

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

*From the OCC Report – The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario’s Regional Economies*



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1. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** embed stakeholder engagement within decision-making structures.
  - a. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** establish arm’s length organizations to manage economic development initiatives or permanent advisory committees to guide them.
  - b. **Municipal governments should** consider whether their economic development offices would benefit from being structured as external corporations with Boards of Directors.
2. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** implement longer-term budgets for economic development agencies and programs.
3. **The Government of Ontario should** improve SME access to economic development information and programs via regional contact points.
4. **The Government of Ontario should** promote regional collaboration.
  - a. **The Government of Ontario should** act as a convener by offering forums for regional collaboration, including events, workshops, and online databases.
  - b. **The Government of Ontario should** identify potential areas of alignment between stakeholders with shared needs or priorities.
  - c. **The Government of Ontario should** champion partnerships that are working well as examples of successful models that may be replicated elsewhere.
5. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** prioritize economic reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
  - a. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** foster long-term relationships with Indigenous business associations and other groups.
  - b. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** examine the relevance and accessibility of all economic development programs to Indigenous peoples, as well as the impacts (or lack thereof) on Indigenous outcomes.
  - c. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** make awareness training mandatory for staff who work with Indigenous businesses, peoples, or programs in any capacity.
  - d. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** use procurement to support Indigenous entrepreneurship by providing suppliers with incentives to include more Indigenous content in their businesses.
  - e. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** work with Indigenous stakeholders to identify and invest in critical infrastructure projects in Northern Ontario.
6. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** enhance the use of data.
  - a. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** earmark a greater share of departmental budgets for program evaluation.



- b. **Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade should** consider adopting the What Works approach to support economic development, using the UK's What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth as a model.
  - c. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** work with other governments, the private sector, and research partners to develop a cohesive strategy to collect, share, and operationalize regional economic data.
7. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** prioritize infrastructure investments that unlock regional economic growth.
- a. **The Government of Ontario should** collaborate with businesses, post-secondary institutions, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank to carry out infrastructure projects that are especially important for Ontario's regional development.
  - b. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** work together to introduce a federal program, similar to Quebec's Immigrant Investor Program, to attract foreign investment in Ontario's infrastructure projects.
  - c. **The Government of Ontario should** prioritize upgrades to rural transportation networks, with investments informed by industry representatives.
  - d. **The Government of Ontario should** reinstate funding for the Forest Access Roads Funding Program to its original level of \$75 million.
  - e. **The Government of Ontario should** expedite the four-laning of Highway 69.
  - f. **The Government of Ontario should** identify electricity infrastructure investments needed to continue guaranteeing a reliable supply of power under different demand scenarios.
  - g. **The Government of Ontario should** consider restructuring the Transmission Systems Code to enable transmitters to distribute infrastructure costs across more ratepayers over time.
8. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** modernize regulations that inhibit economic development.
- a. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** build on the successes of Ontario's Mining Working Group to promptly address major barriers to economic development in other sectors and regions.
  - b. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** evaluate and communicate the economic and social benefits of important regulatory reforms to help build consensus among the public and municipalities.
  - c. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** commit to only introducing new regulations after undertaking appropriate socioeconomic impact analyses.
  - d. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** establish permanent advisory panels to regularly review regulations that may limit the implementation of innovative business models across different sectors.
  - e. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** adopt non-prescriptive regulations where possible.
9. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** work with businesses to champion Ontario's brand.



- a. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** establish clear value propositions for different sectors and regions, and promote these coordinated messages through trade missions around the world.
10. **The Government of Ontario should** focus business supports on enhancing productivity and accelerating growth.
    - a. **The Government of Ontario should** target financial support for businesses towards productivity enhancers such as skills training and technology adoption.
    - b. **The Government of Ontario should** establish an ongoing evaluation framework to ensure programs continue to make the best use of public dollars.
    - c. **The Government of Ontario should** consider where grants can be replaced with other financial instruments.
    - d. **The Government of Ontario should** consider introducing a Rural Investment Tax Credit in Ontario.
  11. **The Government of Ontario should** cultivate a dynamic and inclusive ecosystem for workforce and talent development.
    - a. **The Government of Ontario should** establish formal mechanisms to feed local labour market information into program designs.
    - b. **The Government of Ontario should** target programs based on anticipated short-term employment disruptions to local labour markets – such as plant closures – that may result from global trade agreements or automation, among other things.
    - c. **The Government of Ontario should** partner with post-secondary institutions and SMEs to offer work-integrated learning programs, particularly in regions where businesses have the most difficulty accessing the skillsets they need.
    - d. **The Government of Ontario should** develop a new seed funding program to support projects that develop the skills deemed most critical to the competitiveness of growing industries, and allocate funding on a regional basis.
    - e. **The Government of Ontario should** offer training in skills that enable remote work such as accounting, computer programming, and graphic design for residents outside large urban centres.
    - f. **The Government of Ontario should** improve access to experiential learning and other training opportunities for underrepresented segments of the labour market, including recent immigrants, Indigenous peoples, women, veterans, and people with disabilities.
    - g. **The Government of Ontario should** identify and earmark the financial resources needed to ensure consistent operation and long-term sustainability of Ontario's Indigenous Institutes.
    - h. **The Government of Ontario should** ensure that employers across all regions are aware of the availability and benefits of existing programs and tools.
  12. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** address regional labour market needs by reforming immigration systems and encouraging worker mobility.
    - a. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** coordinate federal and provincial immigration procedures to streamline requirements and reduce wait times.



- b. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** make it easier for foreign talent to obtain accreditation and add more National Occupational Classification skill categories to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) and the Global Talent Stream program.
  - c. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** evaluate the results of the federal and provincial pilot projects to bring more immigrants to smaller communities and, if successful, establish them as permanent programs.
  - d. **The Government of Canada should** increase Ontario's allocation of 6,900 OINP spots.
  - e. **The Government of Ontario should** allocate a portion of its OINP spots on a regional basis.
  - f. **The Government of Ontario should** inform immigrants and post-secondary students about employment opportunities in smaller communities.
  - g. **The Government of Ontario should** become a formal community partner with SuccessionMatching.
13. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** work through post-secondary institutions and innovation centres to improve technology transfer.
- a. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** identify strategies to strengthen collaboration between post-secondaries and industry.
  - b. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** continue to support platforms, such as regional innovation centres, that build bridges between researchers and businesses.
  - c. **Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade should** identify channels to share best practices, learnings, and other knowledge across regional innovation centres.
  - d. **The Government of Ontario should** map regional and sectoral gaps in access to existing hubs and develop strategies to improve their reach.
14. **The Government of Ontario should** develop policies to fill the gaps in Ontario's innovation capacity.
- a. **The Government of Ontario should** carry out a cost-benefit analysis to decide whether an innovation box system would work well in Ontario.
  - b. **The Government of Ontario should** focus financial support for innovation on segments of the economy in which the market typically underinvests.
15. **Federal, provincial, and municipal governments should** remove regulatory barriers that deter private sector investments in broadband.
- a. **The Government of Ontario should** immediately begin consultations with industry to identify regulatory barriers to the expansion of broadband infrastructure.
  - b. **The Government of Ontario should** explore regulations and/or incentives to combine network expansion with transportation infrastructure projects.
  - c. **The Government of Ontario should** consider amending the Ontario Traffic Manual to allow for the use of third-party traffic controls.



- d. **Municipal governments should** work with telecommunications providers to identify and remove intrusive street bylaws, unreasonable terms for roadwork permits, and onerous construction standards.
16. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** ensure public funding for broadband is targeted, coordinated, and streamlined.
- a. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** continue to plan for substantial spending on broadband, regardless of budgetary constraints.
  - b. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** disburse funds more strategically to complement (not compete with) private sector investments.
  - c. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** coordinate efforts to streamline the application and reporting process for participants.
  - d. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** ensure that reporting requirements are proportional to the scope of the projects and provide as much clarity as possible to local businesses regarding how their funds will be disbursed.
17. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** facilitate value-add cluster development.
- a. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** build on previous work to map existing and emerging clusters.
  - b. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** evaluate the economic potential of existing clusters and prioritize investments in the industrial commons located in and around Ontario's most promising value-add clusters.
  - c. **The Governments of Ontario and Canada should** ensure Ontario's clusters have efficient access to international export markets and their needs are well represented in trade agreements.
  - d. **Municipal governments should** align their individual economic development strategies with cluster objectives.

