMI and one that aims to create a set of common performance measures for program evaluation;
2. advocate for the collection of more granular LMI and localized data in all future federal surveys on labour vacancies;
3. promote existing LMI more actively and enhance public awareness of what is available;
4. enhance interprovincial collaboration on LMI and consider the establishment of a cross-ministry committee to improve coordination on LMI efforts;
5. engage with the federal government's new LMI organization when it becomes operational.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **C. Closing the Skills Gap**

Authored by the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce Co-Sponsored by the Mississauga Board of Trade, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Getting people into the labour market is crucial to foster innovation, economic growth and social well-being. Ensuring the right balance between specific labour market needs and generic competencies is a challenge faced today by higher education institutions around the world.

### **Background**

Improving job readiness within an industry sector by exposing employees to specific challenges within the sector and offering training to increase their skills, is in theory a good practice. However, skeptics would argue that industry is in business to make money and if they can just as easily find the talent they need by bringing in foreign trained workers, or poaching from their competition, why wouldn't they. It's a partial solution but only a small part.

The Construction Sector Council declared that between 2012 and 2020, the construction sector will need 319,000 new workers.

Engineers Canada projects that 95,000 professional engineers will retire by 2020 and Canada will face a skills shortage because the workforce cannot be replaced fast enough.

A study by Prism Economics and Analysis for the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers concluded that there is, and will be, a "chronic shortfall between the demand for experienced engineers and the current and projected supply".

There are sector councils that can carry out labour market forecasts that will deliver a roadmap to where the jobs of today and the future lie. This can only help in producing the labour force necessary.

An analysis of the skill composition of employment based on occupation and educational attainment shows a difference between the supply of and demand for highly skilled employees in most countries. The attractiveness of research positions and skilled careers is critical for innovation. According to Rick Miner's estimates, there will be 550,000 unskilled workers who won't be able to find work by 2018. By 2021, the number could be well over a million. At the same time, it's estimated there will be 1.5 million skilled job vacancies this year, and 2.6 million by 2021, according to data cited by Chris Sorenson in, Maclean's Magazine, March 2013.

Economists call it a skill "mismatch." The skills mismatch is multi-faceted. We are confronted by a supply-demand mismatch driven in part by the decisions of students to pursue qualifications in fields with limited employment opportunities. In addition to the supply-demand mismatch, employers also emphasize that competencies such as communication, emotional intelligence, creativity, design, interpersonal skills, entrepreneurship, technological skills and organizational awareness are key indicators to the success of job candidates and employees. The deficit of these skills is often cited by employers as an obstacle in the recruitment process.

The result is an unemployment rate that refuses to fall below seven per cent (about 13.5 per cent among youth), while employers increasingly complain about vacant jobs that promise good wages—particularly in Western Canada, where the oil, gas and mining industries are booming. "The new phenomenon here is that we're going to be seeing pockets of persistent high unemployment existing right alongside serious worker

shortages in particular industries,” says Perrin Beatty, the Canadian Chamber’s CEO, in an interview in Maclean’s Magazine, March 2013.

Careers in the skilled trades are not promoted sufficiently in secondary schools and that affects post-secondary enrolment toward training for those careers.

Many Canadian organizations realize the issues and have offered concrete solutions.<sup>169</sup> “Educational institutions should focus on teaching broader skill sets to facilitate easier transitions through the labour market. Someone who can fill numerous voids within an organization becomes much more valuable than someone limited to just one, which also limits their visibility into how the organization works as a whole, and dramatically decreases their value. Using a sales example, a company would much rather hire someone that can facilitate the entire sales process from start to finish over someone that’s just good at making sales calls.

Also, create shorter, more flexible programs so adult students can upgrade their skills later in life. Plus, coordinate with employers to ensure university and college training curriculum are meeting employer needs.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Allocate new resources to post-secondary educational institutions to support experiential learning and investment in industry-relevant technology.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>169</sup> Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity “The Labour Market Shift” September 2017



## **D. Open Canada Ontario Job Grant Eligibility to Small Business Owners**

Authored by the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

Currently, business owners with a controlling interest are not eligible to participate in funded training through the Canada Ontario Job Grant (COJG). Allowing small business owners to qualify for the COJG would give them much needed tools to successfully run their businesses. Training in human resource management, leadership and management training could help small business owners remain competitive, become better employers, improve their employee retention rate and elevate their understanding of rules, regulations and best practices.

### **Background:**

The Canada Ontario Job Grant is a 6-year initiative that has been successfully subsidizing employee training since its inception in March 2014. This program helps take the financial pressure off businesses looking to improve their employees' skills by subsidizing short-term, third-party training for new and existing employees. This joint federal-provincial funding initiative is split up into provincial variants, each with its own eligibility and funding focuses. This initiative has gone some way to addressing the skills gap in Ontario, but if the small business owners cannot access subsidized funding a significant aspect of the skills gap will remain unaddressed.

While improving the skills of employees is incredibly important, where do business owners get help to improve their own skills? Most small business owners wear many hats: human resources, bookkeeping, health and safety, marketing etc. Ensuring business owners have access to funded training is an investment in their workforce, it encourages the use of best practices, knowledge of and adherence to laws and regulations and continual professional development.

Creating effective employee retention programs is a skill that is worth training for, research shows that integration into one's work group is positively related to commitment and turnover.<sup>170</sup> Employee "churn" is real, reports state that half of all hourly workers leave their job in the first 4 months<sup>171</sup> and half of all senior hires fail within 18 months.<sup>172</sup> Were these "bad hires" or was it "bad onboarding"? Failure to properly orient new employees can leave a new hire feeling un-prepared, un-supported and even unsafe. How does a small business owner know what the best practices are for orientation and on-boarding, what health and safety documentation is required, changing payroll taxes, what about new legislation and requirements?

The COJG has helped rural small businesses give the local workforce an arsenal of sought-after, transferable skills since 2014. In Prince Edward County alone, over \$150,000 has been invested to deliver employer-lead training and helped more than 50 small businesses (not including local trainers and educational institutions) since the introduction of the program.

Small business owners have training needs which remain unmet due to financial constraints, a highly trained workforce working with employers who understand their roles and responsibilities is a recipe for worker retention and attraction and directly addresses the growing skills gap.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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<sup>170</sup> Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., & Wanberg, C. R. (2003). Unwrapping the organizational entry process: Disentangling multiple antecedents and their pathways to adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 779-794.

<sup>171</sup> Smart, B. (1999). *Topgrading: How leading companies win by hiring, coaching, and keeping the best people*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. 4 Krauss, A. D. (2010).

<sup>172</sup> Onboarding the hourly workforce. Poster presented at the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), Atlanta, GA.

**The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:**

4. Allow small business owners access to Canada Ontario Job Grant subsidies for their own training needs
  - a. Encourage the federal government to allow access to all Canadian small business owners
  - b. Encourage the federal government to continue offering the Canada Job Grant after the initial 6-year program has ended in 2020
5. Increase funding to the Canada Ontario Job Grant relative to the increased demand resulting from small business owners accessing the program.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **E. Improve Workforce Competitiveness by Adopting Select for Success as a Vital Support Service for Small Business owners in Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres**

Authored by the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario is facing a threatening skills deficit and experiencing a significant demographic shift with its aging population. Small business owners in rural communities and small urban centres are constrained and negatively impacted to attract and retain workforce talent to remain competitive.

### **Background**

According to Statistics Canada, Ontario's unemployment rate at 5.5% (as of November 2017) is below the national rate of 5.9%. This is a positive news for the Ontario economy which has experienced a relatively strong economic growth in 2017.

While it's encouraging and the story appears positive, a closer look at the experience of Ontario small business owners present a different story. At least 62% of Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) members have attempted to recruit staff in the last six months but only 14% of those did not experience a challenge in hiring. Sixty percent of OCC members cited the biggest challenge as finding an individual with the proper qualification. Only 43% of OCC members are currently operating at full capacity. This number is higher (57%) among large businesses.<sup>173</sup>

Employers and small business owners particularly in smaller urban and rural centers in Ontario must be supported in its struggle to transition to a disruptive, high-skilled economy. OCC is in a unique position as an intermediary for employers and small business owners to ensure that rural communities and small urban centres have access to skills and workforce development required to compete in the global economy. This will be realized by adopting Select for Success as a vital support service for employers and small business owners in the Province of Ontario.

Select for Success, is an employer-based support program funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and lead by New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc., with regional partners, Thunder Bay Multicultural Association and Newcomer Centre of Peel. All three regions, covering western, central and northern Ontario, facilitated a three-stage process to understand employer hiring practices, devise strategies to engage employers in smaller rural and northern regions and address newcomer employment. A comprehensive list of recommendations resulted in building the framework and implementation plan for the creation of the program known as Select for Success. Select for Success, built on four years of good foundation, is scalable. It has the infrastructure and the hand holding component that is crucial for the needs of employers and small business owners.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the government of Ontario to:

1. Work with the OCC and its Chamber Network to increase awareness and promote the programs and services that are available in their communities through Select for Success
2. Promote Select for Success actively and scale the program up to effectively engage a broader number of businesses.
3. Work to enhance coordination and communication between the OCC members and Select for Success partner agencies.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

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<sup>173</sup> Survey of n=773 OCC members conducted online by Fresh Intelligence between October 25<sup>th</sup> 2016 and November 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. Survey of n=1004 Ontarians conducted by The Gandalf Group between December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017. A random probability sample of this size has a margin of error of +/-3.1%, 19 times out of 20.

## **F. Reform of Ontario Apprenticeships and Retraining**

Authored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Co-sponsored by the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The Ontario Government has continually rejected recommendations from employers across Ontario on reforming the Ontario Apprenticeship system.

Failure to address these issues is seriously eroding provincial competitiveness and Ontario is losing economic opportunities through a chronic shortage of skilled employees in construction trades and advanced manufacturing.

### **Background**

On February 7, 2018, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development Mitzie Hunter formally announced Ontario's new Apprenticeship Strategy.

The strategy, according to a ministry news release, transforms the existing Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit into the Graduated Apprenticeship Grant, promotes apprenticeships as a valuable post-secondary pathway, enhances supports to apprentices, and will ensure that students in K-12 are aware of careers in the skilled trades.

There is no reference in the new strategy to the Ontario College of Trades or apprenticeship ratios, two issues that are critically important for many Ontario employers and their chronic shortage of qualified trades. At the 2017 Ontario Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting in Sarnia, a resolution was passed to dismantle the current Ontario College of Trades and return responsibility for trades regulation to the provincial Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

The basis of the resolution was the College has not delivered on its original mandate to regulate skilled professions and more importantly resolve chronic deficiencies with the provincial apprentice system. As noted in the 2017 resolution, the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio has not been significantly revised by the College and the province remains dependent upon antiquated labour laws and a 1970s apprenticeship model that rewards a few well-connected stakeholders.

For some categories of electricians, the journeyman to apprentice ratio is 6 to 1. These regulations do not address the interests of employers or the general public the College of Trades is mandated to protect.

As the College fails to address these issues, opportunities are being limited for young, laid-off and immigrant workers seeking careers in the high-demand skilled trades.

The 2017 Ontario Budget committed to, as noted in Minister Sousa's budget speech, a recalibration of the Second Career program which was critical for unemployed workers integrating back into the provincial workforce during the 2008 recession. Second Career did assist many employers in advanced manufacturing, health care and the construction trades however as the Minister's Budget statement indicated it is currently not functioning near optimal levels. No further announcements have been made subsequent to the 2017 Budget tabling.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Immediately address employer concerns on the apprenticeship system by abolishing the Ontario College of Trades and reforming the process for determining journeyman to apprentice ratios;

2. Meet the commitments of the 2017 Ontario Budget to re-start the Second Career program

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **G. Closing the Gap on Financial Literacy for Ontario's Youth**

Authored by the London Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

Given the current levels of unprecedented household debt and an increasingly complex financial system, Canadian youth must be educated about the intricacies of current day personal finance including borrowing, investing and taxes.

In the summer of 2017, EQAO test scores revealed that half of Ontario's grade six students failed to meet provincial standards in math. Education Minister Mitzie Hunter acknowledged the problem amid calls to overhaul the math curriculum.<sup>174</sup> Troubling as these results may be, the lack of basic math skills is not merely an academic concern. According to the National Balance Sheet and Financial Flow Accounts released September 15, 2017, by Statistics Canada, Canadian households borrowed \$28.9 billion in credit market debt and \$16.5 billion in mortgage debt. Consumer credit and non-mortgage loans increased by \$6.1 billion to \$12.3 billion. Conceptualized at a household level, Canadians borrowed \$1.68 for every dollar of disposable household income.

Climbing household debt is increasingly concentrated among younger Canadians, with the most indebted borrowers tending to be under 45 years of age.<sup>175</sup> Young Canadians are taking on record levels of debt from several sources including post-secondary education, big-ticket purchases such as homes and vehicles, and credit cards.

As a group, younger Canadians tend to have inadequate financial knowledge to navigate the complexities of present-day personal finance. According to a PriceWaterhouse Cooper study, only 24% of millennials demonstrate basic financial literacy and only 8% showed a high level of financial literacy. In the 2017 BMO wealth management survey directed towards millennials, 23% of survey participants cited paying down debt as the highest financial priority. Further, 41% reported that retirement was too far away for them to consider saving for retirement and that paying down debt was a more immediate concern.<sup>176</sup>

It is imperative that youth in Ontario graduate high school as financially literate young adults or these troubling statistics will only worsen. A consumer debt crisis is brewing.

### **Current Situation:**

Ontario legislators have attempted to address the issue of financial literacy through various policies. Member of Provincial Parliament, Vic Fedeli, introduced a Private Member's Bill in the fall of 2016 titled "An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to a comprehensive financial literacy course".<sup>177</sup> The bill sought to amend Ontario's Education Act to require secondary school students to pass a financial literacy course in grade ten in order to graduate. This bill passed through first reading on November 16, 2016, however, MPP Fedeli withdrew his bill due to the Ontario Government's announcement of a pilot project to tackle the same issue.

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<sup>174</sup> Alphonso, Caroline "Half of Grade 6 students fail to meet Ontario math standards" *Globe and Mail* Aug 30 2017 available online: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/half-of-grade-6-students-fail-to-meet-ontario-math-standards/article36124763/>.

<sup>175</sup> Blatchford, Andy "Household Debt Among Young Canadians Is Key Economic Vulnerability: BoC" *Huffington Post* Dec 15 2015 available online: [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/12/15/canada-s-key-vulnerability-of-household-debt-highest-among-younger-people-boc\\_n\\_8812124.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/12/15/canada-s-key-vulnerability-of-household-debt-highest-among-younger-people-boc_n_8812124.html).

<sup>176</sup> BMO Wealth Management, *Generation Why! BMO Wealth Management Report*, Cdn Edition Jul 2017 available online: [https://www.bmo.com/assets/pdfs/wealth/BW\\_report\\_generation\\_why\\_E04.pdf](https://www.bmo.com/assets/pdfs/wealth/BW_report_generation_why_E04.pdf).

<sup>177</sup> Bill 69, *An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to a comprehensive financial literacy course*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess, 41<sup>st</sup> Leg, Ontario, 2016 (first reading).

On March 23, 2017, Minister Hunter announced 29 pilot projects across the province to implement financial literacy as one of four units into the career course required of all Ontario grade ten students scheduled for the 2018-2019 school year.<sup>178</sup> This policy roll-out received some push-back for not going far enough, particularly from Money School Canada executive director Tricia Barry. Barry's criticism focused on a lack of sufficient budgeted funds for professional development for teachers expected to teach the program, and the lack of core money management concepts in the curriculum.<sup>179</sup> The government modified the pilot program to include greater content related to budgeting and financial management, a new module on digital literacy and a dedicated coordinator for each school board.<sup>180</sup>

Opinions vary on the above-noted approaches. Some critics suggest that high school is too late and that the education should begin as early as grade six, while others feel that an entire course dedicated to financial literacy is not the answer as such a policy would require something else to be deleted from the curriculum in order to accommodate it. Notwithstanding the divergent approaches, it appears there is a consensus on the following:

- Consumer debt is at an alarming high and climbing;
- Our banking system is more complex than ever;
- Young people are amassing substantial debt and have limited financial literacy; and,
- If this issue is not addressed promptly, the Ontario economy is in trouble.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:**

1. Create mandatory elementary and secondary-level courses aligned with the Ministry of Education's Transformation Steering Committee's guidelines<sup>i</sup> that address the following:
  - a. The fundamentals of Canadian banking system;
  - b. Calculating and understanding various types of debt such as compound interest, bank loans, OSAP, credit cards, lines of credit, secured and unsecured loans, and mortgage payments;
  - c. Retirement planning;
  - d. Saving;
  - e. Securities;
  - f. Financial products such as RESPs, RRSPs, and TSFAs ;
  - g. Basic income tax; and
  - h. Business financing and entrepreneurship.
2. Provide regular continuing professional development training for teachers required to teach this aspect of the curriculum with measurable standards teachers are required to meet.
3. Involve various stakeholders such as banks, credit unions and the province's accounting body to assist with curriculum development.

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<sup>178</sup> Ministry of Education, "Preparing Students to Thrive in Ontario's Innovative Economy" Mar 23 2017 available online: <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2017/03/preparing-students-to-thrive-in-ontarios-innovative-economy.html>.

<sup>179</sup> Levy, Sue-Ann, "Ontario's students are financially illiterate" Toronto Sun Jun 12 2017.

<sup>180</sup> Ministry of Education, "Financial and Digital Literacy Coming to Career Studies Course Next September" Nov 3 2017 available online: <https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2017/11/financial-and-digital-literacy-coming-to-career-studies-course-next-september-1.html>.

4. Implement a standardized survey or test for students participating at various levels of this curriculum requirement to measure financial literacy rates among youth in Ontario.
5. Consult organizations such as junior achievement that have been delivering financial literacy programs for over 57 years.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



## **H. Addressing Local Labour Market Needs through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program**

Authored by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Co-Sponsored by Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Timmins Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, and Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Employers across Ontario, but particularly in small cities of under 200,000 population and rural areas, are experiencing a shortage of qualified employees and a shrinking labour market. This challenge will continue to grow as existing workers retire.

### **Background**

Many employers are already facing a shortage of qualified employees and communities are struggling with a shrinking labour market. According to research by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, finding someone with proper qualifications is the top challenge for businesses looking to recruit new staff.<sup>181</sup>

One part of the solution to the skills shortage challenge is through progressive immigration policies and processes. The current Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) is one area where Ontario's policies put us at a disadvantage in attracting migrants to meet our labour market needs. The list of eligible professions is narrow and does not include many of the professions that are experiencing shortages such as plumbers, chefs, personal support workers, and truck drivers.

To add further challenges, the OINP requires employers to obtain a labour market impact assessment (LMIA) prior to offering a job to a recent migrant. This LMIA uses provincial information in determining whether a job can be offered to an immigrant. Employers in small and rural communities who are unable to attract Canadian citizens from major urban centres are often denied the opportunity to hire an immigrant because the LMIA data shows that sufficient Canadian citizens are available to fill the role but does not consider whether Canadian citizens are willing to relocate to that area.

A third area of concern is that the OINP does not allocate any of its 6,600 nominated spots to support regional immigration. Between 2011 and 2016 more than three-quarters of all immigrants to Ontario (both Federal & OINP) arrived in the Greater Toronto Area. The OINP would be best utilized by supporting the attraction efforts of communities outside of the GTA.

The Manitoba Immigrant Nomination Program demonstrates the efficacy of being flexible. It includes a much broader list of eligible professions, does not require a LMIA, and provides local communities the opportunity to nominate a certain number of migrants to address local labour shortages. This approach has seen positive results. Each year, some 15,000 immigrants arrive in Manitoba. According to provincial data, 90 percent of Manitoba nominees are employed within their first year and over 130,000 Provincial Nominees have landed since 1998 with a 90 percent retention rate.

The expansion of the list of in-demand jobs to include NOC skill level C, the elimination of the need for a labour market impact assessment for small and rural communities, and the allocation of a percentage of nominee spots by region would improve the ability of small and rural communities to address labour shortages through the OINP.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

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<sup>181</sup> Ontario Chamber of Commerce. 2017. *Talent in Transition: Addressing the Skills Mismatch in Ontario*. <https://occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Talent-in-Transition.pdf>.

1. Implement changes to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program by:
  - a. expanding the list of eligible professions to include NOC skill level C positions that are in demand in each community;
  - b. allocating OINP spots on a regional basis to address labour market needs; and
  - c. working with the Federal Government to eliminate the requirement for a labour market impact assessment for OINP participants to be hired in Ontario communities with populations under 200,000.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **I. Address the Growing Labour Force Disconnect by Creating a Stronger Business/Commerce Curriculum**

Authored by the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce and Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The long-term competitiveness and productivity of the Ontario economy will largely depend on the skill level of our workforce. Financial literacy is in high demand by employers, however, the Government of Ontario has yet to introduce and mandate an essential financial literacy course in the secondary school curriculum to prepare students to make informed business decisions in the workforce.

### **Background**

The new Ontario economy requires businesses to embrace innovation and seize opportunity to remain competitive. Innovation involves investing in technology or modifying the work process to do things more efficiently, requiring less labour for the same output. This can make it difficult for local manufacturing companies to compete with the labour rates of emerging economies. While the core business may remain in Ontario, much of the lower level work will be done abroad.

These trends will cause the new Ontario economy to require relatively fewer employees and more business owners. Many citizens, including people with non-traditional business backgrounds such as the trades, will need to run their own business.

Ontario's future economy will also require residents to be better money managers. Currently, middle- and high-income households are not saving enough for retirement, although most have the tools to do so, as noted by the government's 2014 Budget and Long-Term Report on the Economy.<sup>182</sup> Canadian household debt hit record levels in 2015 with roughly 80% of the population in debt.<sup>183</sup>

Including a mandatory introduction to business and commerce course with financial literacy components as a compulsory credit to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma will provide all high school students with a basic understanding of how to run a business and manage household finances. Key concepts could include how the different forms of debt and investments work and how to construct a business plan and how to create a budget.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create a mandatory grade ten Introduction to Business and Commerce course from existing business and family economics curriculum and designate it as a compulsory credit to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
2. Dedicate a specific section of the course to financial literacy. This would include but not be limited to personal and family budgeting, the value of credit, mortgages, insurance, debt management, and accountability to pay.

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<sup>182</sup> Ontario Ministry of Finance. 2014. *Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy*. <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/ltr/2014/ltr2014.pdf>.

<sup>183</sup> Bank of Montreal. 2015. "The Canadian Debt Picture: Home and Auto Buying, Renovations and Education Top List of Household Debt Contributors." <https://newsroom.bmo.com/2015-08-12-The-Canadian-Debt-Picture-Home-and-Auto-Buying-Renovations-and-Education-Top-List-of-Household-Debt-Contributors>.

3. Promote in all school districts in the province, the Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) program, a ministry-approved specialized program that allows students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while meeting the requirements to graduate from secondary school.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **J. Improve Workforce Competitiveness for Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres by Creating a Flexible Apprenticeship Program**

Authored by the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Guelph Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Rural communities and small urban centers are under great pressure to attract and retain workforce talent. A flexible apprenticeship system is a way to meet that challenge and have a positive impact on Ontario's economic output.

### **Background**

Expanding Ontario's skilled trades labour pool is critical to the continued transformation of Ontario's economy. Skilled trades are fundamental to creating value as a base for economic activity in all businesses in the province. However, some businesses in the skilled trades sector are at a disadvantage because of the reality of limited opportunities in the geographic region in which they operate. Discussion around rural and smaller urban center opportunities vs. larger urban center opportunities in the skilled trades sector has led to a general consensus that the need is simply different in the smaller urban centers and rural communities and the opportunity to take on more apprentices is reflective of a different workload and pace between smaller and larger communities.

In November 2018, the provincial government announced that all ratios for all trades would become 1:1 – one journeyperson to one apprentice. This 1:1 would apply across the board, so that a business with two journeypersons could have two apprentices. This was not the case for many years and our Chamber membership recognizes and welcomes the government's stance as an important step forward to mitigating the skilled trades gap that currently exists.

That said, the reality is that the 1:1 ratio status is not the only solution. The apprenticeship system needs to continue to demonstrate flexibility, particularly for businesses in smaller urban and rural centers. Not only would this flexibility support employers but create more opportunity for the people of Ontario to live and work in their home communities.

In a previous policy resolution (Improve Workforce Competitiveness for Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres by creating a Flexible Apprenticeship Program, 2016), we suggested a pilot program for Ontario that mimics a program in Nova Scotia.

In Nova Scotia, where they have a 1:1 ratio, employers can apply for a ratio increase for the number of apprentices per journeyperson on a per project basis. A form is submitted online and reviewed by the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) based on the following criteria:

- Geographic location of the employer to determine if there is a limited capability to locate and employ journeypersons;
- Steps undertaken by the employer to hire more journeypersons;
- Whether the employer has previously requested ratio adjustments and has been denied such requests;
- Whether previous ratio adjustments were cancelled because of a violation in the terms and/or conditions;
- The availability of senior level apprentices (note: senior level refers to final level apprentices); and
- The attendance of registered apprentices in technical training.

This program has been in place for over a decade and the NSAA says it receives 40-50 requests per year. While the NSAA was unable to provide statistics on the program, they did say that ratio variances are generally approved.<sup>184</sup>

Flexibility in the apprenticeship system is also evident in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland where there is a ratio of one journey person to two apprentices to reflect demand; and as highlighted in the Tony Dean Review on the Ontario College of Trades, British Columbia has never had mandatory ratios.

As they did in 2016, employers in 2018 continued to identify workforce as the key to success. In the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2017 Business Confidence Survey, 77% of employers identified the ability to recruit and retain talent as being critical to their competitiveness.

Between the Dean Review and a Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development report in early 2018 on the apprenticeship system, there has been ongoing agreement between stakeholders that change is required.

Currently, apprentices need to rely on journeypersons and employers to help them with their education and training, which in turn helps the apprentice to successfully write their Certificate of Qualification and to become certified in their trade. In smaller urban and rural communities where the pool of employers and journeypersons is much smaller, having a flexible ratio system is critical to workforce development in the skilled trades, and to long term and sustainable economic growth across Ontario.

The proposed pilot project, based on the Nova Scotia model is an opportunity, in the short term, to gather data and assess the need of small and medium-sized employers in different regional and geographic areas of the province.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement a three-year pilot project that would allow small and medium-sized employers in rural communities and small urban centers across Ontario to apply for an apprenticeship ratio increase.
2. Compile and assess the data from the pilot project to inform future programming and policies.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>184</sup> Email correspondence with Kim Kennedy, Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency received December 16, 2018.

## **K. Addressing Ontario's Skills Gap at the Secondary School Level**

Authored by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Huron Chamber of Commerce – Goderich, Central and North Huron, the Newmarket and Vaughan Chamber, the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Widespread concerns have been expressed over the potential supply of workers in the trades. Currently, Ontario is facing a skills gap as the number of young tradespersons has dropped and fewer still are enrolling in college programs to replace an aging workforce.<sup>185</sup> With stigmas surrounding trades work and fewer secondary schools offering skilled workshop programs, Ontario is in need of a service skills strategy to promote career pathways in the skilled trades.

### **Background**

Employing just over 925,000, the trades industry is one of Ontario's largest employers.<sup>186</sup> In the next few years, it is estimated that 60,000 workers will be required to replace those retiring, who will take essential technical, supervisory, and management skills with them. Furthermore, an additional 75,000 workers will be needed to fill positions related to new projects.<sup>187</sup> The construction and maintenance industry will also need to hire, train, and retain almost 103,900 additional workers as just over 90,000 of Ontario's current construction labour force are expected to retire.<sup>188</sup>

Available work in support services levelled out in 2017, and unemployment rates in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction returned to historically low levels in 2017.<sup>189</sup> There will be a 47 percent gap for technical occupations, 56 percent for supervisors and foremen, 18 percent for skilled trades and 10 percent for production workers. The industry will need to hire roughly 18,000 people in these occupations from 2018 to 2027, but is only expected to secure 8,500 new entrants, leaving a total gap of 9,500 – meaning about half of all vacancies will go unfilled.<sup>190</sup>

However, enrollment trends are exacerbating this issue: Ontario's colleges are seeing a decline in enrollment in the trades as only 26 percent of young adults are considering a career in the skilled trades.<sup>191</sup> There are stigmas that present barriers when attracting youth to the trades- the perception that the sector offers limited opportunities for learning, growth and social mobility impacts their decisions in choosing career pathways in the trades. Having long been perpetuated by parents, students are still adhering to a "university-first" culture much to the detriment of Ontario's economic requirements. Ontario needs tradespeople who can build, repair and maintain its infrastructure and systems.<sup>192 193</sup>

Furthermore, enrolment in undergraduate mining engineering programs dropped 12 per cent between 2015 and 2016 – the largest decline of all engineering programs. The evidence shows that there are skills gaps in important areas of the economy, owing largely to changes to the province's industrial and technological

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<sup>185</sup> <http://www.mining.com/mining-jobs-canada-go-begging-mihr-report/>

<sup>186</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-december-2018>

<sup>187</sup> [https://www.rainbowschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SHSM\\_Construction.pdf](https://www.rainbowschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SHSM_Construction.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> Buildforce Canada, "Construction & Maintenance Looking Forward", Jan. 2019

<sup>189</sup> <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/thousands-of-mining-workers-needed-to-meet-demand-in-next-decade-report-1125120>

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> <http://rescon.com/reports/files/DAWSON-REPORT-OHBA-report.pdf>

<sup>192</sup> Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, "Making Apprenticeship a National Skills Priority", Aug. 2018. [http://caf-fca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FINA\\_Aug2018.pdf](http://caf-fca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FINA_Aug2018.pdf)

<sup>193</sup> [https://www.collegeoftrades.ca/wp-content/uploads/Trades\\_Today\\_Spring\\_2016\\_Web\\_Final-2.pdf](https://www.collegeoftrades.ca/wp-content/uploads/Trades_Today_Spring_2016_Web_Final-2.pdf)

profile. Moreover, given longer-term demographic trends, skills gaps will widen and labour shortages will continue to emerge.

That skills gap comes at a significant cost for Ontario, costing the provincial economy up to \$24.3 billion in forgone GDP and \$3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues- a result of too many young Ontarians being encouraged to pursue a university education over a career in the skilled trades.<sup>194</sup>

The province cannot afford a failure to maximize its human capital potential through insufficient or poorly aligned training and education. Even with Ontarians' high level of post-secondary education, more is needed, along with better efforts to align skills development with skills requirements and encourage secondary school students to choose career pathways in the skilled trades. Failure to take action on skills gaps will have enormous impacts on the economy, firm performance, and economic well-being.

Historically, the Province has provided support to employers with internships for hiring secondary student through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund internship programs which was efficient in encouraging employers to help individuals build skills.<sup>195</sup>

Ontario needs to act proactively to mitigate future labour market pressures. Generating new interest in the trades in Ontario is crucial, as an aging workforce looks to retirement.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Develop and implement strategies and initiatives that enhance exposure to the trades at the secondary school level.
2. Work with Ontario's employer community and post-secondary institutions to determine and promote in-demand skilled trades to secondary schools.
3. Develop trades camps for youth in partnership with secondary schools and local colleges to further enhance exposure to the trades.
4. Provide financial assistance and insurance for employers who take secondary school students on trades-related placements.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>194</sup> [https://www.collegesontario.org/Need to Make Skills Work Report June 2013.pdf](https://www.collegesontario.org/Need%20to%20Make%20Skills%20Work%20Report%20June%202013.pdf)

<sup>195</sup> Ontario College of Trades, "Trades Play a Leading Role", 2016



## **L. Keeping the Best Pieces of the Ontario College of Trades in the Wind Down**

Authored by the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Kingston Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

There were some pieces of the Ontario College of Trades that were working and should be kept as the program is repatriated to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

### **Background**

With the passing of Bill 47, the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018*, the call to wind down the Ontario College of Trades was made official. Since the College started operation in 2013, there has been concern from the skilled trades and the Chamber Network as to its true value to the employer, the trades, and the public.

That said, we have since learned that there were parts of the College that our Chamber members found useful to their business and to their customers, the people of Ontario.

One of these parts was the public registry. The registry that indicates whether or not the business or person is in good standing with their qualifications, how long they've been active and is reflective of all members in the compulsory and voluntary trades in Ontario.

"If keeping the registry helps increase the professionalism of the trades without driving the costs of being a tradesperson up then I am fully behind it."<sup>196</sup>

"We often direct potential customers to the register as a way to confirm that our company was in good standing."<sup>197</sup>

Both members also see it as a way to discourage the underground economy if set up in a way that is advantageous to tradespeople and not prohibitive, particularly around cost.

If promoting the skilled trades continues to be a mandate of the new regime then a public registry would go a long way toward fulfilling that mandate.

The second area that our members felt was a benefit to their profession was the commitment to reduce barriers for internationally qualified tradespeople to become qualified in Ontario. It is anticipated that most of Ontario's workforce of the future will be coming to our province through immigration channels. Creating clear pathways for assessing certification and capabilities in a timely manner will allow more new Canadians to work in the skilled trades economy sooner.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Keep the public registry for skilled tradespeople operational.
2. Create clear pathways for international and interprovincial skilled tradespeople to transition smoothly into the Ontario economy.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>196</sup> Email correspondence with Chamber Member on Monday, December 10, 2018.

<sup>197</sup> In-person meeting with Chamber Member on Monday, November 5, 2018

## **M. Strengthen Connectivity Between Businesses and Post-Secondary Institutions**

Authored by the Whitby Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Brock Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Skills and workforce development remains a top issue for a thriving business climate. Ontario businesses require access to job ready and experienced graduates who meet their needs in order to scale up and grow. The provincial government can support stronger linkages between post-secondary institutions and businesses to ensure the supply of skilled employees meets the demand of businesses.

### **Background**

Upon hire, small businesses require new graduates to have the right skills and experience in order to hit the ground running and to contribute to the business as quickly as possible. Ensuring students in college and university receive hands-on learning opportunities while still attending school presents a huge advantage to both parties and the economy as a whole.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) perceive barriers to providing these experiential learning opportunities to students, such as, costs of student compensation and training and other administrative and operational requirements.

As a result, these barriers limit the number of opportunities for experiential learning to be gained, thereby limiting the potential for businesses to have access to the experienced talent they otherwise could.

On the one hand, businesses benefit from new post-secondary graduates being adaptable and prepared for the unknown jobs of the future, and armed with a skillset that includes critical thinking, problem solving, communication and teamwork. These skills help workers thrive in changing environments and are seen as critical to success in any business.

A greater number of small businesses, in particular, stand to benefit from new thinking and ideas based on emerging research gained through deeper ties with post-secondary institutions. These initiatives also provide small businesses with access to high quality employees and strengthen their ability to recruit graduates equipped with the skills they are looking for.

On the other hand, a post-secondary education that offers both rigorous academic programs and hands-on experiential learning<sup>198</sup> has been proven to help develop the adaptable skills employers need. Eighty-six per cent of current students and recent graduates in Canada have said experiential learning led to an easier transition from post-secondary to a successful career.<sup>199</sup>

While universities and colleges have developed vital services and programs to engage employers and students in experiential learning, providing an adequate supply of these opportunities to meet student demand is a continuing challenge.

That is why early and strong collaboration between post-secondary institutions and business will help ensure students graduate with the skills necessary for today's employers and the jobs of tomorrow.

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<sup>198</sup> Experiential learning is when students learn by doing, using their theoretical knowledge in practical, real-life, or work-related situations. There are many types of experiential learning opportunities designed to give students practical skills, including co-ops, work placements and internships, as well as projects in which students work on finding solutions for employer or industry challenges.

<sup>199</sup> "Work Integrated Learning And Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think." Abacus Data, Fall 2016

Increasing the supply of experiential learning opportunities is also an opportunity for small businesses. Small businesses make up 98 per cent of total businesses and two-thirds of private sector employment in Ontario.<sup>200</sup> Their involvement is particularly critical, as the SME category includes a growing number of start-ups arising from innovation and entrepreneurial activities across the province.

There is an opportunity for government to facilitate more linkages between small businesses and post-secondary institutions to create more hands-on learning opportunities for students.

This can be achieved by building upon existing programs that incentivize small businesses to hire students and recent graduates, as well as exploring new programs that encourage employers to work with universities and colleges to offer additional experiential learning initiatives.

There is also an opportunity for the government to prioritize the marketing of existing programs to employers to help raise awareness of these opportunities.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. In collaboration with small businesses and post-secondary institutions, explore new programs to incentivize greater employer participation in experiential learning initiatives, including, but not limited to, co-op education, work placements, internships, industry-recognized in-class projects, mentorship programs and incubators, accelerators and innovation hubs.
2. Expand the Co-operative Education Tax Credit.
3. Introduce a tax credit available to employers who hire graduates of co-operative education or equivalent programs that allows employers to claim a percentage of wages and salaries for the first year of full-time employment.
4. Direct business-facing Ministries to prioritize communicating new and existing opportunities to support experiential learning opportunities and the associated benefits.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>200</sup> Statistics Canada. 2016. Key Small Business Statistics – June 2016.  
[http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h\\_03018.html#figure2-1-1](http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h_03018.html#figure2-1-1).

## **N. Improving Indigenous Education in Ontario**

Submitted by: Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce and the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Workforce shortages are among the most significant challenges for Ontario businesses, and it is widely recognized that Canada's Indigenous people – the fastest-growing population in the country – must be a key component of Ontario's strategy. While educational attainment for Indigenous people has been on the rise, more must be done to ensure that all Ontarians have the education and training needed to succeed in a modern economy.

### **Background**

This diverse population has typically had lower educational levels than the general population in Canada. Results indicate that, while on the positive side there are a greater number of highly educated Indigenous peoples, there is also a continuing gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Data also indicate that the proportion with less than high school education declined, which corresponds with a rise of those with a post-secondary education; the reverse was true in 1996. Despite these gains, however, the large and increasing absolute numbers of those without a high school education is alarming.<sup>201</sup>

More must be done to close attainment gaps in Indigenous education: almost half of the Indigenous population of working age has some form of post-secondary qualification<sup>202</sup>, as compared to the two-thirds of the non-Indigenous population of the same age.<sup>203</sup> Additionally, 10 percent of the working-age Indigenous population has a university degree, as compared to the non-Indigenous population's 26 percent.<sup>204</sup>

Bridging this gap would have a considerable economic impact: if the education and labour market outcomes of Indigenous Canadians were to reach the level of the general population by 2026, government spending would drop by \$14.2 billion, while increasing Indigenous income by \$36.5 billion.<sup>205</sup>

As the provincial government is responsible for education of the Indigenous population living off reserve, Ontario's efforts to address these responsibilities falls within the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. It allows for enhanced investment in and collaboration between the various components of the provincial education system serving Indigenous students. It also places much-needed emphasis on the unique learning styles and cultural perspectives of Aboriginal students in provincial curricula, assessment practices, and professional teacher development.

Another key element is the presence of nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario, which represent vital stakeholders. These organizations deliver accredited post-secondary programs in partnership with colleges and universities through unique, culturally-sensitive delivery models that blend face-to-face learning with online courses and independent study.

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<sup>201</sup> Gordon, C. E., White, J. P. (2014). Indigenous Educational Attainment in Canada. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 5(3). Retrieved from: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol5/iss3/6> DOI: 10.18584/iipj.2014.5.3.6

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Statistics Canada, "Educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada", National Household Survey 2011

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Drummond, D., Sharpe, A., Murray, A., & Mask, N. (2017). *The Contribution of Aboriginal People to Future Labour Force Growth in Canada* (pp. 1–36). Ottawa, ON.

Despite their key role, they remain outside the Ontario post-secondary system. Unlike provincially accredited colleges, they do not receive government capital or operational funding, instead receiving only funding for program delivery. The 2015 Ontario budget temporarily sought to address this issue, with a three-year funding envelope and a commitment to develop a policy that permanently brings the Indigenous Institutes into the post-secondary system. Following through on this commitment is crucial, as it will bolster Indigenous Institutes' long-term sustainability.

In November 2017, the provincial government passed the Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017 that provided a funding mechanism for provincially funded Indigenous Institutes and incorporated them into the post-secondary system.<sup>206</sup> While this is encouraging, it is time for the government to act on these intentions and begin providing funding.

Further support must also be provided through better access to data. While national census data provides some perspective, there remains a significant lack of information about whether Indigenous post-secondary education and training needs are being met in Ontario.

Among other areas, there is insufficient data on issues such as enrolment, graduation rates, and program effectiveness – information which is required to establish baselines and measure progress on the academic achievement of Indigenous learners.<sup>207</sup>

As Shawn Atleo, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations states, “this work is simply too important to walk away and abandon our students to the next round of discussions, to tell them they will have to wait. We owe it to ourselves, our children and our nations to make our best efforts to achieve our lifelong goal of First Nations control of First Nations education.”<sup>208</sup>

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

2. Strengthen implementation of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework by allocating the financial resources necessary to ensure consistent funding of Framework priorities.
3. Fully implement Indigenous learner reporting mechanisms at both the system and institutional levels to allow for collection of the type of reliable data needed to set baselines and measure progress on academic achievement.
4. Act on commitments for working with Indigenous Institutes to develop a policy to sustainably deliver operational funding and incorporate them into the provincial post-secondary system.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>206</sup> Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017. (2018, November 19). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17i34a>

<sup>207</sup> Council of Ministers of Education Canada, “Key Policies in Aboriginal Education: an Evidence-Based Approach”, 2013 [http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/295/Key-Policy-Issues-in-Aboriginal-Education\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/295/Key-Policy-Issues-in-Aboriginal-Education_EN.pdf)

<sup>208</sup> Atleo, S. (2014, April 12). First Nations Education Act 'must act as a bridge'. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/shawn-atleo-first-nations-education-act-must-act-as-bridge-1.2607454>

## **O. Improve Early Childhood Educational Outcomes Through Expanded Education Opportunities, Targeted Programming, and Innovation in the Classroom**

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario's long-term economic success relies on the quality of its workforce.

There is a strong connection between early childhood development, educational outcomes and future success. Ontario's unreasonably high child developmental vulnerability rate will have a negative impact on our future labour supply, including skilled workforce shortages and ultimately a loss of economic potential. This is especially true for areas of Ontario that are faced with low growth rates, low immigration rates, and an aging workforce. It is imperative for the future of our province that every child is given the best opportunity to succeed.

### **Background**

Education is a pathway to a successful and sustainable labour market career. "Over the next few years 70% of new and replacement jobs will demand post-secondary credentials, compared to 6% that will be available to individuals with less than high school education."<sup>209</sup>

Research shows that children's development at age 5 is a strong predictor of adult health, education and social outcomes. Many later problems like school failure, anti-social behaviour, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, type-2 diabetes, can be traced back to early childhood.<sup>210</sup>

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool that gathers information about children's development in their early years (birth to age 5). The most recent provincial EDI collection (2017/18) shows that the developmental vulnerability rate amongst young children in Ontario is near 30 percent, as measured by one or more of the five developmental scales. This does not include children who have an identified special need. Research states that "[s]uch levels of vulnerability at school entry are at least five times higher than the rates of biological vulnerability that are detectable in the postnatal period".<sup>211</sup> Especially concerning is the fact that the Ontario vulnerability rate is worsening rather than improving, having risen 2 percentage-points in the past ten years.

Drivers of vulnerability include socioeconomic adversity, physical issues like low birthweight, the lack of knowledge of an official language, increases in screen time and sedentary behaviour, limited opportunities to take on developmentally appropriate responsibility or self-care, inadequate sleep, inadequate nutrition, etc.<sup>212</sup>

Children who are deemed vulnerable or at risk of being vulnerable on the EDI are less likely to achieve the provincial standards in the Grade 3 EQAO reading, writing and mathematics assessment than those with

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<sup>209</sup> Lightman, E., Herd, D., Um, S. G., & Mitchell, A. (2009). Post-secondary education and social assistance in Ontario. Canadian Social Work Review/Revue canadienne de service social, 97-113.

<sup>210</sup> Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://edi.offordcentre.com/about/what-is-the-edi/>

<sup>211</sup> Kendall P.R.W. (2003) A Review of Infant Mortality in British Columbia: Opportunities for Prevention. Victoria, BC: Government of British Columbia, Office of the Provincial Health Officer in Kershaw, P., Warburton, B., Anderson, L., Hertzman, C., Irwin, L., & Forer, B. (2010). The Economic Costs of Early Vulnerability in Canada. Canadian Journal of Public Health. 2010;101(Suppl. 3): S8-S12.

<sup>212</sup> Buote, D. (2015). Increasing Vulnerability in the Early Years: A Closer Look at Five North Shore Neighbourhoods. Retrieved from: <http://nscr.bc.ca/pdf/Increasing%20Early%20Years%20Vulnerability.pdf>.

higher EDI scores.<sup>213</sup> Their education trajectories are likely to be lower and these children will face more challenges as they grow. Many will remain behind their peers throughout life, be disruptive in school, fail to graduate and unable to fully contribute and participate in society<sup>214</sup> and may rely on the social system (such as Ontario Works) for financial support.

Overall, grade 3 EQAO data shows a decline in writing skills over the previous three years (from 73% in 2015/16 to 69% in 2018/19). Assessments in math were similar to writing. In Grade 3, 58% met the provincial math standard, a four percentage-point decrease from the average of the previous three years. If these trends continue unchecked, we should expect the number of students not meeting provincial standards in grade 6 to rise. We should also expect the number of children who are unprepared for high-school or post-secondary to rise over time.

There is a significant economic cost to vulnerability. A high vulnerability rate will dramatically deplete our future stock of human capital and will have a negative influence on the quality of our future labour market.<sup>215</sup> Canadian economic analyses reveal that this depletion will cause Canada to forgo 20% in GDP growth over the next 60 years. The economic value of this loss is equivalent to investing \$2.2 trillion to \$3.4 trillion today at a rate of 3.5% interest, even after paying for the social investment required to reduce vulnerability.<sup>216</sup>

Although governments face fiscal constraints, policy-makers should prioritize initiatives with high economic and social returns, such as early childhood education.<sup>217</sup> There is a 7:1 return on investment for early childhood programming compared to a 1:1 payback for adult education.<sup>218</sup>

There is evidence that the duration of early childhood education “is an important factor in boosting math scores, which in turn leads to higher future wages”.<sup>219</sup> With this in mind, the province should focus on expanding licensed early childhood education services in an affordable way which helps everyone equally regardless of their socio-economic situation.

For vulnerable children already in the school system, more targeted programming and an increase in teacher/student interaction time can help close the gap between them and their peers. Research shows that “appropriate supports and interventions during the primary school years will allow many children who were not on track in kindergarten to address early challenges and proceed on a positive academic trajectory”.<sup>220</sup> For children who are significantly behind their peers, a combination of grade retention and targeted programming should be investigated as an option. Researchers/data analysts at the Ministry of Education should conduct a review of the educational outcomes of Ontario children who were retained to determine if grade retention has a positive long-lasting effect on struggling students.

Furthermore, many teachers indicate that only 49% of their time is spent in direct interaction with students, with “time” being the most important barrier to providing personalized learning.<sup>221</sup> An innovative approach is

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<sup>213</sup> Calman, R. C., & Crawford, P.J. (2013). Starting Early: Teaching, Learning and Assessment (pp. 1–37). Education Quality and Accountability Office.

<sup>214</sup> Calman, et al.

<sup>215</sup> Kershaw et al.

<sup>216</sup> Kershaw et al.

<sup>217</sup> Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2017.

<sup>218</sup> Pascal C.E. (2009). With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

<sup>219</sup> Alexander et al.

<sup>220</sup> Calman, et al.

<sup>221</sup> Bryant, J., Heitz, C., Sanghvi, S. & Wagle, D. (2020). How artificial intelligence will impact K-12 teachers. New York: McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/how-artificial-intelligence-will-impact-k-12-teachers>.

to use automation technology to reduce time spent on preparation, administration, evaluation, and feedback, saving approximately 13 hours per week.<sup>222</sup> Teachers could redirect that time toward activities that lead to higher student outcomes such as instruction, engagement and coaching. Further investments in permanent teaching assistants may also help decrease the burden of preparation and administration work that teachers commonly face.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

3. Expand affordable early childhood education (i.e. licensed childcare) to include 3-year olds identified as developmentally vulnerable to reduce the number of these children in Ontario
4. Place a focus on catching up vulnerable (and at-risk of being vulnerable) children to their peers through targeted programming and early interventions
5. Identify communities/regions that have consistently higher child vulnerability rates than the Ontario average and increase their funding for targeted programming
6. Investigate the effectiveness of grade retention combined with targeted programming for children significantly behind their peers
7. Utilize automation technology in the classroom to reduce teacher preparation and administration time so they can spend more time directly interacting with students.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>222</sup> Bryant et al.



## **P. Improving Skilled Trades in the Secondary Schools**

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Many businesses cite lack of workers in the skilled trades to fill positions within their companies today and into the future. There is a general concern that young people are not getting encouragement and opportunity to participate and learn about skilled trades at an early age so they can give serious consideration to a career in the skilled trades while in high school.

### **Background**

The Mississauga Board of Trade (MBOT) authored a report entitled “Review of Skilled Trades in the Secondary School System” which looked at the current state of skilled trades training and curriculum in high schools and made recommendations that can improve and support this going forward.

MBOT met with representatives of all four local school boards and teachers in the Regional Skilled Trades program and found great support and interest in supporting and expanding skilled trades courses in the secondary schools.

While the full report makes many recommendations, this resolution focuses on some key ones for the Ontario Government to consider. The full report is available at [https://issuu.com/mbotontario/docs/mbot\\_skilltrade\\_report](https://issuu.com/mbotontario/docs/mbot_skilltrade_report).

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Allow for the engagement of outside skilled trade expertise to teach segments of classes where this involvement is either warranted or required. The School Boards should be able to compensate these instructors working along with the designated Teacher for the class.
2. Ensure that School Boards have the budget and resources to obtain the proper, up-to-date equipment to teach skilled trades. The Ministry should encourage companies to donate equipment to the schools and be eligible for a tax receipt for the donation.
3. Consider creating a tax credit for companies that accept students for co-op placements in their businesses.
4. Allow students to claim co-op work placements in the 40 hours of Community Service program.
5. Continually assess co-op placement programs to ensure the rapid pace of technological change and industry requirements is met.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **Q. Investing in Ontario's International Undergraduate Student Entrepreneurs**

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Leamington Chamber of Commerce; Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario attracts an increasing number of international students each year. The Ministry of Advanced Education has estimated international students will account for 20 per cent of all Ontario post-secondary enrolments by 2022.<sup>1</sup> These students have an incredible impact on the local economy.

With an increasing talent shortage across the province coupled with a significant business succession issue, it is vital that international students are encouraged to remain in Ontario to continue their positive effect on the economy.

The Ontario Government can support international undergraduate student entrepreneurs by creating a nominee program to provide a more expedient pathway to permanent residency. Both Nova Scotia<sup>2</sup> and Saskatchewan<sup>3</sup> have implemented such pathways in recent years.

### **Background**

International student enrollment in Canada is on the rise. Since 2014 there has been a 73 per cent increase in enrolments bringing the 2018 total to 572,000.<sup>4</sup> The total number of post-secondary international students in Canada as of December 31, 2018 was 435,415, a 17 per cent jump over 2017 (370,975).<sup>5</sup> In 2017, Ontario hosted 48 per cent of the nation's international students.<sup>6</sup>

The positive impact of international students to the economy is remarkable. Approximately 170,000 jobs were created nationally as a result of international student spending in 2017.<sup>7</sup> International students contributed \$21.6 billion to the Canadian economy in 2018 with international student tuition surpassing government grants as a revenue source for many colleges and universities across the province.<sup>8,9</sup>

Some of these students come from entrepreneurial families who wish to expand their family business into Canada. Others may have the desire to purchase established businesses which would address the nation's growing business succession issue.<sup>10</sup>

Currently, international students must find an eligible work position before applying for permanent residence status.<sup>11</sup> This puts their entrepreneurial ambitions on hold. If they could commence their business plans after graduation, they would become not an employee, but an employer, boosting the local economy even further.

Needing to find employment often means these students move to larger city centers. When eligible, the majority will choose to start their new business in the city of their employment – not the city where they completed their studies leading to a huge economic loss for the smaller cities of Ontario.

Ontario does currently have an Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) in place but most international students will not meet the requirements of this program.<sup>12</sup>

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Emulate Nova Scotia's International Graduate Entrepreneur program that allows the Government of Ontario to nominate International students to start and operate their own company in Ontario and meet the eligibility requirements to apply for Permanent Residency.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **R. Maintaining Investment and Innovation in Ontario's Public Education System**

Submitted by: Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant

### **Issue**

The effectiveness of the education system is a priority for the future prosperity of the province and the active participation of all Ontarians in the workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That said, it must be efficient as well as effective. This requires strategic continued investment based on the value Ontarians can derive now and in the future.

### **Background**

The Government of Ontario has initiated a process to reduce funding to the public education system based on two policy decisions:

An increase in average class size at the elementary and secondary level,

A requirement for all high school students to take several mandatory online courses, and

It is the responsibility of local school boards to manage the implementation of cost reductions to achieve compliance with reduced funding. It is of note that many Boards have identified certain innovative, specialty consulting positions (literacy and mathematics coaches for one, and guidance/pathways coordinators for another), and courses with small enrollments among the first wave of potential cost reductions. Increasing class sizes and mandating online learning can be particularly detrimental to students with special needs in education, a student population which has shown alarming growth, almost doubling since 2000.

It should also be noted that while online learning offers a marvelous opportunity to improve the efficiency of some learning situations, there is a proportion of the population that does not learn effectively in an online environment. Further, there are many areas in Ontario that do not have access to high speed internet, and many classrooms lacking the hardware required to offer online courses. There are also students who do not have access to a computer at home.

In the April 2019 publication "Accounting for Ontario's Debt", the Ontario Chamber of Commerce stated:

"Assessing when and whether to invest in needed infrastructure and services (such as transportation infrastructure, broadband internet, or skills development) the government must not only consider the present and future value of such an investment as dictated by interest rates, but the value Ontarians could derive from an investment now versus in the future."

"Local companies tend to derive great value from government initiatives that aim to develop Canadian and provincial economic opportunities both domestically and internationally, such as skills development and export programming. Raising taxes or implementing austerity measures to reduce Ontario's debt burden may, therefore, have the unintended effect of squandering current opportunity to grow Ontario's economy."

The OCC has steadfastly advocated for skills development including a policy paper in October 2006 "Retooling for a Prosperous Ontario, a global perspective on skilled trades" and continues to identify Skills and Workforce Development as one of its Key Issues, stating that "there are clear signs that some groups are being left behind, and that our training and education systems could do more to create a workforce suited for the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Re-orient its approach to education funding policies and practices to emphasize measurable return on investment in terms of improved student outcomes and financial performance, rather than a pure budgetary control emphasizing cost-reduction. This new approach should stimulate and reward innovations that result in more effective educational processes.
2. Establish a fund and a mechanism for benchmarking and communicating best educational practices on a provincial, national and international scale with the goal of ensuring that all school boards and all Ontarians are aware of advances that are leading to improved student outcomes.
3. Once innovations have been identified, tested, and proved, province-wide phase-in by stakeholders should be planned and implemented locally by teaching and administrative staff to account for differences due to geographic and socio-economic limitations.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **S. More systems needed in place to encourage women to pursue a career in skilled trades**

Submitted by: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Guelph Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

A severe and chronic shortage of skilled trade workers continues to dog the Ontario landscape, despite more than 30 years of ongoing discussion among business, education and government leaders on how to solve the problem.

While a strong focus remains on streamlining immigration policies to introduce some of the world's mostly highly skilled individuals into our labour force more seamlessly, the fact that an existing pool of potential talent already exists among Canada's female population remains virtually untapped unless the necessary encouragement and programming are provided.

### **Background**

Ontario, and Canada in general, are dealing with a severe shortage of skilled trade workers. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that Ontario will face a shortage of 190,000 skilled workers by 2020. This number is expected to triple to 560,000 by 2030.<sup>223</sup>

Left hidden among these staggering numbers is the fact less than 4% of all tradespeople in Canada are women. As outlined in a CBC report in June 2019, it was stated that a Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey indicated as of 2018 approximately 34,800 women were working in industrial, electrical and construction trades nationwide. This represents an increase of 200 women, just under 3.9%, compared to a decade earlier. However, during this same 10-year span there were 38,600 fewer people of the overall 934,000 that were working in trades in 2008.<sup>224</sup>

As well, it's been noted in the first quarter of 2019 there were 60,170 job vacancies in Red Seal trades, an increase of 14 % from a year earlier, according to Statistics Canada's job vacancy and wage survey.<sup>225</sup>

As for those currently rising through the training ranks, according to the Canada Labour Force Survey, only one in 10 apprentices in Canada are women and that most populate female-dominated programs such as hairstylist, esthetician, or early childhood education (which isn't considered a skilled trade in all provinces).<sup>226</sup>

A 2019 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) praised Canada's economic immigration system and recommended streamlining and standardizing the ranking system for skilled workers coming into this country and abolishing the Federal Skilled Trades Program. However, it has been noted that while immigration accounted for 80% of our population growth there are projections indicating there are now only two workers ready to replace every skilled trade retiree in Canada by 2035 compared to seven that were in available in 1971.<sup>227</sup> This is another indication that filling the skilled trades gap must be accomplished using as many avenues as possible and creating awareness to encourage more

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<sup>223</sup> 'Leading young people into skilled trades is paying off' – Aug. 1, 2019, PLANT (Advanced Canadian Manufacturing) <https://www.plant.ca/insights/leading-young-people-into-skilled-trades-is-paying-off/>

<sup>224</sup> 'Women are making inroads in the trades but still have a ways to go' – Jul. 23/ 2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-in-trades-1.5215384>

<sup>225</sup> 'Here's where Canadians are finding well-paying jobs in the trades' – July 12/2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canadian-tradespeople-1.5198394>

<sup>226</sup> 'Women are making inroads in the trades but still have a ways to go' – Jul. 23/ 2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-in-trades-1.5215384>

<sup>227</sup> 'Canada must adapt quickly to attract skilled workers, immigration minister says' – Aug. 13/ 2019 – CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/economic-labour-migration-hussen-oecd-1.5244416>

young women about the benefits of pursuing a career in these fields. In 2019, the annual BDO Canada Affordability Index, which looks at how affordable life is in Canada, indicated that nearly 60% of women are living paycheck to paycheck.<sup>228</sup>

Education is the key to raising this awareness. In effort to promote skilled trades to all secondary school students, the Ontario government has announced over the course of the last year it was investing approximately \$75 million in three programs: \$12.7 million for the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program; \$20.8 million in a pre-apprenticeship program; and \$52 million for the Specialist High Skills major program that has the potential to reach 54,000 students in 700 Ontario high schools through more than 2,100 programs.<sup>229</sup>

As well, continued co-op programs in many secondary schools and having students from grades 7 to 12 participate in province-wide Skills Competitions organized by Skills Ontario and Skills Canada provide opportunities for them to experience the world of skilled trades over a period of a few days. Also, additional supports are provided by more localized initiatives such as Career Pathways, operated by the Career Education Council, which interactively assists Grade 8 students in Guelph by showcasing potential career paths, and the Business And Education Partnership of Waterloo Region which introduces secondary students to various careers through an assortment of programs.

In terms of ongoing education for younger students, in our area the Waterloo Region District School Board does provide tech rooms in some of its grades 7 and 8 schools centred on woodworking, while its counterpart the Waterloo Catholic District School Board provides STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) kits to assist students who show an interest in those areas. Additional skilled trades learning opportunities are provided by neighbouring boards, including the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board.

In hopes of attracting more female students, one-day initiatives such as the annual Build A Dream event co-ordinated between four Waterloo Region school boards at Bingemans help promote the skilled trades to grades 7 to 12 girls and attracts at least 1,200 students. Also, Conestoga College's 'Jill of All Trades' event is held annually and gives approximately 200 grades 9 to 12 students from eight school boards the chance to get 'hands-on' experience under the guidance of female mentors in one day. Conestoga College, which in 2019 announced plans to consolidate its various trade schools after purchasing the former 250,000-square-foot Erwin Hymer plant in Cambridge, also provides 'Explore Your Future' days to give Grade 8 students the chance to tour and participate in hands-on activities in specific trades.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

- 1 Continue to market a career in skilled in trades as a viable employment option, and ensure intentional outreach is extended to girls and women.
- 2 Allow students graduating from high school with an interest in any skilled trade to apply to the college of their choice, regardless if they have found employment in the industry.

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<sup>228</sup> 'Majority of women in Canada are living paycheck to paycheck' – Sept. 30/2019 – LowestRates.ca  
<https://www.lowestrates.ca/news/women-canada-living-paycheque-to-paycheque-25809>

<sup>229</sup> 'Ontario takes action to address skilled trades shortage' – Jan. 10/2020 – Ontario Newsroom  
<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2020/01/ontario-takes-action-to-address-skilled-trades-shortage.html>; 'Ontario increasing investments in skilled trades' – Nov. 8/2019 – Ontario Newsroom.  
<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2019/11/ontario-increasing-investments-in-skilled-trades.html>

- 3 Consider working with industry and post-secondary institutions to offer more opportunities at colleges with skilled trades programs to host similar events modelled after Conestoga College's 'Jill of All Trades' in hopes of ensuring more high school students have the opportunity to experience skilled trades training.
- 4 Provide funding for child care expenses to allow women to transition to skilled trades.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## T. Re-Calibrating Primary and Secondary Education to Close the Skills Deficit

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

Ontario is facing a skills shortage crisis. While there are currently approximately 500K unemployed in Ontario<sup>230</sup>, there is a job vacancy rate of 3.3% or approximately 250K unfilled jobs.<sup>231</sup> While retraining the unemployed and recruiting skilled foreign workers does help to relieve some of the deficit, it has proven not to be enough. And while these efforts are still very much needed to alleviate the current problem, the government should be looking to early childhood education to provide a more long-term solution to the future skills needs of the province.

### Background

The skills gap crisis in Ontario is not new but it is getting worse. In 2013, the Conference Board of Canada reported that the skills gap was costing the Ontario economy \$24.3 billion in foregone GDP<sup>232</sup> and it projected that the problem would only get worse if action was not taken. In a more recent report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, it was noted that “the skills mismatch is multi-faceted. We are confronted by a supply-demand mismatch driven in part by the decisions of students to pursue qualifications in fields with limited employment opportunities”.<sup>233</sup>

In an effort to better understand which fields suffered the highest vacancy rates, Statistics Canada introduced a new quarterly Job Vacancy and Wage Survey in 2015.<sup>234</sup> This massive regular poll of 100,000 businesses – the largest business survey that Statscan conducts – drills deeply into the nature of unfilled jobs and wage offers, on a city-by-city and region-by-region basis.

While the federal government has been doing its part to relieve the skills gap by bringing in more economic immigrants, and the provincial government has been introducing new programs to encourage more young people to get into skilled trades<sup>235</sup>, more needs to be done from an early age to ensure that children have exposure to a wide variety of career choices. Doing so will help not only to reduce future job vacancy rates, but future unemployment rates as well.

The Ministry of Education in Ontario did introduce a revised Career Studies Program in the fall of 2019 for secondary school students however, by the time a child reaches high-school there is a high likelihood that their career aspirations are already set.

As a recent article from Nesta (a registered education charity based in England and Wales) said: “*Children’s conceptions of who they are and what they could be are products of their wider socio-economic surroundings: influenced by social (who their families and friends are) and cultural capital (what they consider a reasonable and possible future to be)*”<sup>236</sup> Therefore

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<sup>230</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-november-2019>

<sup>231</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190920/dq190920b-eng.htm>

<sup>232</sup> <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=5563>

<sup>233</sup> <https://occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Talent-in-Transition.pdf>

<sup>234</sup> <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/business/5217>

<sup>235</sup> <https://www.chathamdailynews.ca/news/local-news/addressing-skilled-trades-gap-top-priority-for-monte-mcnaughton>

<sup>236</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/great-expectations/>



*if children are not introduced to a variety of career options through the educational system, the choices will be limited by their own backgrounds, further exacerbating the skills gap crisis when these children graduate from high school or post-secondary school.*

As an example of a best-practice that the Ontario Government might consider in introducing career options to children at a younger age, is the Primary Futures Program based in the United Kingdom.

In 2017, primary schools in the UK began to rethink how and when they should introduce career options to school age children. In a national campaign called Primary Futures<sup>237</sup>, employer volunteers are available to visit schools and provide free voluntary support across a range of areas.

Activities that are included in the Primary Futures program may include:

1. Inviting volunteers from the world of work to visit and chat with children
2. Delivering career-related learning programmes that help children connect their subject learning to the opportunities now and in the future
3. Organising career-related learning trips e.g. to a workplace, business or university
4. Making good use of online learning materials in the classroom such as games, videos, role play, and individual/ group activities
5. Exploring the diverse routes adults have taken to get their current job e.g. vocational (Inc. apprenticeships), academic, starting their own business etc.

In order to address the skills gap in Ontario however it will not be enough for elementary schools to offer career studies in a number of different fields. Focussing on options that specifically target sectors where job vacancy rates are the highest may offer the best solutions.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement a Career Exploration Program in elementary schools that introduces children, parents, and educators to a wide range of career options based on the types of careers that are most likely to be needed by the time children in the program graduate high-school. Such programs should bring in special guests/volunteers from targeted sectors when possible and should also combat any gender stereotypes that may be associated with a given profession. Exposure to this programming could start as early as Grades 1 or 2 to students and parents.
2. Implement a Targeted Career Studies Program for children (starting at about Grade 5) who show particular aptitude in areas where job vacancy rates are expected to be most dire (e.g. manufacturing, skilled trades, agriculture). Programming should allow these children to fully explore career options and gain age-appropriate practical training in these sectors. To fill these programs, it may be necessary to bus these children to another school (possibly even a school from another board) in their district for half or full day each week.
3. Implement a Career Mentorship Program and co-op vocational training at the high-school level with particular focus on sectors of the economy where job vacancy rates are expected to be the highest. Mentors should be professionals from selected sectors – and ideally employers – who can provide

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<sup>237</sup> <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/primary-futures-connecting-life-and-learning-in-uk-primary-education/>

advice to students on which courses they should be taking and which skills they should be developing. Educators and guidance counsellors must also be trained in this area.

4. Revise the secondary school curriculum to make mandatory taking at least one tech or trade course – similar to how students are required to take at least one arts course. Ensure that funding is course-neutral and that tech and trade courses have equivalent funding to other secondary school courses.
5. Review and revise all these programs as necessary based on current and projected job vacancy rates a minimum of every five years.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **SPECIAL ISSUES**

### **A. Fairness for Business in Customer Initiated Transactions**

Authored by the Brampton Board of Trade

#### **Issue**

Section 43 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, and its associated Regulations is overly broad and captures within its requirements businesses, trades people, and contractors who should be exempt from the provisions.

#### **Background**

Section 43 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 (“CPA”), deals with the cooling off period available to consumers when they enter into business contracts at a place other than the provider’s place of business. These are defined as “Direct Agreements” or “Direct Sales Contracts”. In such a situation, the customer has 10 days to cancel the contract. Generally, it is used to cover those direct energy companies who go to door to door convincing customers to enter into lengthy and expensive energy contracts, or other annoying solicitors. The problem, however, is that the legislation is worded too broadly and captures any business who attends at the customer’s home.

For example, a customer contacts an electrician because they have a problem. The electrician makes an appointment, attends at the customer’s home, does an inspection, and provides an estimate. If the customer accepts the proposal, the electrician will make an appointment to return on another day to complete the jobs. In the interim, the electrician is spending time making arrangements with the local utility, acquiring parts and scheduling other jobs around this one. If the customer has a change of heart before the electrician returns to complete the work, he or she can cancel it without any charges. If the electrician has started the job, the customer can still cancel and is only required to pay the “reasonable” costs of the work completed.

This is difficult for any business that relies on direct contact from the customer to initiate the sale (i.e. electricians, contractors, renovations, lawn or yard maintenance, landscape, babysitters, dog walkers, etc.). These are not businesses that rely on solicitation of the customer, such as door-to-door salesmen. Unfortunately, the legislation does not draw the distinction.

Besides the obvious inconvenience to the business in terms of lost efficiency, if the business is regulated by a government agency, the director can face severe consequences beyond those outlined in the Consumer Protection Act. For example, electricians are regulated by the Electrical Safety Authority. If the electrician is found not to be complying with the Consumer Protection Act, they can have their business license suspended or revoked.

#### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Following the BC Legislation, amend section 43(1) of the CPA and its Regulations to reflect exemption from cancellation of Direct Agreements by customers when customer or person authorized on behalf of the customer, initiates contact with business within a reasonable time period.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **B. Workplace Mental Health Strategy**

Authored by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce and Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade.

### **Issue**

It is widely recognized that mental health problems in the workplace have a severe impact on Canada's and Ontario's productivity. Addressing these problems is more than good business; it is the right thing to do. Despite significant efforts by both provincial and federal governments over the last few years, there remains much to be done in the areas of research and promotion. The provincial government has a key role to play in continuing its efforts at mitigating the costs of workplace mental health issues and ensuring that employers are ready and able to properly and positively address workplace mental health issues.

### **Background**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety have provided the following research evidence to demonstrate the significant impact of mental health problems in the workplace.

- 1 in 5 Canadians experience a psychological health problem or illness in any given year and in some areas, such as Ontario, this number is as high as 1 in 4.<sup>238</sup>
- Psychological health problems or illnesses are the number one cause of disability in Canada.<sup>1</sup>
- Psychological health problems cost the Canadian economy ~\$51 billion per year, \$20 billion of which results from work-related causes.<sup>1</sup>
- 47% of Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of daily life.<sup>1</sup>
- Psychological health problems affect mid-career workers the most, lowering the productivity of the Canadian work force.<sup>1</sup>
- Only 23% of Canadian workers would feel comfortable talking to their employer about a psychological health issue.<sup>239</sup>
- According to the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#), in any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems. This includes approximately 355,000 disability cases plus approximately 175,000 full-time workers absent from work due to mental illness.

At one time a similar crisis existed with workplace physical safety. Measurement and tracking of incidence rates, coupled with public awareness and the implementation of occupational health and safety regulations and legislation, played a strategic role in turning the tide. The same can be true for workplace mental health.

When not addressed, psychological health problems in the workplace lead to absenteeism, decreased productivity and quality of work issues, which in turn impact business success. By identifying and reducing workplace risks of psychological injury or illness, employers will benefit from workforce stability, increased productivity, reduced insurance costs, reduced risk of legal or regulatory sanctions, and a healthier financial bottom line. Similarly, employees will benefit due to the impact upon their health, morale, work life quality and ability to perform at their highest capacity.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Identify mental health in the workplace as a key priority for occupational health and safety research grants and funding innovation projects.

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<sup>238</sup> Mental Health Commission of Canada. 2016. National Standard

<sup>239</sup> Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. 2016. Mental Health

2. Ensure that local community resources, using evidence based treatment practices, are visible to employers and employees, easily accessible and affordable.
3. Promote the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (CSA Z1003)
4. Provide training and education for business leaders with a focus on positive ways to address and respond to workplace mental health issues.
5. Consult with private sector workplace benefit providers to ensure an appropriate supporting policy framework exists to allow more employers to offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to their employees.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **C. Province of Ontario Wide Load Permit**

Authored by the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The Ontario Provincial Wide Load Permit System is very complex making it difficult for companies to comply when their vehicles travel throughout Ontario's county roads that are not designated as King's highways.

### **Background**

Most companies do not understand the requirements of the permit system. A provincial wide load permit costs a business \$440.00 annually and is valid ONLY for King's highways. This cost is considered very reasonable.

Alternatively, a business can also purchase a single "trip" permit valid for a limited timeframe with costs varying between \$65.00 to \$700.00 depending on distance travelled and weight of the load carried.

Since the provincial permit is valid for King's Highways only, in some cases businesses must also purchase county wide load permits as well as permits from the "lower tier" municipalities in that county.

This current system forces a business to contact each county and municipality that maintains the roads their vehicles will be travelling on to determine the trip permit process and requirements. This is a very inefficient, time consuming and complex process.

It is a burden to small and medium sized companies (SMEs) that require wide-load permits to fulfill their obligations to their clients. Ontario companies affected are: excavating companies, construction companies, farm machinery dealerships, agricultural suppliers, for example.

### **Complexity Highlights**

The regions of the Province of Ontario contain 23 Counties with 211 "lower tier" municipalities embedded within the 23 Counties. And, there are 11 single tier municipalities (i.e. Brantford-Brant, Toronto, Ottawa, Chatham-Kent, Haldimand, etc.); which leaves a total of 245 potential contacts for permits.

Considering these statistics, business owners must know what municipality maintains the particular road their vehicles will be travelling on in order to legally transport equipment. To determine this, a business would need access to an entire database of Ontario roads and who maintains/owns them.

In our research, most businesses did not know their compliance requirements; and only one knew that County permits were required but did not know about the lower tier municipal permits.

In speaking with local businesses who were stopped and charged multiple times in the past 15 years; the fines were at least \$500.00. It is their feeling that it is cheaper to pay the fine than to spend the time to acquire the necessary permits.

In summary, the current Wide-Load Permit system is a barrier and a financial burden for companies in Ontario to do business.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Investigate the opportunities available to create a one-permit system for wide, high, and heavy loads to navigate throughout Ontario's roads regardless of the regions, counties or municipalities vehicles must travel through.
2. Develop a database with each municipality's rules, restrictions and information to provide businesses with a centralized hub for all permit information.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **D. Expanding Ontario's Leadership on Climate Change Mitigation through Supporting Net-Zero Homebuilding**

Authored by the Guelph Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario homebuilders are unable to leverage their innovative capacity and maximize their business and economic output by accessing the Green Ontario Fund to scale up the building of net-zero homes.

### **Background**

A net-zero energy home produces as much energy as it uses on an annual basis, depending on occupants' behavior. In terms of technology, materials and efficiency standards, the homes are built at least 15 years ahead of where the building industry is today. They include features such as advanced heating, cooling, ventilation, high-efficiency windows, superior levels of insulation and air tightness and solar panels that feed the electrical grid. Net-zero homes have been around for many years but they have typically been custom-built and at a significantly higher expense than regular homes. Net-zero homes offer the potential to save money on energy costs year-round as well as protect home-owners from future energy price increases. Most importantly, they lower greenhouse gas emissions, conserve resources, reduce pollution, and minimize the household's ecological footprint.

As part of the implementation of the Ontario government's *Climate Change Action Plan* the Green Ontario Fund was created. Funded through proceeds from Ontario's carbon market, the Green Ontario Fund is a not-for-profit provincial agency under the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change tasked with reducing greenhouse gas pollution in buildings and industry to help meet Ontario's emission reduction targets. Through programs and rebates, it is intended that the Green Ontario Fund will help people and businesses take climate action into their own hands. Similarly, the *Climate Change Action Plan* stated clearly that there was an imperative to halt the ongoing rise in building-related emissions by giving Ontarians more choices, incentives and tools to make the right energy choice for their homes and businesses, by making new buildings increasingly energy efficient over time. With over 76,000 new home starts in Ontario, it makes it increasingly timely that builders of net-zero homes receive the support needed to build these homes on a larger scale in a cost-effective manner.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Recalibrate the regulations associated with the Green Ontario Fund to allow Ontario's home builders the access to funds to support building net-zero homes.
2. Recalibrate the regulations associated with the Green Ontario Fund to provide a New Home Rebate Program, to support consumers in the purchasing of net-zero homes.
3. Provide greater capacity for these builds by reviewing relevant legislation to increase land supply in regions where this is restricted.
4. Amend the *Development Charges Act* to take into account the service needs of net-zero homes.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



## **E. Increasing Democracy in Ontario's Workplaces**

Authored by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce

Co-sponsored by the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

*The Labour Relations Act, 1995* creates a legal regime which unduly favours union certification, instead of neutrally regulating the process. In 2005, Bill 144 removed secret ballot voting and introduced the card-check system for union certification to the construction industry and in 2017, Bill 148 extended the system to the building services industry, the homecare and community services industry, and the temporary help agency industry. Card-based certification is a major step backwards in democratic processes and is inconsistent with almost every jurisdiction in Canada and the United States.

### **Background**

Prior to 1977, every province abided by card-check certification as the means to recognize a union where certification was complete once a specified majority signed union cards, without a vote being necessary. Since then, many provinces have implemented mandatory secret ballot voting, which requires employees to cast a private ballot before certification can proceed. Some provinces such as B.C., Manitoba and Ontario have alternated between the two systems over the years. Recently, the Federal government, Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador have re-instated card-based certification. In 2015 The Supreme Court upheld Saskatchewan legislation (the *Trade Union Amendment Act*) that eliminates card-based certification.

In June, 2005, Ontario passed Bill 144, the *Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment Act*. This bill re-established the card-based certification system for the construction sector. In 2017, Ontario passed Bill 148, the *Fair Workplace, Better Jobs Act*, which extended the card-check system to the building services industry, the homecare and community services industry, and the temporary help agency industry. The card-based system means that certification of a union may be ordered by the Ontario Labour Relations Board without a certification vote, where more than 55% of the employees have signed membership cards to join a union.

There are a number of concerns with the move away from secret ballot voting. Card-based certification makes employers particularly vulnerable as certification is based on those working on the date of application. This means that automatic certification will apply even where 55% of the employees at work constitute a minority percentage of the employers' actual total workforce. The system is open to abuse as the wishes of only a few employees, can dictate the unionized status of others. Two employees could certify an entire workforce. Card-based applications may be brought by unions on a Saturday for strategic reasons when few employees are working. Union strategies can also include the use of "salts" (individuals sent by the union to seek employment for the sole purpose of bringing a union to the workplace) to certify companies against the will of regular, longer-term employees by bringing forward applications on a day where it is known that only a few employees are working.

Certification based on membership cards removes the employee's right to vote on whether or not they choose a union. Secret ballot voting safeguards employees from intimidation or pressure from union organizers and employers and helps ensure their true opinion is represented. While a secret ballot vote is conducted in a neutral environment by the Labour Relations Board, the collection of signatures on union membership cards is controlled entirely by union leadership. Under the current legislation, there is no means to address abuse and fraud by union organizers during an organizing drive.

Card-based certification also eliminates an employer's opportunity to communicate with their employees about the union certification application prior to a vote. In a card-based certification, the employer is usually unaware that a union organizing drive is taking place, until the application date has passed, at which time the cards are signed and cannot be revoked. The business then loses its ability discuss the issue or to negotiate individually with its employees.

Card-based certification introduced under Bill 144 and expanded under Bill 148 is undemocratic, threatens economic prosperity and significantly shifts the balance in certification votes in favour of organized labour. Card-based certification is vulnerable to abuse and forms of intimidation and undermines the ability of employees to express their true opinions in a legitimate and democratic form. Almost every other jurisdiction in Canada and the United States has recognized this and requires secret ballot voting. Since there is no evidence to suggest that secret ballot voting does not allow employees to express their wishes, and significant risk that card-based certification would do just that, the provincial government should ensure that secret ballot voting is required for union certification among all provincially regulated workers.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. eliminate the card-based certification system for union certification for small construction employers and repeal the Bill 148 amendments to the Labour Relations Act expanding card-based certification;
2. notwithstanding recommendation 1, allow employees to dispute the voluntariness of the signature on their union card on the basis of fraud, intimidation or coercion following a union certification application;
3. require the Ontario Labour Relations Board to make a bottom-line decision (with reasons to follow) on certification applications or status disputes within thirty days of the matter being remitted to the Board for decision.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **F. Bill 2, Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2018**

Authored by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Car dealerships lose productivity and manpower every time they are required to have their paperwork processed for vehicles sold or leased. In certain cases, there is no concierge service for Car Dealerships and even worse, some Service Ontario location only allow two transactions processed at one time. These delays are at a significant cost to the car dealerships and may result in unnecessary delays for the consumer.

### **Background**

Bill 2 was before the Ontario Legislature in 2015 – then known as Bill 152 and in 2016-then known as Bill 3. The Ontario Legislature was prorogued in 2016 as well as 2018 and the legislation, which had strong all-party support, never made it to the Standing Committee after passing 2<sup>nd</sup> reading in 2015, and 1<sup>st</sup> reading in 2016. If passed, Bill 2 would eliminate the outdated and unnecessary requirement for auto dealers to physically transport paperwork back and forth to a Service Ontario location upon completion of a sale or lease.

Instead, auto dealers could register vehicles online, from their dealership. This digitization of the vehicle sales process will cut red tape, and save dealers time and money. Furthermore, consumers would be able to take possession of their newly purchased vehicle minutes after signing on the dotted line – rather than wait hours or days and make another trip to the dealership to pick up their new vehicle.

Quebec has offered digital vehicle registrations to its new car dealers since 2002 and New York State dealers have had a similar program since the mid-1990s. New Brunswick, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, Michigan and a number of other U.S. states also provide this service.

Ontario's auto sector and consumers would greatly benefit from a digital, efficient and secure vehicle sales process while allowing them to serve their customers better. By implementing Bill 2, Ontario will follow through on its 2016 Budget statement that, "To meet the expectations of the public, government digital services must mirror the simplicity and effectiveness Ontarians have experienced using private-sector digital services. This does not simply mean putting existing processes online; it means fundamentally rethinking how government programs and services are delivered in Ontario."

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Pass and Implement the Bill 2 legislation as soon as possible.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **G. Protect Employers Rights to Screen for Police Records**

Authored by the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, co-sponsored by the Belleville Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

It is imperative that any changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code do not eliminate an employer's right to screen prospective and current employees for a clear police record (absence of a police record) as an employment requirement in Ontario.

### **Background:**

Currently Bill 164, Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2017 has been sent to the standing committee for Regulations and Private Bills. If passed, this would add the words 'police records' to the list of reasons prohibiting discrimination in the province, including for employment. The government needs to take a clear stand confirming that screening for police records by employers is not a Human Rights Code issue.

Businesses in Ontario do not screen for police records with the intent to discriminate and harm individuals who are seeking employment. Many businesses are working in regulated industries and are bound by criteria, which include the screening of prospective and current employees. This is to ensure the safety of their products, their clients and their employees.

For example, manufacturers are expected to ensure the security of the manufacturing process and supply chain performance to mitigate the risk of loss, theft, contraband smuggling and terrorism and to protect the interest of their stakeholders. In order to ship to their customer's distribution centers in the United States of America, they are required to conform to the Security Criteria of C-TPAT for Foreign Manufacturers.

"Consistent with foreign regulations, background checks and investigations should be conducted for prospective employees. Once employed, periodic checks and reinvestigations should be performed based on cause, and/or the sensitivity of the employee's position." **US Border Customs and Border Protection Foreign Manufacturer Security Criteria.**

Within Ontario, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) sets out roles and responsibilities for employers with respect to workplace violence and workplace harassment, including developing and implementing policies and programs. For these reasons, many employers are required to screen prospective employees and existing employees for the absence of a police record to ensure they are providing their employees with a safe workplace.

"Under the Preventing Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment Employers must proactively assess the risks of workplace violence that may arise from the nature of the workplace, the type of work or the conditions of work. Measures and procedures to control these risks must be included in the workplace violence program. Employers must advise the Joint Health and Safety Committee or health and safety representative, if any, or workers, of the results of the assessment, and provide a written copy, if available."

**Ministry of Labour Occupational Health and Safety Act**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Protect the rights of employers to screen prospective and current employees for police records.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **H. Scale back the “One-size fits all” Scheduling Provision of Bill 148**

Submitted by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issues:**

The Government of Ontario’s “one size fits all” provision for scheduling fails to take into account the operational requirements of businesses in different sectors across Ontario.

### **Background:**

As part of Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, the Ontario Government made substantial changes to the Employment Standards Act (ESA). Particularly important were the changes to the rules around scheduling. Under the new rules set out for employers in Bill 148:

- Employees would have the right to request schedule or location changes after having been employed for three months, without fear of reprisal.
- Employees who regularly work more than three hours per day, but upon reporting to work are given less than three hours, must be paid three hours at their regular rate of pay.
- Employees can refuse to accept shifts without repercussion if their employer asks them to work with less than four days' notice.
- If a shift is cancelled within 48 hours of its start, employees must be paid three hours at their regular rate of pay.
- When employees are "on-call" and not called in to work, they must be paid three hours at their regular rate of pay. This would be required for each 24-hour period that employees are on-call.
- If a collective agreement is made between an employer and a union, the agreement would prevail in place of some of these new rules.

Remaining mindful of Ontario’s business competitiveness is a top concern as it directly relates to economic growth and sustainability. The heightened restrictions around scheduling will impact Ontario’s economic standing in the long-term. This will result in increased costs to operations, add unnecessary administrative burdens, and negatively impact the required flexibility and efficiency to remain competitive.

The scheduling changes in the Bill also enhance the perception of Ontario not being an ideal environment for business investments. Special Advisors Mitchell and Murray in their Final Report on the Changing Workplaces Review specifically acknowledged that scheduling “cannot be the same for all employees employed in all businesses. Scheduling can be a very complex and difficult subject”. Recommendation 90 is that “government should adopt a sector-specific approach to the regulation of scheduling”.

The Newmarket Chamber of Commerce supports this recommendation. A targeted approach would mitigate unintended consequences for businesses across Ontario.

### **Recommendation:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Delay the implementation of the scheduling provision which is currently scheduled for January 2019 until consultations with each sector have been completed and scheduling rules are created that factor in the operational needs of each sector.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **I. Correct Calculations for Statutory Holiday Pay**

Authored by the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

There has been a significant change to the calculation of statutory holiday pay under Bill 148 that creates financial hardship to those employers that have part time employees or those that work longer shifts but fewer days such as continental shifts.

### **Background:**

As a result of Ontario's Bill 148, the formula for the calculation of public holiday pay in the Employment Standards Act (ESA) was amended effective January 1, 2018, as follows:

Prior to January 1, 2018: Total amount of regular wages earned by the employee in the four work weeks immediately preceding the public holiday, divided by 20.

Effective January 1, 2018: Total amount of regular wages earned in the pay period immediately preceding the public holiday, divided by the number of days actually worked in that pay period.

"Part X (Public Holidays) is amended. The rules for the calculation of public holiday pay under section 24 are amended to be based on the number of days actually worked in the pay period immediately preceding the public holiday. Sections 27, 28, 29 and 30 are amended to require an employer to provide an employee with a written statement that sets out certain information when a day is substituted for a public holiday." -  
Legislative Assembly of Ontario Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017

The changes to the calculations have made it too costly for employers to schedule part time employees in the two weeks leading up to a public holiday. Also for many Ontario manufacturers, they can no longer offer their employees continental shifts. (A type of work cycle, most commonly at a manufacturing plant or institution, with shifts worked four days in a row, followed by four days off in a row) One employer estimated that continental shift adds an additional ~1.75% to overall cost of payroll in a year as a result of this change.

E.g. Full time employee works 40 hours per week (5 x 8 hours)

Old rules 4 weeks hours 160 / 20 = 8 hours of pay

New rules income over previous two weeks divided by number of shifts. Assuming \$20.00 an hour \$1600.00 divided by 10 shifts = \$160.00 or 8 hours pay (no change)

E.g. Part time employee works one eight-hour shift per week.

Old rules it would be 32 hours /20 and they would get 1.6 hours of stat pay or \$32.00

Under the new rules you take the earnings over the previous 2 weeks, 16 hours @ \$20.00 = \$320.00 divide by number of shifts 2. So \$320.00 / 2 = stat pay of \$160.00

If someone works 10 shifts in the previous 2 weeks for a total of 80 hours or someone works 1 shift in the previous 2 weeks for a total of 8 hours their stat pay will be exactly the same.

Below is a link to the calculator from the Government of Ontario web site

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-holiday-pay-calculator>

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Correct the Public Holiday Pay calculations so compensation is based on the hours worked in the pay period immediately preceding the public holiday not the number of shifts worked.

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021



## **J. Mitigating the impact of Bill 148**

Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Kawartha Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, London Chamber of Commerce, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue:**

With the recent passing of Bill 148 Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, there is much concern as to the impact on business viability because of the large number of changes.

### **Background:**

After the May 2017 announcement of the legislation, the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce embarked on an information gathering campaign as to how our 900 members would be coping with the proposed changes. While many accept the outcome of the bill with regard to minimum wage the challenges do not end there. The legislation contains a significant number of changes from personal emergency leave to scheduling that will impact each business differently. There are businesses that have concerns with integration of the new legislation into current policies, uncertainty as to whether or not their current policies will stand under scrutiny, and the guidelines that enforcement officers will follow.

We heard from our members that implementing the changes would cost thousands of dollars each month and tens of thousands over the course of a year. They are looking at their business models with an eye to reduced hours, reduced staff, and potential automation. This critical eye is not only because of the minimum wage adjustment, but also due to the significant number of changes to the Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act.

We know our Peterborough businesses are not alone in these challenges and as the provincial government has committed to building a fairer, better Ontario this has to happen in concert with the business community.

There have been several independent economic analyses detailing that there will be an impact on the number of jobs in Ontario and while this varies from 50,000 to 180,000 over the next two years, it is not to be dismissed and not to be solely the fault of a business trying to survive in a new legislative climate.

While the funding announced in the Fall Economic Statement for a reduction in the Small Business Tax Rate and Enhancing Support for Youth Employment offer some relief, there is more that could be done.

Businesses need time to transition. Yes, our Ontario entrepreneurs are hard working and committed, but just as transition programming was made available after the introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), such programming is required again.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:**

1. Introduce a two year tax credit program that allows employers to recoup up to 32% of costs (e.g. Human Resources, Legal Consultants, Increased Accountant time etc...) as a result of Bill 148.
2. Increase the threshold of the Health Tax Exemption to \$500,000 from \$450,000, and index to inflation moving forward.
3. Introduce a Scale-Up Tax Credit that allows business to recoup up to 20% of costs associated with scaling up in the year in which money was spent.

4. Increase the registered charity and non-profit PST portion of the HST rebate to 100% to ensure that the sector can continue to meet rapidly increasing demands.
5. Reinstate the schedule to reduce and standardize the Business Education Tax Rate to the 1.22% threshold, unless a municipality is lower than that threshold.
6. Explore opportunities to create a bracketed small business deduction rather than a flat rate for small businesses with an annual income less than \$500,000.
7. Add information on the changes from Bill 148 to all applicable concierge services that apply to workplaces.
8. Allow Enforcement Officers to issue warnings for first time offenders on infractions related to the changes legislated in Bill 148 as opposed to fines for first-time offenders. Warnings versus fines would take into account the severity of the infraction. If a warning is issued, the employee would still receive what is owed to them.
9. Establish a 'Reward the Good Players' approach to recognize employers who have consistently demonstrated positive employment and labour practices.
10. For new legislation that shows an economic impact to small business or employers develop a framework for a defined implementation time frame.
11. Look at altering the WSIB rate structure and reduce it based on the impact of Bill 148 changes.
12. Amend the legislation/regulation to allow the Ministry of Labour to produce a copy of the claim as filed by the employee.

\* The OCC recognizes that as a not for profit organization, it would benefit from this change, but in the pursuit of the overall public interest, urges the government to address this change

Effective Date: April 28, 2018

Sunset Date: April 28, 2021

## **K. Addressing Employment Standards Act**

Authored by the Ajax Pickering Board of Trade, Co-sponsored by the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, the Mississauga Board of Trade, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Whitby Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Currently, when a claim is filed with the Ministry of Labour, the employer does not receive it. Instead, the employer only receives a letter identifying by bullet points the category of each issue (e.g. “wages”, “vacation pay”, etc.). The current policy of the Ministry of Labour to refuse to disclose the claim runs contrary to the efforts for an early settlement and the fundamental rights enriched by our justice system.

### **Background**

The Ontario Ministry of Labour receives on average approximately 15,000 claims per fiscal year.<sup>240</sup> However, in some years, the number of claims has exceeded 23,000. Of the complaints that are filed, roughly 90% are filed by employees who are no longer employed by the employer in issue.<sup>241</sup>

When the Ministry of Labour receives a claim, it then sends out a letter to the employer notifying them of the claim. The letter solely details the nature of the claim by providing the category of each issue (e.g. “wages” or “vacation pay” or “termination pay”). The actual amounts claimed under each category are not normally provided. Enclosed with the letter is a package recommending settlement discussions and a template form to confirm any settlement reached.

At the same time that the letter is sent out, the claim is then placed in queue to be assigned to an Employment Standards Officer, which can often take several months to occur. The claim will be either assigned to an Employment Standards Officer 1 (who can only mediate a settlement) or will be immediately escalated to an Employment Standards Officer 2 (who can mediate a settlement and can issue orders). During the waiting period, the employer can reach out to the employee (if their current contact information is known), but the employee is not obligated to discuss the matter or to provide the claim. Once the Employment Standards Officer is assigned, if a resolution cannot be reached, then the matter will eventually be investigated and an order or a refusal to issue an order issued.

At no point during this entire process is the employer allowed to be provided with the claim from the Ministry of Labour due to its policy. In fact, the employer can only obtain a copy of the claim from the Ministry of Labour if, after an order is rendered, the employer appeals the decision to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and moves for an order for its production.<sup>242</sup> As a result of the refusal to produce the claim, the employer is often unable to address the issues prior to the Employment Standards Officer being assigned. Further, once the Employment Standards Officer is assigned, the employer may not fully appreciate the issues or the source of any misunderstanding.

While essentially all other claim processes in Ontario (including applications before the Human Rights Tribunal) require the claim to be provided to the respondent, the Ministry of Labour has declined to accept this fundamental principle of justice. As a result of this failure to disclose, settlement discussions are hindered and employers are at a disadvantage in responding to claims. The claims process should be improved by

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<sup>240</sup> Ontario Ministry of Labour <[https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2017-2018-ministry-labour?\\_ga=2.89487003.1632369137.1547212240-492227812.1491401077](https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2017-2018-ministry-labour?_ga=2.89487003.1632369137.1547212240-492227812.1491401077)> , Published: August 16, 2017

<sup>241</sup> Toronto Star <<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2018/10/25/ministry-of-labour-puts-hold-on-proactive-workplace-inspections-internal-memo-says.html>> , Published: October 25, 2018

<sup>242</sup> Friedrich Schiller Schule Inc. (Friedrich Schiller Schule) v. Adam, 2013 CanLII 2654 (ON LRB)

requiring that, upon being filed with the Ministry of Labour, a copy of the claim is to be provided to the employer.

**Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Revise the policy of the Ministry of Labour to require that a copy of any claim filed under the Employment Standards Act be provided forthwith to the responding employer.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **L. Auto Insurance Reform: Making Premiums Affordable**

Authored by the Brampton Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Auto insurance premiums rise as accidents decline.

### **Background**

Auto insurance rates continue to climb while the rate of auto accidents continue to fall. In Ontario, auto insurance is mandatory and is provided by the private sector. The overall goal of insurance companies is to provide a good auto insurance product to the customer – at a competitive price- that allows for adequate indemnification in the event of an accident. Yet the insurance companies need to be profitable. In order to maintain their profit levels they have continually raised rates over the last few years to cover the rising cost of claims.

The cost of claims continues to be the driving factor for the increasing rates. The technology now used in most vehicles has proven costly to replace and repair while, at the same time, the cost of auto insurance fraud in Ontario was estimated to be up to \$1.6 billion annually.<sup>243</sup> Furthermore, according to a review conducted by David Marshall for the Government of Ontario, a third of the insurance premium benefits do not even go to the customers as indemnification or for treatment.<sup>244</sup>

A crisis has developed and the need to make a change is urgent. Customers can't afford the higher premiums, while insurance companies can't afford the higher pay outs. It's a vicious cycle and something has to give.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Simplify the accident benefit and tort systems to ensure that these systems are accessible without legal representation except in the most complicated cases. Claimants should receive maximum amount of benefits while reducing the cost of administrative fees.
2. Conduct a review of the present auto insurance product and rating criteria and make meaningful changes that will fairly indemnify individuals for their loss and keep the product affordable.
3. Continue initiatives that assist the insurance industry in fighting fraud.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>243</sup> Liam McFarlane. 2012. *Ontario Automobile Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force: Preliminary Review of KPMG Forensic Report Dated June 13, 2012*. Ernst & Young LLP. <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/autoinsurance/forensic-ey.pdf>.

<sup>244</sup> David Marshall. 2017. *Fair Benefits Fairly Delivered: A Review of the Auto Insurance System in Ontario*. <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/autoinsurance/fair-benefits.html>.

## **M. Brownfield Act Overhaul**

Authored by the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The *Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011* and companion regulations came into full effect as of October 1, 2004. This legislation was designed to remove barriers relating to regulatory liability, financing and planning and in fact had the complete opposite effect.

### **Background**

The 1996 Guideline for use at Contaminated Sites in Ontario served as the forerunner to the current Record of Site Condition (RSC, Brownfields Regulation) and was established to remove barriers relating to regulatory liability, finance and planning and promote the redevelopment of brownfield sites. The legislation has evolved over time and most recently has seen an extensive revision to the Regulation which came into force in 2011 (O.Reg. 511/09). While filings from 2004 to 2011 were challenging; the most recent revisions have basically stifled the intended goals of this legislation.

This is noted because the design of the current regulatory process follows a prescriptive standard that affords absolutely no discretion in its application. It is premised on an impeccable standard that affords no uncertainty and which has manifested the red tape it had originally intended to avoid. The 2009 revision recognized "... Brownfields are underdeveloped or previously developed properties that may be contaminated. They are often, but not always, former industrial or commercial properties ...". The implied goal was to introduce legislation that would promote revitalization of such historic lands.

The prescribed process demands a myriad of requirements including legal interpretations, legal surveys, comprehensive technical interpretations and often considerable environmental sampling to characterize the Site Condition to the current standards. This arduous site screening process has significantly increased redevelopment costs and timelines to achieve these prescriptive standards. It is these issues that stifle this type of urban revitalization. Under this process it is far simpler to develop the outlying urban fringe than revitalize the urban core; especially historic manufacturing precincts. Cost and time inequalities favour the urban sprawl fundamentally discouraged by government. However, the legislation prohibits Municipalities from issuing any Building Permit pending the issuance of Provincial acceptance of the RSC where any gentrification is contemplated.

In the extreme, winter maintenance salt spread across sidewalks and parking lots (for safety purposes) is a *de facto* contaminant which can suspend any redevelopment until all aspects of the Regulation are resolved. Yet there is essentially no reasonable remediation technique to abate salt concentrations above Provincial Standards. A protractive risk assessment process must be undertaken which results in no meaningful change to the Site Condition once completed; but is costly to pursue and inevitably stalls any brownfield development for months or longer.

Even the Ministry has recognized the futility of this and several other of the most obvious deficient situations within these prescriptive standards and have proposed changes to the existing legislation as has been incorporated into the Excess Soil Management regulatory proposal (ERO No.: 013-2774). Immediate acceptance of these changes would represent an easy fix and first accomplishment for this government.

The demanded standard of care would appear unique to all other MECP submission standards. Competent professionals evaluating brownfield properties are frequently informed by the MECP following a 45-day review period that even the smallest inaccuracy necessitates resubmission. The perception has become that a thesis level dissertation document is required. From a risk assessment perspective, the submission standards are more arduous than the drug evaluation process through Health Canada / FDA. The process is also unique in that no pre-consultation is involved.

Legislation is not written to address all possible circumstances. In contrast it provides guiding principles. For example, we recognize that laws are not written to prevent all motorists from exceeding posted limits; but it

guides acceptable use and seeks to dissuade aberrant behaviour. However, the distinctive nature of the Brownfield legislation as it exists currently subscribes to a utopian standard.

Finally, at the conclusion of this process a series of documents are issued by the MECP which can include a Certificate of Property Use (CPU) which often imposes very restrictive site development conditions. For example, any changes to the site development plan can conceivably result in re-evaluation and at a minimum requires MECP Director approval for any and all changes regardless of their nature. As a result, the MECP has unwittingly become a partner in the revitalization process.

Any doubt about this is realized when comparing these standards to that used in the financial community. Banks and other financial lending institutes are risk adverse industries yet there has been no appetite to demand the RSC standards. These agencies continue to use the former standards to facilitate reasonable and timely vetting of this process. Furthermore, the CSA in reviewing these standards has not made any substantial changes toward the RSC requirements. It is perplexing to the Chamber why this dual standard between the public and private sector persists and leads to a common sense conclusion that regulatory over-reach exists with this matter.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Overhaul of the Brownfields Legislation to address barriers to brownfield redevelopment:
  - a. Shorten timelines for the assessment process for regulatory completion to one year;
  - b. Consider a variety of alternatives like the possibility of an external peer review process that could expedite the review process without a loss of integrity (*i.e.*, Qualified Reviewer in addition to Qualified Person);

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **N. Forestry Strategy: Fireproofing Communities through Public Forest Access Roads**

Authored by the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

Forest fires can occur anywhere in Ontario, but most large fires occur in the boreal forest. They can threaten human safety, destroy property or disrupt economic activities.<sup>245</sup> However, wildfires are also an important natural process in Ontario's forest ecosystems. Managing forest fires in Ontario is about balancing the benefits of forest fires, and protecting public safety and communities. Introducing a Forestry Strategy Program will help protect communities against the threat of wildfires while increased funding for forest access roads will support the infrastructure needed in rural and northern Ontario to provide access for firefighting efforts as we face intensifying fire seasons.

### **Background**

Prolonged dry conditions throughout Ontario made 2018 one of the most active forest fire seasons in almost a decade, with more than 1,300 forest fires burning over 265,000 hectares of forest, nearly double the 10-year average.<sup>246</sup>

The impact wildfires have on communities can be devastating. Solutions and mitigative approaches to reduce the hazard posed by interface fire to communities exist by implementing vegetation management strategies.<sup>247</sup> The Provincial Government can look to create greater partnerships with the forestry industry and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to assist in forest management and combat the economic impacts wildfires have on communities.

The forest industry can work with governments, First Nations and local communities, to apply strategies that will minimize climate change risks to our forests and forest communities in the years to come. Ontario's Forest Access Roads Funding Program (a cost-sharing program with industry that supports the construction and maintenance of access roads in Crown forests) will provide a critical infrastructure to ensure that communities and forests are accessible for firefighting efforts.

A good example of this was the major Timmins area forest fire of 2012, which forced the closure of Highway 144 for days. Fortunately, the 100 km Papakomeka/Grassy River forest access road network was able to provide a critical link from Timmins to Sudbury and served as a crucial route for emergency and fire response during the disaster. This road is maintained with support from Ontario's forest access roads funding program.

Forest access roads also play a critical role in the movement of goods and people, supporting natural resource industries as well as the people who live, work and play in rural and northern Ontario.<sup>248</sup> Roads on Crown land provide access for industries such as forestry, mining, prospecting, trapping and tourism, while facilitating the maintenance of critical infrastructure such as power grids, telephone lines, railways and pipelines.

In addition, many of Ontario's First Nations communities rely exclusively upon public forest access roads to transport goods and to reach vital outside services such as healthcare and education. This public infrastructure is, and will continue to be, relied upon by all Ontarians, especially during emergencies like forest fires.

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<sup>245</sup> [https://www.oafc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/page/2507/FMS\\_Discussion\\_Paper%20\(2\)-1.pdf](https://www.oafc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/page/2507/FMS_Discussion_Paper%20(2)-1.pdf)

<sup>246</sup> [https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2018-11/EnvironmentPlan\\_1.pdf](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2018-11/EnvironmentPlan_1.pdf)

<sup>247</sup> <https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/images/uploads/resources/FireSmart-Protecting-Your-Community.pdf>

<sup>248</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/page/state-ontarios-natural-resources-forests-2016>



Fireproofing communities can significantly reduce the risk that wildfires pose and mitigate the socioeconomic impacts from damages caused by wildfires.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Protect against wildland fire incidents through the ongoing development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
2. Reinstate the Public Forest Access Roads program funding to the original 2006 level of \$75 million.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

## **O. Improving Support for Employers**

Authored by the Ajax Pickering Board of Trade, Co-sponsored by the Mississauga Board of Trade and the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Currently, the Office of the Employer Advisor (the “OEA”) provides complimentary expert guidance to employers in regard to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and reprisal issues in regard to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. However, in guiding employers as to their obligations, the OEA does not address the employer’s obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. As a result, the advice given by the OEA may unintentionally cause the employer to violate the Human Rights Code.

### **Background**

The OEA provides “Ontario employers with expert, free and confidential advice, representation, and education on all workers’ compensation issues under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and on unjust reprisal issues under the Occupational Health and Safety Act”.<sup>249</sup> On average, in a given fiscal year, the OEA has roughly 3,000 instances of providing advice.<sup>250</sup> The advice may be provided over a few minutes or several hours. Of the cases handled, 51% were in regard to entitlement issues (e.g. whether there is a leave entitlement) and 15% were in regard to return to work issues (e.g. what obligations are there for when an employee returns from a leave).

In providing this advice, the OEA does not address the employer’s obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. For example, if an employer had a worker who was returning after a leave of absence, the OEA would address the requirements under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. However, the OEA would not advise that the employer also has an ongoing obligation under the Human Rights Code to provide needed accommodation, up to the point of undue hardship. As a result, the employer may unintentionally violate the employee’s rights under the Human Rights Code when handling her return to work.

The absence of advice regarding human rights obligations is particularly alarming when you consider the fact that 70% of applications before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal are in regard to alleged employment related discrimination.<sup>251</sup> Further, the lack of assistance on human rights obligations is compounded by the fact that the Human Rights Legal Support Centre (which is funded by the Government of Ontario) only provides assistance to individual applicants, not employer respondents.<sup>252</sup> Employers should be confident in knowing that the advice the OEA provides is consistent and complete in review of all legal obligations.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Expand the mandate of the Office of the Employer Advisor to include providing expert, free and confidential advice on worker disability and leave related issues under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

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<sup>249</sup> Ontario Office of the Employer Advisor, <<http://www.employeradviser.ca/en/>>

<sup>250</sup> Ontario Office of the Employer Advisor, Annual Report 2017 – 2018, <<http://www.employeradviser.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/OEA-Annual-Report-2017-18-final-English.pdf>>, at pg. 7.

<sup>251</sup> Social Justice Tribunals Ontario, 2017 – 2018 Annual Report < <http://www.sjto.gov.on.ca/documents/sjto/2017-18%20Annual%20Report.html#hrto4>>

<sup>252</sup> Human Rights Legal Support Centre, , <<http://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/about-us>>

## **P. Remove Canadian Residency Requirement for Ontario Corporations**

Submitted by: Quinte West Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce and Belleville Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The need for Ontario corporations to require 25% of their directors to be Canadian residents is creating an unnecessary barrier to set up here and companies look to other provinces that do not have this requirement.

### **Background**

All Ontario companies must have at least one director and this person must be a resident Canadian as defined in the Business Corporations Act (Ontario). The Business Corporations Act (Ontario) provides for a residency requirement for directors. 25% of the directors of an Ontario company must be “resident Canadians” as defined by the Act. This means that if an Ontario company has one to four directors, at least one of them must be a resident Canadian.

### **Business Corporations Act - PART IX DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS - Residency**

(3) At least 25 per cent of the directors of a corporation other than a non-resident corporation shall be resident Canadians, but where a corporation has less than four directors, at least one director shall be a resident Canadian. 2006, c. 34, Sched. B, s. 19 (2).

### **Corporate Directors Residency Requirements in Canada**

Jurisdiction	Director Residency Requirement
Federal (Canada)	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
3 Canadian Territories	No Canadian Directors Required
British Columbia	No Canadian Directors Required
Quebec	No Canadian Directors Required
New Brunswick	No Canadian Directors Required
Nova Scotia	No Canadian Directors Required
Prince Edward Island	No Canadian Directors Required
Newfoundland	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Alberta	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Ontario	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Manitoba	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Saskatchewan	25% resident Canadian Directors Required

It is only directors, which are specified, officers and shareholders do not need to be Canadian residents. Note also that Canadian residents are specified, not Canadian citizens.

*“British Columbia, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are the only Provinces in Canada that waive the corporate directors' residency requirements. This is especially important for foreign individuals and businesses wishing to register businesses in Canada, as they will not have to appoint resident Canadian directors if they incorporate in any of these Provinces.”* [www.newbusinessnow.com](http://www.newbusinessnow.com)

*“Not all provinces and territories have the same rules. As an example, in British Columbia the Business Corporations Act (British Columbia) does not provide for a residency requirement. Therefore, a non-Canadian or a Canadian citizen not living in Canada may be the sole director of a BC company. This is good news for those Canadians who wish to conduct business in Canada but also wish to live outside of Canada. As well, foreign individuals are able to set up BC companies and act as the sole director of those companies since there is no requirement for them to live in Canada.”*  
<http://www.canadianbusinessresources.ca>

Removing the requirement for 25% Canadian residency would align with the Ontario governments mandate to reduce red tape in the province and be cost neutral to the government.

## **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Remove the requirement for 25% Canadian Residency from the Ontario Corporations Business Act.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **Q. Accounting for Economic Outcomes in Regional Collaboration Projects**

Submitted by: Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Jobs created during collaborative regional economic development projects are only attributed to the municipality in which they are geographically located.

### **Background**

“Ontario’s economy is undergoing a period of rapid change. Twenty-first century globalization, urbanization, and technological transformation are challenging the status quo and redefining what it means to be competitive. Given these and other pressures, Ontario’s overall prosperity will increasingly depend on the strength of its regions.” - This is how the 2019 report from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce titled “The Great Mosaic – Reviving Ontario’s Regional Economies” starts.

It’s a fitting to start to a discussion around how to then calculate economic impact. Municipalities impacted by “A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe” are bound by provincial legislation to have official plans, land needs assessments, and zoning by-laws in place that detail how each municipality is going to achieve the pre-determined milestones of jobs and residents per hectare. Those results are then reported to the province.

And while these plans and processes are necessary, they don’t account for the fact that more and more economic development is collaborative and crosses geographic lines. One example can be found in the City of Peterborough. The City has contributed significant dollars to infrastructure at the regional airport that lies just outside its geographical boundary. The combined investment by the City, County and local township has resulted in the number of jobs increasing from 50 to over 300 over the past decade. The question becomes how is the outcome of those investments (jobs, new economic opportunities, etc..) accounted for in growth targets? Right now, the outcome falls to the municipality in which the tangible asset exists – therefore, we are back to geographical boundaries even though it is a regional collaboration.

This disconnect between investment and reporting rules is a barrier to regional economic development because the value of the investment is diminished when the result is not recognized. To resolve this issue and encourage more regional collaboration that will benefit all of Ontario we ask that government amend the reporting rules and allow all municipalities to account for the jobs they have helped create through regional projects.

The Growth Plan document identifies a need for complete communities with the following paragraph in section 2.1

“To support the achievement of complete communities, this Plan establishes minimum intensification and density targets that recognize the diversity of communities across the GGH. Some larger urban centres, such as Toronto, have already met some of the minimum targets established in this Plan, while other communities are growing and intensifying at a different pace that reflects their local context.”

This allowance will encourage more collaboration across geographical lines by municipalities and help regions invest in projects that will benefit their area and the province as a whole. It will also more accurately reflect the local context of the urban rural mix in the outer ring municipalities. These outer ring municipalities also address issues such as transit and conservation issues across geographical lines, yet recognition of the impact of regional economic development on multiple municipalities does not happen.

Continuing in 2.1 is the following

“...consider opportunities to better co-ordinate our collective efforts across municipalities to support their contribution to economic growth and improve access to transit.” If this call is to be realized to its maximum potential then there has to be allowance to recognize the impact of jobs created and economic impact when municipalities work together.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Develop a mechanism that allows for multiple municipalities who have invested in a regionally significant project to account for jobs created proportional to financial contribution when reporting to government.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **R. Bettering Ontario Workplaces**

Submitted by: Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Mississauga Board of Trade, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

In Ontario, new employers have a lengthy list of policies, programs, and training that they must develop and implement. These obligations are important to ensure the health and safety of all workers in Ontario. However, these obligations can seem insurmountable for a start-up, small business, or not-for-profit. The result of this hurdle is that many businesses either ignore their obligations or attempt to avoid these obligations by only hiring contractors.

### **Background**

For provincially regulated employers in Ontario, there are various sources of legislative employer obligations. This includes the *Employment Standards Act* (the “ESA”), the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (the “OHSA”), and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (“AODA”).

Under the OHSA, employers have an obligation to have a health and safety policy, a workplace harassment policy, a workplace violence policy, a health and safety program, a workplace harassment program, and a workplace violence program. In addition, under the OHSA, employers have an obligation to provide employees with Worker OHSA Awareness Training, Supervisor OHSA Awareness Training, workplace harassment training, and workplace violence training. In addition, the health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee have to receive specific training. These training programs are in addition to industry or workplace specific training obligations.

Under AODA, employers have to develop various policies (including a workplace accommodation policy) and provide training on AODA, its standards, and the Human Rights Code.

The above are only a few of the examples of the policies, programs, and training that Ontario employers must develop and implement.

A few of the legislatively required policies, programs, and training are provided complimentary by the province (e.g. there is a complimentary Worker OHSA Awareness Training). Many however are not. As a result many new employers either ignore their obligations or attempt to avoid these obligations by only hiring contractors.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Provide a centralized support mechanism (e.g. web portal) for employers to easily obtain sample HR policies, programs, and training that are statutorily required.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **S. Healthcare Crisis: Demands Exceed Supply**

Submitted by: Brampton Board of Trade

### **Issue**

Ontario's healthcare system is not meeting population demographics.

### **Background**

Hospital overcrowding has become the new normal in too many of Ontario's growing cities. This is not because of inefficiencies, rather Ontario's hospitals are the most efficient in the country.<sup>253</sup> According to the Ontario Hospital Association, clinical innovation has led to Ontario's hospitalization rate being the lowest in Canada, and when patients end up in a ward, their average stay is cheaper and shorter than in any other province.

The issue is that the supply of 30,000 hospital beds on Ontario has not increased since 1999, even though Ontario's population has grown 27%, from 11.5 million to 14.6 million.<sup>254</sup> In addition, the segment of Ontario's population that is 65 years or older has increased by 1 million. As a result, hospitals in high growth cities operate at over 100% capacity on a near daily basis.

Another significant factor is that 1 in 6 hospital beds are occupied by patients who require an 'alternative level of care' (ALC), which on average is less expensive than hospital beds and come in such forms as long-term care, assisted living, and rehab.<sup>255</sup> The majority of ALC patients are waiting for a long-term care beds, which in 2019 had a wait list of 161 days. While the current provincial government has invested in more long-term care beds, it takes 3 years to get those beds in operation. Just 21 new long-term care beds opened in Ontario in 2019, while the waitlist grew by more than 2,000. Under the previous provincial government, only 611 new long-term care beds opened from 2011 to 2018.

Matching patient needs to the appropriate healthcare resources will reduce the strain put on hospitals and will contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Ensure provincial funding commitment for new hospital beds based on communities' and regions' demographic and infrastructure needs.
2. Speed up the process to get new long-term care beds into operation - and make sure the beds are created where they are needed.
3. Ensure provincial funding commitment for variety of 'alternative level of care' options that meet diversity of needs, including at-home, community, and mental health support.
4. Research healthcare technology in comparable jurisdictions where remote patient monitoring and crisis management is used effectively to curtail hospital stays.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

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<sup>253</sup> Ontario Hospital Association. 2019. Ontario Hospitals - Leaders in Efficiency. <https://www.oha.com/Documents/Ontario%20Hospitals%20-%20Leaders%20in%20Efficiency.pdf>

<sup>254</sup> Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. 2019. Hallway Health Care: A System Under Strain. [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/premiers\\_council/docs/premiers\\_council\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/premiers_council/docs/premiers_council_report.pdf)

<sup>255</sup> Matt Gurney. 2019. TVO: How to end hallway medicine, Part 3: Doug Ford's plan is a start, but it's not the solution. <https://www.tvo.org/article/how-to-end-hallway-medicine-part-3-doug-fords-plan-is-a-start-but-its-not-the-solution>



## **T. Maintaining Rural Emergency Services**

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Recent reductions in emergency room services across southwestern Ontario have escalated concerns over health care delivery to rural communities.

### **Background**

Canadians living in rural areas comprise 18% of the population but are served by only 8% of total physicians across the nation.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada, in their 2019 pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, noted that Canada needs a rural economic policy that narrows the existing disparities in health and wellness and ensures that rural Canadians have better access to health care with an opportunity to realize their economic potential. A strategy/policy also needs to catalyze rural communities' abilities for employment, improved health care efficiencies, stronger rural health infrastructure, and ultimately attracting more people to live, work and invest outside major urban centres.

Over the past year, hospitals in the southwestern Ontario communities of Chesley and Clinton have reduced hours at their emergency rooms by closing from 8 pm to 8 am. In both institutions a shortage of nurses required difficult and potentially volatile decisions by local administrators.

At the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Annual Conference in January of 2020, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott noted the Auditor General reported in 2017 that health services are delivered inconsistently across Ontario, a predicament that is neither fair nor equitable for people living in rural communities. The status quo, according to the Minister, is not an option.

In October of 2019, the Ministry of Health appointed Jim Pine as an advisor for conducting consultations on public health and emergency services. He has been asked by the province to facilitate discussions with emergency health providers and municipal stakeholders. To address the impact of service reduction such as the aforementioned predicaments in Chesley and Clinton, the provincial business sector should be invited to discussions in relation to any negative effects on rural economic development and investment attraction.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Include the business sector on consultations for emergency rooms across rural Ontario and ultimately develop solutions for avoiding any future service reductions.

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## **U. Making Data More User Friendly**

Submitted by: Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

### **Issue**

There is currently a deficit of tools for businesses to receive data in a timely and easy to read and understand.

### **Background**

The Ontario government is currently building a data strategy. Among the goals of the new strategy is to “create economic benefits by enabling Ontario firms to develop data-driven business models and unlock the commercial value of data” along with the idea that data can be a key economic driver.

The Peterborough Chamber of Commerce hosted one of six in-person consultations welcoming about 40 businesses, residents and organizations into our boardroom. There was great discussion about how business can ask and receive the right data in a readable format and a timely fashion.

One consultant said even asking for specific business counts in an area can be difficult and a query mechanism or help desk that can provide an answer would be appreciated.

Our local Workforce Planning Council has such a staffed query desk that businesses and organizations can access to get answers on labour market information (LMI). This help function is extremely useful and has proved to work very well for much needed local context on LMI. A similar program for data would be welcome.

According to Forbes.com’s Bernard Marr, 90 per cent of all data ever collected was generated in the last two years. An article by MaRS on how innovative companies are using data states that connecting and understanding data related to people, platforms, the Internet and supply chains (and most importantly, turning it all into profitable insights) is crucial when achieving competitive advantage.

Our resolution asks for the opportunity for businesses in all communities in Ontario to enhance their competitive advantage through the creation of a query dashboard that can easily compile data and communicate the information in a simple, easy to read format for the business.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Develop a data query dashboard that can merge and release data sets upon request for businesses and Ontarians.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

## **V. Making Ontario a Leader in Smart Government**

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario and its municipalities are competing with other governments throughout the world to become a “Smart Province” and “Smart Cities”.

The government of Ontario should become a leader in the adoption of ‘smart’ government technologies to improve efficiencies, reduce costs and improve service delivery to taxpayers and to strive to move toward digital government.

At the same time, Ontario should become a leader in promoting the adoption by its municipalities of ‘smart cities’ technology including providing province-wide standards, benchmarks and best practices, facilitating information-sharing and providing stable and consistent funding to allow municipalities to make investments in the technology and infrastructure required to achieve these goals and to also move toward digital government.

### **Background**

A ‘Smart Government’ has been simply defined as “the use of technology and innovation by governments for better performance”.<sup>256</sup> Similarly, a Smart City has been defined as “innovation, not necessarily but mainly through information and communications technologies (ICT), which enhance urban life in terms of people, living, economy, mobility and governance”. As such, smart government and smart cities use technology and the data it collects to tackle challenges such as traffic congestion, reducing environmental impacts, fighting crime, providing social services, fostering economic growth, and improving the delivery and accessibility of government services. It includes the use of technology in the delivery of services (often known as digital government).

The diminishing cost of IT infrastructure and the continued development of more powerful and efficient internet and wireless networks has created the potential for governments to collect, use and analyze data for the betterment of the lives of its citizens and for the benefit of all taxpayers including businesses through increased efficiencies and reduced costs in the delivery of government services. For example, the ability to collect instantaneous feedback through smart devices (e.g. smart street lights with internet-connected sensors that collect data of all types from weather, movements, loud noises associated with threats to public safety or open parking spots) allows governments to be more efficient and effective in their delivery of services to citizens.

Various individual department projects and systems within the federal and provincial government have provided good examples of ‘smart’ government, including the online systems to manage federal immigration applications, which could be used as potential models to promote a broader movement toward ‘smart’ government.

In the fall of 2019, the Ontario Government introduced its Building Smarter Government Initiative and while the Ontario Chamber of Commerce applauds this initiative as a good start, there is still much more that can be done to make Ontario a truly “Smart Province”.

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<sup>256</sup> Smart City and Smart Government: Synonymous or Complementary, Abstract by Prof. L. Anthopolous & Prof. C.G. Reddick, submission to 25<sup>th</sup> Annual World Wide Web Conference (2016).

One of the most striking examples of the benefits of smart government is the ‘e-Estonia’ project in this EU country which has achieved remarkable benefits from a strong focus on the adoption of digital government with an emphasis on accessibility and usability for its citizens.<sup>257</sup> This includes adopting processes to ensure that data is only required to be entered once into a government system and that appropriate access is granted to and shared by various levels of government and departments whom require it but is also limited to such departments.<sup>258</sup> These processes are estimated to have saved 820 years of working time for government employees on annual basis or an estimated 2% of the country’s GDP derived from savings on government employee salaries and costs.<sup>259</sup> In addition, it has created business opportunities through its e-residency program which allows individuals and businesses across the world to become ‘residents’ of the country for the purposes of interacting with and accessing certain online government services by allowing them to quickly and easily create a digital profile which facilitates doing business in the country without time-consuming processes for obtaining immigration status or approval to enter and do business in the country in the traditional manner.

At the same time, the government should ensure that an individual privacy-centric approach is taken in the implementation of such measures, including adopting a ‘privacy by design’ approach as promoted by Ontario’s former Information & Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, which focuses on priorities such as preserving consent; minimizing data collection and retention; anonymizing data and ensuring safeguards to restrict unlawful surveillance among other things.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Mandate an existing provincial agency or Ministry (presently under the purview of the Treasury Board) to lead both provincial government Ministries and agencies as well Ontario municipalities in the adoption, implementation and continuous improvement of ‘smart’ government technology.
2. Empower the said agency to create, implement and promote province-wide standards, goals, benchmarks and best practices on the use of ‘smart’ government technology including facilitating co-operative information-sharing about the successes, experiences and projects undertaken by various levels of governments.

Among the said goals should be:

- A focus on those initiatives that improve the quality of life of taxpayers
- Increase efficiencies, improve service delivery and accessibility
- Reduce costs
- Fight climate change

This must all be done while respecting individual privacy rights. Initiatives should be scalable and be focussed on governments of varying sizes and population densities from cities to small towns and rural communities.

3. Commit to providing stable funding and/or tax incentives for ‘smart’ government initiatives both at a provincial and municipal level. Such funding should, when possible, be reasonably tied to outcome-based measurements so as to promote the adoption of those initiatives and technologies which have been

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<sup>257</sup> European Commission: Digital Government Factsheet 2019: Estonia.

<sup>258</sup> e-Estonia Guide 2018, published by Estonia Chief Information Officer.

<sup>259</sup> <https://e-estonia.com/how-save-annually-820-years-of-work/>

proven to further the goals of the initiative. Emphasis should be placed on initiatives involving public private partnerships and private sector involvement.

4. Once the Government of Ontario has introduced these initiatives, it must then leverage its position to attract new business and investment by marketing Ontario globally as Canada's first "Smart Province."

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## **W. Ontario's planning for Urban Mobility – Smart cities and digital transformation**

Submitted by: The Oakville Chamber of Commerce, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Milton Chamber of Commerce and Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The role of the Province in the application of data and innovative technologies that enable municipalities to establish intelligent transportation networks and optimize urban mobility.

### **Background**

A reliable transportation network is essential for trade, the movement of goods and services as well as people. It is also integral to our province's economic competitiveness.

As our communities become more connected through the collection of data, artificial intelligence and technology, it is vital that we are prepared for the business climate of the future and that we remain competitive with other jurisdictions.

Population growth as well as increased employment growth, is positive for our local economy; however, it also underlines the need for building a resilient transportation network that works for all modes of transportation to supply the movement of goods and people.

A report recently released by the Province signals that the province is positioning Ontario to be a leader in the development, commercialization and adoption of advanced manufacturing and mobility technologies. Supporting new mobility technologies, enhancing the innovation ecosystem as well as supporting research and development and early stage technology development are all measures that will assist communities in their efforts to adopt new technologies.<sup>260</sup>

Beyond providing the legislative and regulatory framework, the province can further connect municipalities and establish a common framework for the development of alternative Connected Vehicle/Autonomous Vehicle scenarios, readiness guidelines, and potential projects. The creation of a dedicated program could further incent municipalities to invest in infrastructure/technological updates within their local jurisdictions, thereby creating a healthy environment for emerging transportation technologies.

It is vital that municipalities engage in the development of a technological transportation system where data from smart infrastructure, transportation networks, and connected vehicles can empower planners, transit agencies, and other municipal leaders to make advancements in urban mobility. The future efficient movement of both people and goods and services will depend on the effective management of a connected infrastructure.

As the industry evolves and becomes a reality, it will become a competitive economic advantage for municipalities that embrace it—and a disadvantage for communities that don't.

The new market for automated and connected vehicles is expected to grow exponentially and large economic benefits are expected. Other regions are not standing still (e.g. United States, Japan and China) and are already adopting strategies for automated vehicles and attracting investment in this field.<sup>261</sup> Companies could soon be including Autonomous Vehicle, connectivity and technology readiness in their decisions on where to locate a business or expand operations.

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<sup>260</sup> Driving Prosperity: The future of Ontario's Automotive Sector, February 14, 2019

<sup>261</sup> On the road to automated mobility: An EU strategy for mobility of the future, Brussels, 17.5.2018

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Encourage municipalities to include adoption of emerging transportation technologies in their short- and long- term “Transportation Master Plans (TMPs)” to ensure that they are prepared for the inevitable arrival of new modes of transportation (such as Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and related transportation infrastructure).
2. Create a dedicated program (e.g. matching funds) that encourages municipalities to invest in infrastructure/technological updates within their local jurisdictions, thereby creating a healthy environment for emerging transportation technologies.
3. Support academic institutions in becoming agile incubators of young talent, encouraging them to develop innovative solutions for mobility and transportation for Ontario’s municipalities through sustainable technologies, as well as investing in research and skills training to meet the future labour demands.

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## **X. Making the Ontario Energy Board Hearing Process More Accessible**

Submitted by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sponsored by Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The current Ontario Energy Board (OEB) framework relating to cost eligibility and cost awards (the framework) makes stakeholder participation prohibitively expensive. As an example, the OEB does not:

- advise parties who are eligible to receive cost awards at the outset of hearings (e.g. proceedings or consultations/policy initiatives)
- guarantee costs associated with participation will be reimbursed; and
- advise parties of the percentage of costs that will be reimbursed.

These costs and the framework are significant barriers to full participation by stakeholders with limited resources. In addition, the Board has pre-determined that certain groups are not eligible for any costs even if they are accepted as an intervenor (i.e. organizations representing municipalities or groups of municipalities).

### **Background**

The Ontario Energy Board regulates electricity and natural gas in Ontario, in part by decisions made during hearings on a variety of energy issues including pricing of energy, regulation of generation and distribution of electricity, and for various energy projects that affect the interests of the business community across the Province.

As currently implemented, the framework relating to cost eligibility and cost awards is prohibitively complex which results in uncertainty and increased expense for stakeholders with limited resources. The OEB has set up processes and guidelines which parties, in hearings before the Board (i.e. participants that want to actively contribute to the decision-making process), must prove that they should be: granted Intervenor Status; deemed eligible to receive cost awards; and awarded an amount of costs. Although the OEB sets the guidelines as noted above, such guidelines are further scrutinized by the OEB and are reviewed using a significant amount of discretion.

The OEB prescribes an avenue for reimbursing some of the costs to participants through separate application processes that are also subject to almost full discretion of the OEB. Organizations or individual participants with limited resources are *advised* to hire legal professionals such as lawyers or paralegals or analysts at their own expense and then apply for reimbursement of the costs that would be calculated according to the OEB's own guidelines. There is no guarantee of what would be accepted as an eligible cost and at what percentage such expense will be reimbursed (if at all). This process is a significant barrier to full participation, especially by groups in small and rural areas with limited cash resources. This can be viewed as discriminatory toward these stakeholders. The Chambers of Commerce across the Province are concerned that public policy is being decided based on who can afford to be at the table for the discussion in the OEB hearings.

An example that illustrates the high cost of participation is the recent OEB hearing about alternative mechanisms for natural gas expansion. A group of stakeholders from Northwestern Ontario registered as intervenors and spent more than \$70,000 to actively participate in the hearing by submitting evidence, arguments or interrogatories (written questions) and by cross-examining witnesses. The decision by the OEB on the issue most important to the group was to uphold the status quo. The application for the



reimbursement of costs associated with the hearing took nearly a year to receive a decision to reimburse 98% of the costs and for those costs to be paid out. There was no guarantee that all the costs incurred by the group would be reimbursed by the OEB's cost award decision.

The vast majority of the OEB hearings are held at their headquarters in Toronto which increases the costs associated with formal interventions by those in rural and remote areas. While the OEB provides telecommunication services (e.g video conferencing) such services, while useful, are not as effective in ensuring a parties positions are integrated into decisions. In addition, many of the applications are extremely technical in nature. As such, organizations that are not in the 'business' of intervening require external expertise to assist them in preparing the material for submitting to the OEB and in examining the materials submitted by the applicant and other intervenors. The more complex the application, the higher the costs that will be assumed. When funding is restricted, or approved at a late stage, the participation will be less diligent in order to reduce costs.

Some of the solutions to mitigate the barriers to participation in the OEB hearings can be found in the National Energy Board (NEB) intervenor process. The intervenors in the NEB process are advised up front of the costs that will be eligible and how much of the cost will be recovered, based on the funds available for that particular issue. The participants can then decide if they will proceed with the application to be a participant in the hearings, and if so, the depth of their participation. The NEB also provides upfront funding to assist with the costs of the participants whereas the OEB process requires that the participants pay for all costs and then apply for partial reimbursement.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario (via the Ontario Energy Board) to:

- Y.** Create a more transparent and predictable process for cost eligibility and cost awards for participation in OEB hearings.
- Z.** Provide sufficient additional funding for participants, ensuring full participation for cost eligible participants in OEB hearings by:
  - a. Providing for an OEB process that takes into consideration the eligible participant's actual capacity to pay for full participation in the OEB hearings and upholds the principle of fairness for all stakeholders; and,
  - b. Providing for OEB to release advanced funding for costs so all eligible participants can benefit from an up-front amount that covers the costs of initializing and participating in the OEB hearings and for experts (if required). A hold-back can be put in place subject to final submission of expenses etc.
- AA.** Amend the cost eligibility and cost awards processes by:
  - a. Advising parties whether they are eligible to receive cost awards at the outset of the hearings and what specific costs they are eligible for;
  - b. Guaranteeing costs associated with participation will be reimbursed; and
  - c. Advising parties of the percentage of costs that will be reimbursed.

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