



## ADVOCACY WINS 2016/2017

The OCC's powerful advocacy, backed by the strength of its Chamber Network and corporate partners, achieves impactful policy wins for Ontario businesses.



## ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *SMALL BUSINESS TOO BIG TO IGNORE CAMPAIGN*

**Ask:** Earlier this year, the OCC, in partnership with local chambers of commerce and boards of trade, launched the *Small Business Too Big to Ignore* campaign to champion this vital component of Ontario's economy. In addition to highlighting the success of small businesses in Ontario, our objective was to identify and develop potential policy solutions to the most significant barriers to small business growth.

- ✓ **Win:** On March 1, the Ontario government launched its *Small Business Innovation Challenge*. Through this initiative, the Province is inviting small- and medium-sized businesses to develop, test and demonstrate innovative solutions to challenges that will enhance government programs and services.
- ✓ **Win:** During Question Period on October 19, the advocacy efforts of the *Small Business Too Big to Ignore* campaign were explicitly acknowledged by Minister of Economic Development and Growth, Brad Duguid. He emphasized how it highlighted concerns of rising input costs and electricity prices amongst the small business community.

"Mr. Speaker, we're working very closely with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They've written a report that completely aligns very much with the work we're doing..."

— Hon. Brad Duguid, October 19, 2016.

## ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *ELECTRICITY PRICING*

**Ask:** In our 2015 report, *Empowering Ontario: Constraining Costs and Staying Competitive in the Electricity Market*, the OCC called on the Ontario government to ensure that future energy policies reflect the principles of affordability, transparency and flexibility. This call was echoed in our December 2016 submission in advance of the Long-Term Energy Plan. In both documents the OCC argued that a thoughtful balancing of these three principles would promote economic prosperity and business competitiveness, and strengthen ratepayer confidence in Ontario.

- ✓ **Win:** In the September 2016 Throne Speech, the government announced that the Industrial Conservation Initiative will be expanded so that any company that consumes more than 1MW will be eligible. Accordingly, an additional 1000 companies in Ontario are now eligible to save between 14% to 30% on their bill, a noticeable increase from the 300 companies currently enrolled in the program.
- ✓ **Win:** The removal of the Debt Retirement Charge on commercial, industrial, and other non-residential electricity users on April 1, 2018, nine months earlier than expected.
- ✓ **Win:** In March 2017, the Ontario government announced its Fair Hydro Plan which will provide a 17% rate reduction and rate freeze to approximately 500,000 small businesses and farms. The government also announced a further expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative would be available to electricity consumers with peak demands between 500 kilowatts (KW) and 1 megawatts (MW) that operate under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes 31, 32 and 33.



“...The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has highlighted the importance of the small businesses and the challenges they face. Many regional chambers have spoken to us about that, so we listened and we took action.”

— Hon. Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy (October 26, 2016)

### ○ ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT: *CLOSING ONTARIO'S TOURISM GAP*

**Ask:** In *Closing the Tourism Gap: Creating a Long-Term Advantage for Ontario*, the OCC advocated that the Province develop a government-wide Ontario tourism strategy with measurable targets. We also highlighted the need to work with tourism operators to reduce the regulatory and cost burdens within the industry by adding the tourism sector to the Red Tape Challenge.

- ✓ **Win:** In the *Strategic Framework for Tourism in Ontario*, the government explicitly acknowledged the efforts and leadership presented by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce through our solution-based advocacy approach in the tourism sector. The report recognizes our efforts stating, “the government is encouraged by the leadership that industry is already taking. Recently, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce released a forward-looking report on how the sector can collaborate to improve avenues for success. The report provides an examination of provincial tourism industry trends and presents recommendations for government and industry to work together to boost long-term competitiveness and generate sustainable demand for Ontario tourism.”
- ✓ **Win:** The goal set out within the government’s strategic framework (“To meet or exceed global industry growth over a five-year period, which the world tourism organization estimates will grow by an average of 3.3 percent per year until 2030”) satisfies the OCC’s recommendation of a long-term strategy with a clear industry growth target.
- ✓ **Win:** The Ontario government signaled that it will add the tourism sector to the Red Tape Challenge, a direct recommendation of the OCC to help improve the operating environment for business.

### ○ ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT: *IMMIGRATION REFORM*

**Ask:** In *Passport to Prosperity: Ontario's Priorities for Immigration Reform*, the OCC urged the federal government to return the economic category immigration target to the 2015 range of 172,100–186,700 by no later than 2017/18.

- ✓ **Win:** During his keynote address at the launch event of the OCC report in April 2016, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration John McCallum indicated his support for this and the other recommendations in the report.
- ✓ **Win:** In October 2016, Minister John McCallum announced that the federal government plans to keep the immigration targets for 2017 at 300,000. However, the new plan represents an increase in a higher target for economic immigrants –



increasing from 160,600 in 2016 to 172,500 in 2017. This measure will contribute to the ability of Canadian employers to attract the global talent that they need to remain competitive.

- ✓ **Win:** In November 2016, Minister John McCallum announced that additional points would be awarded to applicants whose degrees were obtained in Canada. International student graduates will now receive 15 to 20 points through the application process, depending on the length and level of education they've received in Canada. This policy is consistent with a recommendation in *Passport to Prosperity* which urged government to award additional points to graduates of Canadian colleges and universities.

### ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN*

**Ask:** Recognizing the burden of the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP), the OCC called on government to delay its implementation to provide more time for businesses to adjust to the new financial obligations. We also asked that the government provide greater clarity and broader classification for "comparability" to include Defined Contribution Plans. All the while, the OCC was working toward our stated, preferred option to support retirement security which is a national Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) enhancement instead of a stand-alone ORPP.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2016, Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa announced that the Government of Ontario would be abandoning the ORPP in favour of an enhanced CPP, avoiding increased regulatory fragmentation and thus administrative burden – mitigating significant consequences for Ontario's business community.

### ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *INCREASING FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR ONTARIO STUDENTS*

**Ask:** Through our resolution process last May, the Ontario Chamber Network identified the need to build a stronger business/commerce curriculum in Ontario schools which would emphasize financial literacy. This message was delivered during our advocacy campaign on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP). Throughout the campaign, the OCC highlighted the positive benefits that increased financial literacy can have on individual saving behaviour and urged the Ontario government to take steps to formally build financial literacy programming into the Ontario school curriculum.

- ✓ **Win:** As announced on March 23, 2017, Ontario will be rolling out pilot projects at 28 high schools aimed at revamping the Grade 10 careers course to include financial literacy. The pilot project, which will involve over 700 students, lays the foundation for the inclusion of financial literacy as part of the school curriculum by fall 2018.



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**○ ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN THE ONTARIO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM*

**Ask:** In the 2016 Health Transformation Initiative, the OCC asked for improved pathways for Ontario health and life science technologies into our public health care system, as well as more supports for start-ups in this sector to bridge the commercialization “valley of death”.

✓ **Win:** On April 3, 2017, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced the first recipients of the Health Technologies Fund, which supports the development of technologies that can bring value and improved care to the health care system. Additionally, he named the first three Innovation Brokers, who are leaders capable of connecting providers, patients and other stakeholders to innovative health technology companies.



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## BUDGET WINS

### ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *MODERNIZING THE CONNECTING LINKS FUNDING PROGRAM*

**Ask:** In our *2017 Pre-Budget Submission*, we called for a one-time, \$30-million enhancement of the Connecting Links fund as a transitional measure to assist affected communities in addressing the two-year gap in which the program was discontinued.

- ✓ **Win:** In Budget 2017, the government announced that funding for the Connecting Links program will increase to \$30 million per year by 2018-9.

### ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *ENHANCING PRIMARY CARE*

**Ask:** In the inaugural report of the 2016 Health Transformation Initiative, *Transformation Through Value And Innovation: Revitalizing Health Care in Ontario*, the OCC called for greater use of integrated provider care teams to better co-ordinate holistic care and to ensure patient needs are consistently and effectively addressed.

- ✓ **Win:** Announced in Budget 2017, the government is investing a further \$15 million to create new, or expand existing, interprofessional health care provider teams.

### ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES SCALE-UP*

**Ask:** The OCC has consistently identified the regulatory burden as a barrier to business growth and innovation in Ontario. In 2016, we specifically highlighted the challenges faced by small businesses seeking to scale into medium- and large-sized firms in *Breaking Barriers: Ontario's Scale-Up Challenge*.

- ✓ **Win:** Announced in Budget 2016, the Business Growth Initiative (BGI) committed \$400 million over five years to help leverage Ontario's highly skilled workforce to compete through innovation. In the 2017 Budget, the Ontario government expanded the BGI by \$650 million over the same period. The BGI is dedicated to helping small businesses scale up through its Scale-Up Ventures Fund, encouraging the broader economy to become more innovative, and reducing the regulatory burden on business.



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## ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *MAPPING THE PROVINCIAL SHARING ECONOMY*

**Ask:** In our report *Harnessing the Power of the Sharing Economy*, the OCC called on the province to demonstrate leadership and develop a roadmap of how best to harness the opportunity of the sharing economy and detail the appropriate role of government in addressing some of the challenges. We also encouraged government to address unnecessary and outdated regulations and harmonize standards currently impeding the sector.

- ✓ **Win:** In Budget 2017, the government announced that they will this year release its integrated Sharing Economy Strategy. Using broad, evidence-based research, the strategy will reflect the Province's approach to supporting the innovation economy, while ensuring standards for consumer protection and worker well-being. The strategy will help modernize regulations and reduce red tape.

## ○ **ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:** *CLARIFICATION ON CAP AND TRADE TO SUPPORT BUSINESS*

**Ask:** In an open letter to the Premier released in April, the OCC called for government to prioritize the allocation of cap and trade revenue for businesses, prioritize innovation funding, create greater post-2020 design certainty and monitor and respond to regional impacts.

- ✓ **Win:** In Budget 2017, the Ontario government provided some clarification as to how the cap and trade auction proceeds will be spent. With expected revenues of \$1.8 billion in 2017-8 and \$1.4 billion in 2018-9, Budget 2017 details that \$800 million will go directly towards helping homes and businesses adopt low-carbon technologies while a further \$410 million towards implementation of Green Investment Fund initiatives.



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## ○ ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT: *FISCAL MANAGEMENT*

**Ask:** In previous pre-budget submissions, including the 2017 edition, the OCC has called for the government to meet its commitment of a balanced budget by 2017-18.

- ✓ **Win:** We are pleased to see that the government has achieved this very important goal, for the first time since the 2008-9 recession. Additionally, Ontario's net-debt-to-GDP ratio is down to 37.8 percent (from approximately 40 percent in 2014-5), a decline the government hopes to continue through 2030. While a balanced budget is a positive first step, the OCC will continue its advocacy to encourage surplus budgets to allow for debt repayment. The current interim debt for 2016-17 is \$299.2 billion, and Budget 2017 projects the debt will grow by \$63 billion to \$362.4 billion by 2019-0.

Fiscal prudence should remain a top priority for the Province. Ontario's current fiscal environment deters private investment, reduces the government's capacity to make productivity-enhancing investments, and compromises its ability to respond to future economic slowdowns.

## ○ ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT: *PROMOTING REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

**Ask:** Highlighted specifically in our *Digging Deeper* and *Closing the Tourism Gap* reports, the OCC explicitly recognized the unique challenges that various regions across the province must confront. The OCC advocated that the geographically and sectorally specific challenges of these regions need to be addressed through dedicated long-term planning in areas such as infrastructure.

- ✓ **Win:** Budget 2017 commits the government to develop regional economic development plans that will include strategies to build on the unique strengths of each region and aim to bolster their economic growth.