

BLUEPRINT TO BOLSTER ONTARIO'S PROSPERITY

Letters to Each Provincial Cabinet Minister Outlining Key Policy Priorities



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August 3, 2022

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Main Legislative Bldg Rm 223, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Premier Ford,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) looks forward to working with you and your entire team to champion economic growth across Ontario on behalf of our members. Continued collaboration and engagement will be critical to strengthen our communities, workforce, and economy.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the government in its second mandate, we are providing all Ministers with a blueprint for steps that can be taken to ensure we are bolstering Ontario's prosperity.

Some key highlights in OCC's *Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity* include:

- Addressing Ontario's labour market challenges by boosting immigration, removing barriers to labour mobility and introducing workforce development strategies for key sectors such as construction, health care, tourism, and hospitality, and transportation.
- Continuing to prioritize lowering the administrative burden on business and ensuring that regulation is streamlined and effective.
- Bolstering our health care system by developing a health human resources strategy, delivering on digital health, and addressing backlogs in routine vaccines, diagnostics, and cancer screenings.

- Planning for Ontario's long-term energy needs to ensure businesses and residents continue to have access to reliable, clean, and affordable energy for generations to come.
- Propelling housing affordability through increased supply and regulatory reforms to ensure employers can continue to attract and retain talent.
- Advancing regional transportation connectivity and fare integration as well as broadband infrastructure projects in collaboration with the private sector.
- Modernizing public procurement to support small businesses and equity seeking entrepreneurs.
- Seizing Ontario's opportunity to lead in the global green economy by minimizing uncertainty, supporting cleantech, mobilizing clean energy solutions, and strengthening climate adaptation.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with you as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc.

Lorne Coe, Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier

Michelle E. DiEmanuele, Secretary of the Cabinet, Head of the Public Service

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville St, 11th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1B3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Thompson,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

It has never been more important for public policies to focus on measures that support business predictability and encourage economic growth. Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil.

In the OCC's *Vote Prosperity* platform for the 2022 provincial election, we call for measures that boost business confidence and predictability, pro-growth policies, ones that build resilient communities and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Meeting the demand for local food. The Agri-Food Open for E-business program launched by the provincial and federal governments in 2020 helped farmers' markets, food producers, retailers, and garden centres expand their presence online. Local food, however, has been slow in transitioning to e-commerce. Given the high demand for these programs, the Province should increase funding available through such programs to help more agri-food businesses invest in online infrastructure to support e-commerce sales.

Supporting the food and beverage industry. Ontario's food and beverage industry is facing a labour shortage that is expected to persist for several reasons, including the lack of transportation options, complex immigration processes, and rising living costs. Filling the talent gap in this sector will be essential to supporting food security across the country. Your Ministry must work in partnership with employers, post-secondary institutions, and provincial and federal stakeholders to address these challenges and support the viability of the sector. For details, see our report, [*Falling the Talent Gap in Ontario's Food and Beverage Manufacturing Sector.*](#)

Addressing interprovincial trade barriers for meat and meat products. Currently, a dual system is in place for meat inspection in Canada. Meat products produced in facilities that are federally inspected and follow national standards can be exported interprovincially and to other countries while products produced in provincially licensed facilities can only be sold within provincial borders. This regulatory framework coupled with potential shortages threaten food security. Given how Ontario and Quebec employ strict and similar meat inspection requirements, the Province should consider entering a bilateral agreement with the Government of Quebec, recognizing the equivalency of inspection systems. As a starting point, your ministry should work with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade in conducting an in-depth market analysis to understand the impact such an agreement would have on the sector.

Bridging the digital divide. Although access to reliable broadband internet has been a longstanding issue in Ontario, it has been magnified by COVID-19. Broadband enabled many businesses to sell their products online and consumers to purchase food and other products virtually. The digital shift, however, presents significant challenges for businesses, farmers, workers, and consumers with unreliable or nonexistent internet connectivity in Ontario, particularly in rural, remote, and northern communities. Access to high-speed broadband will be critical to supporting the growing use of precision agriculture. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the federal government to expand broadband infrastructure in rural communities to support access to new markets and spur regional economic growth. For details, see our [*2022 Provincial Budget Submission*](#) and [*Vote Prosperity.*](#)

Enhancing the AgriStability program. Global events, supply chain constraints, inflation, and the ongoing pandemic have increased the strain on farmers in Ontario, with many experiencing higher costs for farming inputs. As a result, the risks farmers face have changed, and this program must evolve in response to such changing risks to ensure producers have the right tools at their disposal. Government programs that are well-funded and easy-to-access will be necessary for helping farmers mitigate risks and continue to invest in their businesses.

Your ministry should work with the federal government and other provinces and territories to increase the payment cap available to eligible participants while also developing systems to quickly assess claims and process payments through the AgriStability program.

Improving the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program application process. Few agricultural producers are applying to the CAP program for funding due to administrative burdens. We urge you to work with your federal counterpart to consult with the agricultural industry to streamline the application process and reduce burdens.

Supporting the next generation of farmers. Current projections estimate that 123,000 agriculture jobs will go unfilled in Canada by 2029, with Ontario accounting for the majority of the sector's labour gap. We encourage you to implement a campaign that educates youth about the agri-food industry and the high-skilled, tech-driven careers available within this sector. At the same time, barriers that deter youth from pursuing farming careers must be addressed, including access to land, training, and capital.

Curbing food fraud. Given the complexity of the global food supply chain, combatting food fraud will require a multi-stakeholder approach. The Ministry's Food Integrity Initiative brought together government, industry, researchers, and academics with an interest in food fraud – a first step in addressing the issue. Given the complexity surrounding food fraud, your ministry should narrow its focus to key areas in need of attention, including certain supply chains and food products, to develop an effective action plan. For further details on the above recommendations, see our report, [*Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario*](#).

Tackling food insecurity. Rising food costs coupled with the loss of employment income during the pandemic has resulted in an increase in food insecurity. High demand for foodbanks and other supporting non-profits led to many struggling to maintain operations while keeping up with demand and rising costs. In addition to addressing rising food costs, your ministry should actively seek to invest in the resiliency and preservation of agricultural and farm lands to ensure a secure, reliable, adaptive, and sustainable supply of food given population growth and geopolitical risk factors.

Fixing the interest arbitration system for rural municipalities. Interest arbitration is the legal mechanism available to Ontario municipalities for settling disputes that arise in contract negotiations with essential services including police and fire. The current system does not adequately consider the capacity of smaller municipalities to pay. In certain regions of the province, particularly rural and remote areas, awards granted by arbitrators are disproportionate to existing revenue resources available to local governments. In 2018, the Province modernized the interest arbitration system for the firefighting sector by amending the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*.

We call on you to work with the Ministry of Labour to make similar reforms to the arbitration system for police services through updates to the *Police Services Act, 1990*. For details, see our report, [*Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Rob Flack, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
Trevor Jones, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
John Kelly, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Doug Downey
Attorney General
McMurtry-Scott Building, 720 Bay Street, 11th floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Downey,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Attorney General of Ontario.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of the Attorney General, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Developing a strategy to champion the cannabis sector. Since legalization, and against the backdrop of a pandemic, the cannabis sector continued to grow, contributing \$13.3 billion to Ontario's GDP, generating \$3 billion of tax revenue and sustaining 31,000 jobs annually, in addition to safeguarding public health by working to displace the illegal market. Despite this progress, major hurdles persist, including an overly restrictive regulatory regime. For details, see our [2022 provincial budget submission](#).

Modernizing Internet gaming (iGaming) framework. The modernization of gaming revenue in Ontario provides new opportunities while also raising some concerns. It is anticipated that the iGaming initiative will allow the Government of Ontario to capture revenue that might otherwise go to offshore gaming providers. However, we are concerned that Ontario’s approach may come at the expense of current revenue and employment sources our communities depend on. For details see our letter, [Internet gaming \(iGaming\) framework](#).

Supporting economic growth in the beverage alcohol industries. The OCC’s report, [Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario](#), outlines how the Province should modernize the sale and distribution of beverage alcohol to responsibly promote growth across all four categories – wine, beer, spirits, and cider. The recommendations include but are not limited to alleviating tax burdens, cutting red tape, and removing antiquated inter-provincial trade barriers.

Pursuing lost tax revenues from underground markets. Illegal markets are a substantial source of lost tax revenue for Ontario and its municipalities. Contraband tobacco alone results in \$750 million per year in lost revenue for the Province. Meanwhile, the size of Ontario’s illegal cannabis market accounts for over 40% of household spending on cannabis. These and other markets that are prone to untaxed economic activity remain a concern for both economic and public health reasons. The Ontario government should establish tougher penalties for noncompliance, coupled with intensified audits, for such industries. For further details, see our reports, [Supporting Ontario’s Budding Cannabis Industry](#) and [Guiding Policy Principles for Tobacco and Vaping Products](#).

Providing choice in accessing the justice system. The use of technology over the course of the pandemic has allowed all parties and their counsel to access the justice system from their homes and offices. Providing Ontarians with the option of making court appearances virtually saves time, resources, and improves access to the system for individuals who face barriers including disability, illness, and the need to find childcare. To improve the efficiency of the justice system, we ask that the government continue to improve and expand on the ability to file and access documents electronically. Finally, given the technological divide faced by rural communities and low-income peoples, government must also strike a balance between virtual appearances and accommodating in-person proceedings where necessary.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Brian Saunderson, Parliamentary Assistant to the Attorney General
David Corbett, Deputy Attorney General

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
438 University Ave, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Fullerton,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Reinstating the Basic Income pilot program. Food insecurity, record levels of inflation, and the phaseout of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit have brought the concept of Basic Income back into public discourse as a replacement of the current social assistance regime. Following the cancellation of the pilot project in Ontario in 2018, the Hamilton Community Foundation, McMaster University, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded a study by McMaster University to evaluate the dataset. Many recipients reported improvements in their health, labour market participation, food security, housing, and financial well-being through their participation in the basic income pilot project. Re-instating the pilot project that was previously cancelled in Ontario could provide the province with the data needed to fully understand the costs and benefits of this program.

Meeting the demand for trained early childhood educators. Women’s participation in the labour market is a precondition to our economic prosperity, and affordable childcare will take us closer to these objectives. The childcare agreement signed between the Governments of Ontario and Canada was an encouraging step. To make this agreement viable, it is essential that the province’s childcare sector has an adequate supply of qualified workers. This will require collaboration between your ministry and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to recognize foreign credentials, enhance online training, fast-track in-school credentials, and develop financial support for underemployed populations to access training opportunities.

Launching an Ontario she-recovery campaign. The pandemic has disproportionately affected women across the province, exacerbating existing inequalities that challenge certain groups, especially racialized women, Indigenous Women, single mothers, low-income women, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and those living in rural areas. We encourage your ministry to work with stakeholders to develop shared targets and work collectively to address barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our communities. For details, see our report, [*The She-Recovery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario.*](#)

Supporting diverse entrepreneurs. Women and visible minority founders are more likely to report difficulties with managing business cash flows and obtaining new financing. Immigrant, lower-income, and younger entrepreneurs also access lower levels of external financing. Addressing these inequalities is critical for social and economic reasons. When entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds succeed, not only do they benefit, but consumers gain more innovation in the products and services offered to them. We ask your ministry to work with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and Ministry of Indigenous Affairs to develop direct support providing financing, legal advice, mentorship, training, and supplier diversity programs for small businesses owned by women, Indigenous, and racialized peoples. For details, see our report [*Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19*](#) and [*2022 provincial budget submission.*](#)

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario’s business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Charmaine Williams, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity

Logan Kanapathi, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Nolan Quinn, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Denise Allyson Cole, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Marie-Lison Fougère, Deputy Minister, Office of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Michael Ford
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism
56 Wellesley St W., 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2E7

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Ford,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community. We believe these recommendations could support the renewal of Ontario's anti-racism strategic plan by ensuring more equitable economic outcomes for racialized communities.

Recommendations:

Fostering more diverse talent by addressing skills mismatches and future workforce needs.

We encourage your Ministry to work closely with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to foster a more diverse workforce by expanding immigration allocations in Ontario and reducing barriers to foreign credential recognition. While immigration is essential to filling short-term labour gaps, Ontario also needs a long-term workforce development strategy that fosters more equitable economic outcomes for racialized and other marginalized Ontarians. Specific emphasis must be placed on attracting and retaining skilled labour in high-demand sectors including construction, logistics, early childhood education, health care, agriculture, and long-term care. For further details, please see the [OCC's 2022 budget submission](#).

Setting and working towards collective diversity and inclusion targets. An equitable socioeconomic recovery will only be achievable if all stakeholders rally behind measurable goals. As a starting point, your Ministry should communicate the business case on how diversity benefits companies' bottom lines and the broader economy. Over the longer term, stakeholders will need to coordinate around the collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant information. For solutions related to the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women, please see [*The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario.*](#)

Creating an inclusive ecosystem for diverse entrepreneurs. The economic impacts of the pandemic have disproportionately affected equity-deserving groups, including but not limited to racialized, Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2S+ entrepreneurs. Your Ministry should work with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to facilitate inclusive conditions for entrepreneurs with financing, legal advice, mentorship, and training. See the OCC's [*Vote Prosperity*](#) election document for more details.

Using procurement to incentivize diversity and inclusion. Currently, public-sector request for proposal (RFP) processes are driven almost entirely by short-term cost considerations. Companies with strong diversity and inclusion models are not rewarded, despite evidence of their socioeconomic value. Your Ministry should work with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery to adjust RFP processes in a way that creates opportunities for diverse entrepreneurs and suppliers that demonstrably support diversity and inclusion. Beyond supporting a broader range of entrepreneurs, diversifying public procurement will also help to build more robust supply chains and increase economic development. For further information, please see [*The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario.*](#)

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Graham McGregor, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

Billy Pang, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

David Wai, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Jill Dunlop
Minister of Colleges and Universities
438 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Dunlop,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Colleges and Universities.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Colleges and Universities the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Preparing the labour force of tomorrow. As the job market and economy continue to evolve, post-secondary institutions must be able to adapt to changing labour market demands. To secure a talent pipeline reflective of the current and future needs of the labour market, we encourage you to ensure that post-secondary institutions have sustainable funding and that you collaborate with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, post-secondary institutions and private sector to identify high demand programs of study where current or anticipated labour shortages exist. Expanding enrolment, introducing new programs and micro-credentials in addition to coordination with colleges and unions will be crucial to meeting Ontario's workforce needs and supporting lifelong learning. For details, see OCC's [Recommendations for Ontario's Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee](#) and [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#).

Supporting the next generation of health care professionals. The pandemic has highlighted the need to invest in Ontario’s health human resources to address current and future demands on our health care system. We encourage your ministry to continue to increase enrolment numbers in public post-secondary institutions for in-demand health care areas; invest in resources and supports (i.e., mentorship opportunities, internships, etc.) for post-secondary students in health care programs; and leverage existing campaigns to encourage careers in health care. For details, see OCC’s letter [*Ensuring Sufficient Health Human Resources in Ontario*](#).

Providing students with experiential learning opportunities. Enhanced experiential learning programs – including, but not limited to, work-integrated learning, co-operative education, and internships – can help to align skills development with the labour market. The Province should explore options to incentivize greater participation in experiential learning programs from employers, especially small businesses and employers in remote regions. For details, see OCC’s report [*The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario’s Regional Economies*](#).

Supporting research and development. Ontario’s colleges and universities are world-leading hubs for innovation in multiple fields including clean tech, artificial intelligence, and life sciences. The Province must work to further leverage these engines of economic growth by investing in research in up-and-coming technology. New application-based funding streams should be developed to allow post-secondary institutions to build infrastructure that will further attract research funding in sectors experiencing rapid growth. To stimulate more research that will help drive the province’s economic recovery, Ontario should also increase its funding for applied research to match other province’s annual allocations. For details, see the OCC’s reports [*Supporting Ontario’s Budding Cannabis Industry*](#) and [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario’s Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#).

Addressing the carbon footprint of Ontario’s post-secondary institutions. As hubs for innovation, colleges and universities across the province can serve as leaders in the development and adoption of energy saving retrofits and renewable energy. In order to meet our collective climate goals and support technical advancements, your ministry must prioritize training the next generation of workers in modernized facilities with green technology. This aging infrastructure has a substantial environmental footprint that will need to be addressed as industries work to move to a carbon net-zero status and align with ongoing initiatives to cut greenhouse gasses. Together with the Minister of Energy, your ministry must work with the federal government to advocate for funding to support retrofitting initiatives to promote carbon-zero facilities in post-secondary institutions.

Improving Indigenous education and learning opportunities. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Indigenous affairs to identify and earmark the financial resources needed to ensure consistent operation and long-term sustainability of Ontario’s Indigenous Institutes and improve access to experiential learning and other training opportunities. For details, see OCC’s report [*The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario’s Regional Economies*](#).

Investing in Ontario’s international undergraduate student entrepreneurs. With an increasing talent shortage across multiple sectors of the economy, it is vital that international students are encouraged to remain in Ontario to support the province’s continued growth. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism to consider additional pathways for public post-secondary students to permanent residency and to ensure that students can continue to contribute to local economies and workforces while studying.

Encouraging women to pursue a career in the skilled trades. Despite decades of discussion amongst business, education and government leaders, Ontario continues to face a shortage of skilled workers. With public colleges training close to 85% of apprentices, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the Ministry of Education must continue to market a career in the trades as a viable employment option with direct and intentional outreach towards women and girls. Concurrently, the ministries should support colleges in providing first-hand learning and mentorship opportunities.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario’s business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Natalie Pierre, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities
Shelley Tapp, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Colleges and Universities

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Victor Fedeli
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
College Park, 777 Bay St., 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Fedeli,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Removing barriers to interprovincial trade and labour mobility. Interprovincial barriers to trade and labour mobility continue to limit Ontario's competitiveness and deter further investment. Economic activity is hampered by inconsistent rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, marketing, and more. According to a recent study by Deloitte, removing interprovincial trade barriers would increase Ontario's GDP by \$23 billion and annual provincial tax revenues by \$5 billion. For more details, please see our election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Addressing Ontario’s skills mismatches and future workforce needs. While immigration is essential to filling short-term labour gaps, Ontario needs a workforce development strategy to prepare for longer-term labour market needs. Specific emphasis must be placed on attracting and retaining skilled labour in high-demand sectors including construction, transportation, logistics, early childhood education, health care, agriculture, and long-term care. As we work towards recovery, it will be crucial to ensure specific skills training support is afforded to those demographic groups disproportionately affected by the pandemic and looking to join or re-enter the labour force. Key recommendations to address these issues are included in our [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#).

Supporting trade exposed industries. Ontario has existing competitive advantages in several key industries – including energy, mining, and forestry – that are critical to Canada’s export capacity and regional economic development. Policies that support the growth of these industries will serve to drive innovation, job creation, decarbonization, and community revitalization across the province. For details, refer to our [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#).

Taking swift action to reduce unproductive regulation. Regulatory burdens hamper business productivity with outsized administrative costs, dissuading foreign investment and limiting economic growth. We encourage you to work with the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction to continue taking action to streamline and modernize regulation with the goal of increasing business competitiveness through the government’s quarterly red tape reduction bills. Ongoing efforts in this area should be informed by robust engagement with businesses and other stakeholders. Further, Ontario should avoid a piecemeal approach to new legislation in areas such as data privacy, where a federal framework will reduce friction for businesses and support compliance. For more details, please see our election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Streamlining the development and permitting process to address Ontario’s housing crisis. Access to affordable housing is essential to attracting, retaining, and developing a diverse and productive workforce. High housing costs put a strain on the local economy by preventing employees from living near their jobs, which increases commute times and makes it more challenging for businesses to hire workers with the right skillsets. We recommend your ministry work with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects and eliminate any excessive regulatory hurdles, including establishing a transparent and fair process around municipal zoning orders (MZOs).

Developing critical minerals and electric vehicle supply chains. The province is well positioned to support investment in mining innovation that amplifies the critical minerals strategy and takes advantage of the quickly evolving battery value-chain. We encourage your ministry to engage with the mining industry and Indigenous communities in discussions that aim to support these projects. The establishment of proactive public policies and collaboration with the federal government and municipalities to develop a fast-track process for permitting and land leasing will also be crucial to attract battery cell manufacturers.

Improving business confidence and predictability. Businesses need a stable policy environment with clear timelines, contracts, consultations, and strategies to help them plan for the future and make long-term investments. Given the uncertainty brought on by inflation, supply chain disruptions, geopolitical conflicts, and the pandemic, we urge your government to improve predictability around legislation that significantly impacts the business community. For details, see our election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Prioritizing infrastructure investments that unlock regional economic growth. Regional economic growth must remain a focus when the government considers infrastructure development. Further investments in transportation and broadband infrastructure will be critical to supporting rural and northern communities' access domestic and international markets. Where possible, the Government of Ontario should carry out infrastructure projects in collaboration with regional businesses, post-secondary institutions, and other stakeholders to pool resources and share risk. For further details, refer to [The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies](#).

Continuing to pursue Ontario-US state trade MOUs. We encourage your ministry to continue to take an active role in promoting positive bilateral cooperation with American states, especially those Ontario conducts a significant amount of trade. The signing of subnational bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between Ontario and American states is a useful means to strengthen trade, labour mobility, and tourism. It can also support publicizing Ontario's pro-trade message and illustrating our shared interests in areas such as the auto industry, environment protections, and economic development.

Adopting a bold strategy for low-carbon exports. The global market for sustainable Canadian goods and services is ripe as the United States and other nations have expressed a desire to limit their reliance on China for critical minerals. Canada should adopt a bold strategy for low-carbon exports that positions Ontario's energy, cleantech, and natural resource sectors as strategic tools in the transition to net zero. We encourage your ministry to work with the federal government so that we can leverage these sectors to support Ontario's export industries and support further economic development. For details, refer to [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#).

Developing more experiential learning opportunities. The most effective way for workers to attain job-relevant skills training is through experiential learning opportunities, which provide job seekers with hands-on education in real workplaces. In collaboration with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, we encourage your ministry to create more such opportunities. Doing so would not only provide employers with a more capable workforce able to meet timely and job-specific needs, but also give individuals the chance for greater economic mobility.

Bridging the digital divide. Although access to reliable broadband internet has been a longstanding issue in Northern Ontario, it has been magnified by COVID-19. With unreliable, even nonexistent, internet connectivity in northern and Indigenous communities, many businesses and investors are unable to access local and international markets. Access to high-speed broadband will be critical to improving quality of life in the north by increasing access to virtual health care, employment, and education opportunities. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the federal government to expand broadband infrastructure in northern and Indigenous communities to support access to new markets and spur regional economic growth. For details, see our [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Supporting Ontario's forestry industry. Forestry represents an important source of jobs and economic development for Ontario, particularly communities in the North. The sector is poised to grow because of increasing global demand for value-added wood products such as furniture and construction materials. Your ministry should continue to work with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry and federal government to ensure that trade negotiations and/or disputes with the US do not result in decisions detrimental to Ontario's forestry industry. To ensure the sector can continue to be competitive, we also encourage you to work with the Ministry of Finance to establish an Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program that encourages continued investments in the domestic industry.

Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure. Northerners continue to suffer from an infrastructure deficit limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and investment opportunities. Indigenous communities in particular face higher costs when it comes to accessing healthy and nutritious foods, often leading to food insecurity. Construction of all-season roads could lower the cost of transporting goods to the north, making healthy food more accessible and reasonably priced in these communities. This will include continued investments to complete the four-laning of Highway 69, which will unlock the region's economic potential, drive job creation, and improve the community's inter- and intra- provincial connectivity. We encourage you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to address these issues. For details see our reports, [Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#) and [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#).

Addressing supply chain disruptions and delays. The pandemic has had widespread impacts on global supply chains affecting businesses and consumers alike around the world. Congestion and outdated infrastructure have been major factors. Many businesses in Ontario are now grappling with delays thus limiting their ability to meet consumer demand. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and federal government to investigate pain points along supply chains and make the necessary infrastructure investments that will ensure long-term reliability. For details, please see [Supply Chain Disruptions and Delays](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Collaborating on transportation and transit infrastructure projects. Public transit and transportation infrastructure will play a key role in supporting Ontario's economic recovery, job creation and decarbonization efforts. As businesses and investors look to expand their operations, access to public transit and transportation infrastructure remain key variables during decision making. We urge you to work in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation and municipalities to expand GO Transit service, invest in long-term infrastructure projects. Proposed infrastructure in large cities such as Toronto, including the Ontario Line and capital funding to connect the Eglinton West LRT Extension to Toronto Pearson, Canada's largest global hub airport, will support continued population growth in Ontario's urban centres. In developing these proposals, the Province must ensure greater integration with existing transportation infrastructure including Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (YTZ). For details, see our report [*Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs, 2022 Provincial Budget Submission*](#) and [*Vote Prosperity*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Andrew Dowie, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Effie J. Triantafilopoulos, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Stephen Rhodes, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Lecce,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Education.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Education, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Implementing career exploration earlier. We encourage the Ontario government to consider introducing career options to children at a younger age. For example, the [Primary Futures Program](#) based in the United Kingdom offers career exploration programs, mentorship opportunities, and career studies in partnership with employers. These are a meaningful way to introduce children, parents, and educators to a wide range of career options.

Scaling interventions proven to increase women’s representation in skilled trades, STEM, and other traditionally male-dominant, high-growth occupations and sectors. Elementary and high schools influence how girls and boys perceive their future career options. Exposure to diverse role models in technology and the skilled trades has been shown to increase students’ interests in these careers as outlined in the OCC report, [*The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario.*](#)

Improving Indigenous education in Ontario. While educational attainment for Indigenous peoples has improved, more must be done to ensure equal access to the education and training needed to succeed in a modern economy. We encourage the government to make further investments in Indigenous education and implement reporting mechanisms to allow for collection of the type of reliable data needed to set baselines and measure progress on academic achievement.

Promoting the skilled trades as a viable career option for young people. Students and their parents are often unaware of how lucrative and rewarding a career in the trades can be. In light of our aging population and labour market demands, this needs to be a priority. Exposing students to the value of applied learning and the opportunities for skilled trades training can help promote this pathway.

Expanding financial literacy within Ontario’s education curriculum. To ensure all Ontarians have the knowledge and skills needed to understand the financial structures that create economic growth and personal wealth, your ministry should continue to expand elementary and secondary-level courses focused on personal financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario’s business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Patrice Barnes, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education

Matthew Rae, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Todd Smith
Minister of Energy
77 Grenville Street, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2C1

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Smith,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Energy.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Energy, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Addressing Ontario's long-term energy needs. As the province begins to enter a period of widening energy shortfalls, forward planning will be essential to ensure businesses and residents continue to have access to reliable, clean, and affordable energy for generations to come. As part of its long-term energy framework, your ministry should ensure there is a competitive and transparent process for contracts that leverages existing assets where possible and provides predictability for investors. This framework also needs to be comprehensive; an integrated approach that incorporates clean electricity and low-carbon fuels will be necessary. The launch of the Electrification and Energy Transition Panel was a great step and we look forward to supporting its work. For further details, see [Addressing Ontario's Growing Electricity Needs](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Taking a proactive and efficient approach to transmission and distribution infrastructure. As demand for electricity grows, the Independent Electricity System Operator is forecasting major infrastructure needs in Toronto and areas east of the city beginning in the mid-2020s, as well as additional pockets of demand in other regions driven by greenhouses and the electrification of mining and heavy industry. Additionally, severe weather events caused by climate change will increasingly impact the costs of adapting and maintaining these systems. Your ministry should work with stakeholders to undertake proactive investments in transmission and distribution infrastructure across the province for both electricity and natural gas systems. Ontario Energy Board regulations, including the Leave to Construct thresholds, should also be modernized to enable efficient and timely development of critical energy infrastructure. Paying for this infrastructure through the rate base can be a cost-effective pathway to accelerate investments where there is a clear economic benefit.

Championing Ontario's nuclear sector. Nuclear power is responsible for a significant share of clean energy, jobs, innovation, and economic development opportunities in Ontario. The industry's recent investments in small modular reactors and hydrogen offer competitive pathways to decarbonizing other areas of the economy. Your ministry can continue to support nuclear energy's role in addressing Ontario's growing electricity needs by reviewing potential cost recovery mechanisms and the timelines for necessary project approvals. Your ministry should also continue to work with the federal government to support continued investments in nuclear as a key competitive advantage. For more details, see [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#).

Growing the hydrogen economy. Low-carbon hydrogen is a significant economic opportunity for the province and a critical tool in the fight against climate change. Ontario businesses are leading in the production and use of hydrogen, reflecting a promising export opportunity as global demand takes off. Building on the work that has been done around Ontario's hydrogen strategy, your ministry should continue supporting both demand- and supply-side policies to enable further growth and innovation. This includes providing hydrogen producers with optionality in their electricity rates, as is currently being proposed. For more details, see [*Accelerating Growth in Hydrogen Energy Through Electricity Rate Options \(ERO: 019-5381\)*](#).

Expanding natural gas infrastructure and delivering cost-effective emissions reductions. Natural gas is an affordable, reliable source of energy in Ontario and currently the only resource capable of meeting peak demand periods year-round. Further, the industry is working to integrate carbon-neutral and net-carbon-negative sources, investing in renewable natural gas, hydrogen, and other low-carbon technologies for heat and transportation, and developing carbon capture and storage opportunities in Ontario.

We encourage the Province to work with industry to continue expanding regional natural gas infrastructure, develop a streamlined framework for carbon capture and storage – including recognition under Ontario’s Emissions Performance Standards Program – and establish incremental targets for low-carbon fuel blending into the natural gas distribution system. For more details, see the [*Memorandum from the OCC’s Energy Policy Council*](#) and [*Geological Carbon Storage in Ontario*](#).

Leveraging clean technology as a driver of economic growth. Ontario is home to many innovative hydrogen, renewable energy, biomass, nuclear, energy storage, and critical mineral projects. Development of clean technologies will drive job creation, reduce emissions, position the province as a leader in the global green economy, and support long-term economic growth. To support these projects, we encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade to advance investments in research, commercialization, skills training, and export capacity. For details, see [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario’s Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#) and [*Energy Policy and Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis in Ontario*](#).

Advancing zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) supply chains. The global market for ZEVs is expected to grow at breakneck speed, and Ontario has what it takes to be a leader in its supply chains. Decarbonization of vehicles will require a combination of technologies. Together with the Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks, your ministry should work with industry to develop a ZEV strategy that integrates electric battery, fuel blending, hydrogen, renewable natural gas, and hybrid technologies. The strategy should build on Ontario’s Critical Minerals Strategy and Hydrogen Strategy and incorporate relevant infrastructure, manufacturing capacity, and support for fleet operators to advance ZEV markets from top to bottom.

Helping businesses become more energy efficient. Programs such as the Business Energy Audit program have allowed businesses to improve their energy efficiency. We encourage your government to continue supporting businesses of all sizes to both to reduce their electricity costs and natural gas consumption, and to achieve our collective environmental targets. There is also an opportunity to introduce policies that incentivize builders and municipalities to lower the carbon footprint of new buildings. The Province’s recent announcement to extend hybrid home heating into additional municipalities is a practical example of this that can be further expanded.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Jess Dixon, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Energy
Stéphane Sarrazin, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Energy
Stephen Rhodes, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Energy

August 3, 2022

The Honourable David Piccini
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
College Park, 777 Bay St, 17th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Piccini,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Minimizing uncertainty. Uncertainty about future government policies is one of the main barriers that deters the private sector from making major investments. This is especially true when it comes to climate and energy policies, where volatility can significantly impact financial returns. Businesses need more transparency and predictability around the decision-making process to understand how policies and regulations will impact their investments.

We call on your ministry to establish a coherent decision-making framework that outlines the criteria, considerations, and procedures upon which climate policies will be based. Industries also need stability in the programs and supports available to help them abate their emissions; your ministry should provide clarity on the Ontario Carbon Trust that was announced in the 2018 environment plan.

Strengthening climate adaptation. While reducing greenhouse gas emissions is necessary, the reality of climate change means we must also learn to adapt to its effects. Communities will need strong physical and natural infrastructure, asset management policies, and emergency response protocols to manage the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Municipalities are on the front lines of this issue, and they need more support. We encourage your ministry to work with the federal government to support communities with climate adaptation and asset management, backed by adequate and sustained funding. The ministry should also actively support the federal Task Force on Flood Insurance and Relocation.

Unlocking the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire is one of the most promising mineral development opportunities in Ontario. Recent geopolitical events and supply chain disruptions highlight the need for government to tap into this key source of critical minerals that will drive electric battery and computer chip manufacturing, and Canada's transition to a net-zero economy. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Northern Development and First Nations to streamline environmental approvals around key development projects that will support Ontario's leadership in the green economy.

Improving building efficiency and resilience. Retrofits are necessary to reduce emissions from existing buildings. For brick-and-mortar businesses, these measures help lower overhead costs by reducing energy consumption, but there is often a capacity gap that prevents small and medium-sized businesses from adopting them. To support demand, we encourage your ministry to work with the federal government to expand energy efficiency grants or low-interest loans. Concurrently, Ontario should continue to incrementally evolve its building codes to improve climate resilience and net-zero readiness, taking direction from Infrastructure Canada's Climate-Resilient Buildings and Core Public Infrastructure Initiative and continued upgrades to Canada's National Building Code.

Addressing brownfield sites in small town Ontario. Smaller tax base resources and lower property values limit the ability of towns and villages to deal with brownfield sites under their jurisdiction. Developments in these towns are moved to the fringes, taking up available agricultural land, diverting consumers away from downtown cores. Since the onset of the pandemic, individuals from larger centres have moved to smaller communities, drawn by the desire for a better quality of life, spurred by the increased opportunity to work from home. Clearing these brownfield sites would increase options for those migrating to smaller communities and reduce loss of agricultural land. By providing these municipalities with easily accessible funding, they will be able to develop plans to rejuvenate their downtown cores, meet housing demand and support local businesses. As minister, we urge you to work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to overhaul the brownfield's legislation to support smaller communities.

Tackling waste challenges. Ontario has been shifting towards making producers responsible for the waste they produce with the intent to promote innovation and harmonize rules across the province. However, there is concern among stakeholders that the complexity of Ontario's new rules may lead to compliance challenges, especially for small businesses. Your ministry will need to provide sufficient guidance and support to facilitate the transition and improve cohesiveness across jurisdictions to reduce red tape for businesses operating across the country.

Reconsidering the landfill ban on organic material. The government's proposal to ban organic material from landfills will be problematic given the difficulty to enforce bans and the province's lack of sufficient infrastructure to process diverted waste. The proposed ban will also prevent technologically advanced landfill operators from using waste to generate renewable natural gas (RNG). Your ministry must reconsider the landfill ban proposal or exempt landfills that convert waste emissions to RNG.

For details, see our report [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy.*](#)

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

John Yakabuski, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Serge Imbrogno, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
Frost Bldg S., 7 Queen's Park Cres, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Finance.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Finance, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Removing barriers to interprovincial trade and labour mobility. Interprovincial barriers to trade and labour mobility continue to limit Ontario's competitiveness and deter further investment. Economic activity is hampered by inconsistent rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, marketing, and more. According to a recent study by Deloitte, removing interprovincial trade barriers would increase Ontario's GDP by \$23 billion and annual provincial tax revenues by \$5 billion.

Your ministry must work in partnership with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to remove barriers to interprovincial trade using mutual recognition agreements and/or unilateral recognition of the adequacy of standards, where appropriate. For details, see [Vote Prosperity](#) and [2022 provincial budget submission](#).

Avoiding new taxes or tax increases on business. It has never been more important for public policies to support business predictability and economic growth. With the impacts of the pandemic still lingering, businesses need stability. For example, Ontario's basic beer tax is currently scheduled to increase on March 1, 2023. This is an annual escalator that has been deferred since 2018. It impacts brewers of every size, from small to large, every bar and restaurant owner down to the beleaguered consumer. Unless the Minister of Finance passes a regulation to defer it, this tax hike would have unintended consequences for businesses, consumers, and our economy.

Protecting municipalities' fiscal capacity. Ontario's post-pandemic recovery and long-term success will depend on the economic potential of its 444 municipalities. In recent decades, the downloading of provincial government responsibilities onto municipal governments has resulted in a multi-billion-dollar funding gap, as revenue streams were not downloaded to match. Now is the time for municipalities and the Province to review revenue generation and spending mechanisms, including property taxes, to ensure communities are able to continue investing in their economic development opportunities and attracting talent and businesses. For further details, please see our report [Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities](#).

Developing a plan for fiscal balance. The continued challenges of COVID-19 have necessitated significant government spending to support businesses and individuals, resulting in a large provincial budget deficit. The Province needs to have a transparent, long-term debt management plan and path to fiscal balance in place to protect taxpayers. While support for those in the hardest-hit sectors should remain a priority, policies to improve the cost-efficiency of Ontario's public sector should be explored. The OCC encourages the government to adopt value-based procurement and alternative service delivery, digitize government, reduce administrative burdens, pursue lost revenue from untaxed economic activity, and implement a formal policy on asset recycling. These measures will improve value for public spending, encourage innovation, and support small businesses. For further details, please see our [2022 provincial budget submission](#).

Enhancing access to capital and credit for small businesses. Small businesses are cornerstones of local economies and have been at the centre of the economic crisis created by COVID-19. Looking ahead, entrepreneurship will be fundamental to Ontario's economic recovery and it will require access to the right forms of capital. Recognizing that newer and smaller businesses are inherently riskier to finance, Ontario must develop policies to bridge gaps for entrepreneurs who will be in greatest need of support as they rebuild and grow in a post-pandemic world.

Your ministry should consider targeted loan guarantees, debt forgiveness, procurement reforms, regulatory sandboxes, and capital market reforms. For more details, please see our report [*Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Rick Byers, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance
Stephen Crawford, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance
Greg Orencsak, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Caroline Mulroney
Minister of Francophone Affairs
700 Bay St, 25th Floor, Suite 2501
Toronto, ON M7A 0A2

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Mulroney,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Francophone Affairs.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Francophone Affairs, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Facilitating greater francophone immigration. Your ministry can play a role in addressing ongoing labour shortages by facilitating the attraction and settlement of skilled francophone talent across the province. Survey data collected by the OCC reveals that most sectors (62 percent) are facing labour shortages and expect to continue facing them over the next year. We encourage you to work with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the federal government to foster a more diverse workforce by expanding francophone immigration allocations in Ontario and reducing barriers to foreign credential recognition.

Fostering more diverse talent by addressing skills mismatches and future workforce needs.

While immigration is essential to filling short-term labour gaps, Ontario also needs a long-term workforce development strategy that fosters more equitable economic outcomes for racialized and other marginalized Ontarians. We encourage you to work with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade as well as the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development on a workforce development strategy that places specific emphasis on attracting and retaining skilled francophone labour in high-demand sectors including construction, logistics, early childhood education, health care, agriculture, and long-term care. For further details, please see the [OCC's 2022 budget submission](#).

Removing barriers to interprovincial trade and labour mobility with Quebec. Interprovincial barriers to trade and labour mobility continue to limit Ontario's competitiveness and deter further investment. Economic activity is hampered by inconsistent rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, marketing, and more. According to a study by Deloitte, removing interprovincial trade barriers would increase Ontario's GDP by \$23 billion and annual provincial tax revenues by \$5 billion. We recommend your Ministry work with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to explore mutual recognition agreements with the province of Quebec to create a more competitive corridor between the two largest provinces in Canada. For more details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Implementing earlier career exploration models. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Education to introduce career options to children at a younger age in Ontario's French language schools. For example, the [Primary Futures Program](#) based in the United Kingdom offers career exploration programs, mentorship opportunities, and career studies in partnership with employers. These are a meaningful way to introduce children, parents, and educators to a wide range of career options. We would also encourage further collaboration with the Ministry of Education to promote skilled trades as viable career path for young people, to expand financial literacy within Ontario's francophone education curriculum, and to scale interventions proven to increase women's representation in skilled trades, technology, and other traditionally male-dominant occupations and sectors.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Natalia Kusendova, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Francophone Affairs
Marie-Lison Fougère, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Francophone Affairs

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
Deputy Premier
438 University Ave, 8th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Jones,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Health.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Health, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Developing a health human resources (HHR) strategy. Ontario's health care system was already strained before the pandemic and has since been further impacted, with burnout and staffing shortages affecting access to care across the province, particularly in rural and remote communities. The Government of Ontario should work with all stakeholders across the health care system to develop a coordinated, evidence-based HHR strategy for Ontario that includes short- and long-term objectives, incentivizes collaborative health teams, and leverages innovative scope of practice and patient care approaches. For more details, see our [letter on HHR](#).

Addressing the surgical backlog and deferred cancer treatments, diagnostics, and procedures. The backlog of surgical procedures and disruption of cancer care and diagnostics during the COVID-19 pandemic is already having consequences on health outcomes, the health care system, and the economy. See our letter on [interrupted cancer care](#) for more details on the challenge and recommendations to address it.

Supporting Ontario’s aging population. As Ontario’s population ages, chronic diseases and conditions are projected to increase: for example, the number of Ontarians living with dementia is expected to double to over half a million within two decades. This will place increased demand on families and communities, the health care system, and health care providers. The OCC’s Health Policy Council has offered several [recommendations to alleviate these pressures](#).

Continuing to tackle the mental health action gap. The pandemic continues to have a profound impact on mental health, with over half of Canadians reporting their mental health has worsened over the past two years. To address these challenges, government must encourage businesses to evaluate and strengthen offerings to their employees, as outlined in the [OCC’s Mental Wellness in the Workplace: A Playbook for Employers](#). At the same time, further support must be directed towards frontline workers, youth, and other disproportionately impacted communities who have experienced heightened stress during COVID-19.

Delivering on virtual care and digital health. While telemedicine has been in place in Canada for decades, the importance and prominence of virtual care rose during the pandemic. In addition to the virtual delivery of care, innovations in digital health – including integrated health records, electronic referrals, and improved resource and service navigation – can help ensure improved outcomes, cost-effective service delivery, and a healthy, productive workforce. To capitalize on the benefits of virtual care and digital health for patients, the health care system, and employers, the OCC’s Health Policy Council has developed recommendations detailed in [Realizing the Full Potential of Virtual Care in Ontario](#).

Prioritizing routine immunizations. With COVID-19 at the forefront of public attention, routine immunizations have declined sharply. If unaddressed, the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases could further strain our health care system and workforce. The Province must develop a strategy to boost uptake in schools, expand access points, leverage public health campaigns, and maximize the availability of centralized digital immunization records. For more information, see our [letter and statement on routine immunizations and blog, *An Effective Prescription for an Increasing Problem*](#).

Anticipating the next crisis and implementing Ontario’s life sciences strategy. Early in the pandemic, policymakers recognized the gap left in Ontario’s life sciences industry following years of industry divestment. Ontario needs to implement a comprehensive, long-term life sciences strategy that supports strong, innovative public-private partnerships and ensures we have the tools necessary to build a resilient health care system.

In addition to the four pillars identified in Ontario's life sciences strategy, this should include lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other health crises to help prepare and plan for future crises through cross-sector collaboration.

As immediate priorities for your new mandate, we wish to stress that this is not an exhaustive list of key issues impacting the health care system in Ontario. The OCC and our Health Policy Council look forward to ongoing opportunities to engage with your Ministry and Cabinet colleagues on these and other emerging issues in the health care space.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health
Robin Martin, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health
Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Greg Rickford
Minister of Indigenous Affairs
160 Bloor Street East, 4th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2E6

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Rickford,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Prioritizing economic reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. To effectively strengthen Ontario's regional development, the Province must recognize Indigenous peoples as critical partners and work closely with Indigenous communities. Through building mutually beneficial relationships that support and promote Indigenous procurement, entrepreneurship, recruitment and retention, government will create an environment conducive to fostering economic reconciliation. We recommend your office work with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to examine the relevance and accessibility of their initiatives to Indigenous peoples, as well as the impacts on Indigenous economic outcomes.

Concurrently, we encourage your government to support businesses to implement Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #92 on businesses reconciliation and take action on the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. For opportunities, see our report [*The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*](#).

Supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs. Indigenous founders are more likely to report difficulties with managing business cash flows and obtaining new financing. Addressing this inequality is critical for social and economic reasons. When entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds succeed, not only do they benefit, but consumers gain more innovation and choice in the products and services offered to them. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Ministry for Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, to develop direct support as well as financing, legal advice, mentorship, training, and supplier diversity programs for small businesses owned by Indigenous peoples, which could also include supporting organizations including the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business and National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association. A loan guarantee program, for example, could be targeted towards costs associated with starting new ventures such as equipment, franchise fees, real estate, and marketing. For details, see our report [*Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19*](#) and [*2022 provincial budget submission*](#).

Unlocking the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire is one of the most promising mineral development opportunities in Ontario. Recent geopolitical events and supply chain disruptions highlight the need for government to tap into this key source of critical minerals that will drive electric battery and computer chip manufacturing, and Canada's transition to a net-zero economy. We ask your ministry to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs to ensure Indigenous communities are active participants and proponents of these long-term projects.

Bridging the digital divide. Although access to reliable broadband internet has been a longstanding issue in Northern Ontario, it has been magnified by COVID-19. With unreliable, even nonexistent, internet connectivity in northern and Indigenous communities, many businesses and investors are unable to access local and international markets. Access to high-speed broadband will be critical to improving quality of life in the north by increasing access to virtual health care, employment, and education opportunities – areas in which Indigenous peoples experience disproportionately poor outcomes. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the federal government to expand broadband infrastructure in northern and Indigenous communities to support access to new markets and spur regional economic growth. For details, see our [*2022 Provincial Budget Submission*](#) and [*Vote Prosperity*](#).

Investing in Northern Ontario’s highway infrastructure. Northerners continue to suffer from an infrastructure deficit limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and investment opportunities.

At the same time, these communities are facing greater impacts of climate change and lack the necessary infrastructure to mitigate risk. Indigenous communities, in particular, face higher costs when it comes to accessing healthy and nutritious foods, often leading to food insecurity and other health challenges. Construction of all-season roads could lower the cost of transporting goods to the north, making healthy food more accessible and affordable in these communities. This will include continued investments to complete the four-laning of Highway 69, which will unlock the region’s economic potential, drive job creation, and improve the community’s inter- and intra- provincial connectivity. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to address these issues. For details see our reports, [*Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario’s Transportation Needs*](#) and [*Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario*](#).

Improving Indigenous education, learning and training opportunities. We encourage you to work with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to identify and earmark the financial resources needed to ensure consistent operation and long-term sustainability of Indigenous Institutes in Ontario and improve access to culturally based experiential learning and other training opportunities. In addition, we ask your ministry to work with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, the private sector, and post-secondary institutions to provide more training opportunities to Indigenous youth to increase their labour force participation and drive entrepreneurship. For details, see OCC’s report [*The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario’s Regional Economies*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario’s business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Dave Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs
Shawn Batise, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Kinga Surma
Minister of Infrastructure
777 Bay St, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2C8

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Surma,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Infrastructure.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Infrastructure, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Bridging digital divides. While businesses had to close their doors to customers in accordance with public health rules during the pandemic, many seized the opportunity to pivot, developing or joining online marketplaces for good and services. However, rural, remote and First Nations communities continue to lack access to reliable broadband connectivity, limiting their access to markets, employment, education, and healthcare. As such, the government must urgently identify and address all barriers to broadband deployment, such as make-ready costs, that limit the impact of private sector investment, reduce the number of projects that reach the build phase, and jeopardize the government's goal of full connectivity by 2025. Expanding Ontario's broadband infrastructure in partnership with municipalities, the federal government, and the telecommunications industry will be crucial to supporting regional economic growth and development. For details see our report [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Strengthening climate adaptation and resiliency. Extreme weather events continue to inflict costly damage to infrastructure and communities across Ontario. The province already faces a municipal infrastructure backlog of \$52 billion, and according to a recent report by the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, the cost of maintaining public buildings will increase by \$6 billion between 2022 and 2030 due to climate hazards.¹ We urge you to work with the federal government to address municipal infrastructure backlogs and state-of-good-repair projects by supporting municipalities with investments in the maintenance, repair, and resiliency of infrastructure assets to increase their life cycle and avoid compounding replacement costs. This includes dedicated funding for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. We also ask that you support changes to the building code that ensure structures can resist increasingly frequent extreme weather events. We call on you to work with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs to develop these plans with Indigenous leadership, executing strategies in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For details see our report, [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario’s Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#) and [*Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario’s Municipalities*](#).

Collaborating on transportation and transit infrastructure projects. Public transit and transportation infrastructure will play a key role in supporting Ontario’s economic recovery, job creation and decarbonization efforts. As businesses and investors look to expand their operations, access to public transit and transportation infrastructure remain key variables during decision making. We urge you to work in partnership with the Minister of Transportation and municipalities to expand GO Transit service and invest in long-term infrastructure projects. For details, see our report [*Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario’s Transportation Needs, 2022 Provincial Budget Submission*](#) and [*Vote Prosperity*](#).

Investing in Northern Ontario’s highway infrastructure. Northerners continue to suffer from an infrastructure deficit limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and investment opportunities. Indigenous communities in particular face higher costs when it comes to accessing healthy and nutritious foods, often leading to food insecurity. Construction of all-season roads could lower the cost of transporting goods to the north, making healthy food more reasonably priced in these communities. This will include continued investments to complete the four-laning of Highway 69, which will unlock the region’s economic potential, drive job creation, and improve community’s inter- and intra- provincial connectivity. For details see our reports, [*Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario’s Transportation Needs*](#) and [*Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario*](#).

¹ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario. 2021. Costing Climate Change Impacts to Public Infrastructure. [https://www.fao-on.org/web/default/files/publications/EC2105%20 CIPI%20Buildings/CIPI%20Buildings-EN.pdf](https://www.fao-on.org/web/default/files/publications/EC2105%20CIPI%20Buildings/CIPI%20Buildings-EN.pdf).

Streamlining the infrastructure approvals process. Under the current regulatory and approvals process, many critical infrastructure projects continue to be delayed, and in some instances, cancelled. In light of significant gaps in the critical infrastructure needed to support population and economic growth (such as energy and housing), it is imperative that your ministry conduct a full review of the current approvals, environmental assessments, and community consultation processes to ascertain opportunities for reducing friction and delays without compromising the integrity of the environment, protected areas, and agricultural lands. At the same time, government must also ensure project consultations are meaningful, of adequate length, and remain accessible to the public, businesses, and Indigenous communities.

Addressing supply chain disruptions and delays. The pandemic has had widespread impacts on global supply chains affecting businesses and consumers alike around the world. Congestion and outdated infrastructure have been major factors. Many businesses in Ontario are now grappling with delays thus limiting their ability to meet consumer demand. This is hampering Ontario's international competitiveness and economic growth. The issues are also being fueled by underinvestment in technologies that promote visibility and real-time product management, as well as supply chain strategies that encourage diversification, resiliency, flexibility, and reliability. As Minister of Infrastructure, we urge you to work with the federal government to investigate pain points along supply chains and make the necessary infrastructure investments that will ensure long-term reliability. For details, please see [*Supply Chain Disruptions and Delays*](#) and [*Vote Prosperity*](#).

Expanding zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) infrastructure. One of the key impediments to consumer uptake of ZEVs in Ontario is the cost and lack of sufficient public charging infrastructure. By prioritizing investments in charging stations and other supportive ZEV-infrastructure, the government can accelerate the electrification and decarbonization of vehicles, enable growth of the domestic ZEV market, and further reduce greenhouse gases. For details, see our report, [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy, 2022 Provincial Budget Submission*](#) and [*Vote Prosperity*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Amarjot Sandhu, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure
Vijay Thanigasalam, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure
Carlene Alexander, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Infrastructure

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Main Legislative Bldg, Queen's Park, Rm 223
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Premier Ford,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate on your re-election as Premier of Ontario

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Removing barriers to interprovincial trade and labour mobility. Interprovincial barriers to trade and labour mobility continue to limit Ontario's competitiveness and deter further investment. Economic activity is hampered by inconsistent rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, marketing, and more. According to a study by Deloitte, removing interprovincial trade barriers would increase Ontario's GDP by \$23 billion and annual provincial tax revenues by \$5 billion. For more details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Protecting municipalities' fiscal capacity. Ontario's post-pandemic recovery and long-term success will depend on the economic potential of its 444 municipalities. In recent decades, the downloading of provincial government responsibilities onto municipal governments has resulted in a multi-billion-dollar funding gap, as revenue streams were not downloaded to match. Now is the time for municipalities and the Province to review revenue generation and spending mechanisms, including property taxes, to ensure communities are able to continue investing in their economic development opportunities and attracting talent and businesses. For further details, please see: [*Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities.*](#)

Addressing the immigration backlog. In December 2021, there were over 1.8 million immigration applications awaiting processing, including future citizens, permanent residents, and international students as well as a significant, three-year backlog in the skilled immigrant category. Over the past two years, we have seen firsthand the challenges businesses and healthcare systems faced because of a shortage of skilled labour. We encourage your Ministry to work with the federal government to resolve this backlog to address the province's skills mismatch and ensure future workforce needs are met.

Tackling supply chain backlogs and delays. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis, along with ongoing climate-related disasters, have exposed structural weaknesses across domestic and international supply chains, threatening Canada's economy, national security, and business competitiveness. While the Ontario and federal governments have taken steps to strengthen supply chains and domestic manufacturing in Canada, businesses are facing enormous challenges when it comes to supply and inventory management. This unpredictability threatens business continuity and economic recovery. There are several ways to tackle these challenges in collaboration with the federal government as well as provinces and territories across Canada. For further details, please see OCC's [*Policy Primer: Supply Chain Disruptions and Delays.*](#)

Promoting Ontario as a place to invest long-term. Ontario must focus on creating the right environment for business competitiveness, predictability, and sustained long-term economic growth. While we encourage you to champion Ontario's brand in Canada and abroad, we also encourage you to work with other ministries to further improve Ontario's business environment by modernizing regulations and ensuring timelines and consultations are transparent and give sufficient time for businesses to plan for the future. . For more details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [*Vote Prosperity.*](#)

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Andrea Khanjin, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Alexandra Sutton, Deputy Minister, Intergovernmental Affairs

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Monte McNaughton
Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
400 University Ave, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister McNaughton,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Preparing the labour force of tomorrow. As the job market and economy continue to evolve, post-secondary institutions must be able to adapt to changing labour market demands. To secure a talent pipeline reflective of the current and future needs of the labour market, we encourage you to ensure that post-secondary institutions have sustainable funding and that you collaborate with the Ministry of colleges and universities, post-secondary institutions, and private sector to identify high demand programs of study where current or anticipated labour shortages exist. Expanding enrolment, introducing new programs and micro-credentials in addition to coordination with colleges and unions will be crucial to meeting Ontario's workforce needs and supporting lifelong learning. For details, see OCC's [Recommendations for Ontario's Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee](#) and [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#).

Making regional immigration pilots permanent. Employers in small and rural communities who are unable to attract residents from major urban centres are often denied the opportunity to hire temporary foreign workers because Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) show that sufficient talent is available within Ontario to fill the role, even if these individuals are unwilling to relocate to that area. Regional pilots have been introduced to help fill local labour shortages and support economic growth in select rural and small communities. We believe these pilots should be made permanent.

Increasing Ontario's allocation of immigrants under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. In Canada, the federal government gives each province a set allocation of economic immigrants they are allowed to accept each year. In 2021, that allocation to Ontario was 9,000 – wholly insufficient given the available opportunities in Ontario for gainful employment. While the Province has called on the federal government to double the amount, the actual need is likely much higher. We look forward to supporting the province in this endeavour.

Addressing Ontario's skills mismatches and future workforce needs. While immigration is essential to filling short-term labour gaps, Ontario needs a workforce development strategy to prepare for longer-term labour market needs. Specific emphasis must be placed on attracting and retaining skilled labour in high-demand sectors including construction, logistics, early childhood education, health care, agriculture, computing, and long-term care. As we work towards recovery, it will be crucial to ensure specific skills training support is afforded to those demographic groups disproportionately affected by the pandemic and looking to join or re-enter the labour force. Key recommendations to address these issues are included in our [2022 budget submission](#).

Improving business confidence and predictability. Businesses need a stable policy environment with clear timelines, contracts, consultations, and strategies to help them plan for the future and make long-term investments. Given the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19, we asked your government to exercise caution around legislation that significantly impacts the business community. For details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Removing barriers to interprovincial trade and labour mobility. Interprovincial barriers to trade and labour mobility continue to limit Ontario's competitiveness and deter further investment. Economic activity is hampered by inconsistent rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, marketing, and more. According to a recent study by Deloitte, removing interprovincial trade barriers would increase Ontario's GDP by \$23 billion and annual provincial tax revenues by \$5 billion. For more details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Bridging digital divides. Rural, remote and First Nations communities continue to lack access to reliable broadband connectivity, limiting their access to regional and international markets, employment, education, and healthcare. Access to high-speed internet will be essential to attract and retain talent in these communities while also supporting labour productivity. Expanding Ontario's broadband infrastructure in partnership with municipalities, the federal government, and the telecommunications industry will be crucial to supporting regional economic growth and workforce development. For details see our report [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario, 2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Modernizing the journey-person-to-apprentice ratio. To address the desperate need for skilled tradespeople in Ontario, it is critical that the Province revise the current journey-person-to-apprentice ratio. Fundamentally, there needs to be greater flexibility within the Ontario apprenticeship framework. In Nova Scotia, for example, employers can apply for a ratio increase for the number of apprentices per journey-person on a per-project basis. The implementation of a similar process in Ontario could alleviate some of the challenges that employers experience with respect to recruiting sufficient journey-people to hire additional apprentices.

Implementing career exploration earlier. We encourage your Ministry to work with the Ministry of Education to introduce career options, including skilled trades, to children at a younger age. For example, the [Primary Futures Program](#) based in the United Kingdom offers career exploration programs, mentorship opportunities and career studies in partnership with employers. These are a meaningful way to introduce children, parents, and educators to a wide range of career options.

Supporting app-based workers and platforms in Ontario. In Ontario, app-based platforms offer unique flexible earning opportunities that thousands of workers depend on to earn income in a way that works with their schedules. We look forward to working with the Government and other stakeholders to ensure that Bill 88 is implemented in a sensible manner to prevent any unintended outcomes. We also encourage the Portable Benefits Advisory Panel to engage stakeholders prior to developing their working plan.

Reinstating the basic income pilot project in Ontario. We encourage your Ministry to work with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to reinstate the basic income pilot program in Ontario. This program could, if implemented successfully, have better outcomes for those who need it most. A basic income allows people to pursue training, education, and/or entrepreneurship, creating sustainable economic value. However, without completion of the pilot, data regarding the success of this model in Ontario is inconclusive.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Deepak Anand, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

David Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

Greg Meredith, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Long-Term Care
400 University Avenue, 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 1S5

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Calandra,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Long-term Care.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Long-term Care, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Prioritizing long-term care services across rural and northern Ontario. We encourage your ministry to prioritize long-term care (LTC) in non-urban areas. These areas continue to struggle to keep up with demand for beds and labour required to meet the standard introduced in 2020 to provide nursing home residents with an average of four hours of direct care every day.

In order to meet this objective, we recommend you work closely with the Minister of Finance to increase direct care funding in rural and remote areas to ensure adequate, predictable, and stable multi-year funding.

Resolving the labour market shortage for senior's care. The LTC sector has faced a workforce shortage that has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and the province's aging population.

During the pandemic, your government took steps to assist the sector by launching the Personal Support Worker Return of Service Program in partnership with Ontario Health. Such programs, however, put extreme pressure on the private sector to keep their fees low. As such, we recommend you work with the Ministry of Labour, Skills Training and Workforce Development and Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility to strike a taskforce to study best practices in closing the sectors wage gap and develop a strategy to recruit and retain skilled labour in the LTC sector.

Prioritizing demographic shifts for human health resources planning. With Canada’s aging population, chronic conditions are expected to rise, which will increase the demand on the health care system. As one example, 564,000 Canadians currently live with dementia – a number that is expected to increase to 937,000 by 2031.² In comparison to other jurisdictions, Canada has few neurologists, geriatricians, and psychiatrists who can support family physicians with the diagnosis and management of Alzheimer’s and dementia. This situation could create a bottleneck and delay diagnosis, testing, and treatment if demographic shifts are not taken into consideration for health systems planning. For details, see [Ensuring Sufficient Health Human Resources in Ontario](#).

Enabling investments towards innovative models of home and community care for seniors. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, most Canadian seniors with dementia live at home, where they can maintain their independence and engage with their community. A well-resourced home and community care sector would alleviate constraints in LTC and create long-term savings for the Province. For further details, see [Supporting Ontario’s Aging Population](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario’s business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

John Jordan, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care
Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care

² Alzheimer Society of Canada. Latest information and statistics. <https://alzheimer.ca/cornwall/en/take-action/change-minds/alzheimers-awareness-month/new-way-looking-impact-dementia-canada>

August 3, 2022

The Honourable George Pirie
Minister of Mines
Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St. W.
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Pirie,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Mines.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Mines, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Investing in mining innovation. Technology adoption will help reduce the cost of mining operations, strengthen the industry, and increase the sector's competitiveness. Provincial investments in mining innovation such as battery electric mining equipment will be critical to increasing mining reserves and supporting Ontario in its effort to meet local and global demand through the Critical Minerals Strategy. We encourage your ministry to increase the relative government-to-industry funding ratio for mining innovation and ensure support for projects throughout their entire lifecycles. In doing so, we recommend your ministry provide funding for projects that go beyond academic research to support research and educational institutions to develop talent and advance technology implementation and commercialization.

The industry's growth can also be stimulated through the Ontario Focused Flow-Through Share Tax Credit; we encourage you to work with the Ministry of Finance to increase the tax credit from five to 25 percent to incentivize and accelerate mining exploration and development.

Developing critical minerals and electric vehicle supply chains. The province is well positioned to support investment in mining innovation that amplifies the critical minerals strategy and takes advantage of the quickly evolving battery value-chain. We encourage your ministry to engage with the mining industry and Indigenous communities in discussions that aim to support these projects. The establishment of proactive public policies and collaboration with First Nations, federal government, and municipalities to develop a fast-track process for permitting and land leasing will also be crucial to attract battery cell manufacturers.

Unlocking the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire is one of the most promising mineral development opportunities in Ontario. Recent geopolitical events and supply chain disruptions highlight the need for government to tap into this key source of critical minerals that will drive electric battery and computer chip manufacturing, and Canada's transition to a net-zero economy. We ask your ministry to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs to ensure Indigenous communities are active participants and proponents of these long-term projects.

Leveraging clean technology as a driver of economic growth. Ontario is home to many innovative hydrogen, renewable energy, biomass, nuclear, energy storage, and critical mineral projects. Development of clean technologies will drive job creation, reduce emissions, position the province as a leader in the global green economy, and support long-term economic growth. To support these projects, we encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade to advance investments in research, commercialization, skills training, and export capacity. For details, see [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#) and [*Energy Policy and Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis in Ontario*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Anthony Leardi, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Mines
Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Mines

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Clark,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Streamlining the development and permitting process to address Ontario's housing crisis.

Access to affordable housing is essential to attracting, retaining, and developing a diverse and productive workforce. High housing costs put a strain on the local economy by preventing employees from living near their jobs, which increases commute times and makes it more challenging for businesses to hire workers with the right skillsets. We recommend your ministry work to expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects and eliminate any excessive regulatory hurdles. This would include the establishment of a transparent and fair process around municipal zoning orders (MZOs) and ensuring all municipalities have access to up-to-date official development plans.

Ending exclusionary zoning. Currently, it is illegal in many Ontario neighborhoods to convert a single-family home into a townhome, duplex, triplex, or fourplex without a zoning by-law change, which delays projects, costs additional money, and leaves people stranded without an affordable home. These outdated zoning laws encourage NIMBY forces to drive up costs of homes or drive away affordable homes in a neighbourhood entirely. The Province should act on the recommendation of the Housing Affordability Taskforce and use the Planning Act to implement as-of-right zoning in Ontario's highest-demand urban neighbourhoods. This change would allow the seamless and legal development of gentle density, including duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, next door to existing density and close to subway and transit stations without unnecessary and lengthy case-by-case approvals.

Addressing the low-income housing crisis. The shortage of low-income and community housing across all corners of the province is placing excessive strain on municipal resources and their limited property tax base. We encourage your ministry to work in partnership with municipalities, non-profit housing providers, the private sector, and other stakeholders to increase the supply of community housing and improve the efficiency of the provincial community housing system to guarantee long-term sustainability.

Eliminating the expansion of municipal land transfer taxes. Over the last year, several municipalities have passed motions asking the Province to amend the Municipal Act to give all municipalities the power to charge their own municipal land transfer tax (MLTT). An additional land transfer tax would cost Ontario families almost \$15,000 on an average priced home. Implementing a province-wide MLTT will remove billions of dollars from the economy and negatively impact job substantiality, housing affordability and economic recovery. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Finance to not impose new taxes including a MLTT, instead working with stakeholders to review the Municipal Act to update the municipal taxation system to simplify the system and promote access to housing.

Strengthening climate adaptation. While reducing greenhouse gas emissions is necessary, the reality of climate change means we must also learn to adapt to its effects. Communities will need strong physical and natural infrastructure, asset management policies, and emergency response protocols to manage the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Municipalities are on the front lines of this issue, and they need more support. We encourage your ministry to work with the federal government to support communities with climate adaptation and asset management, backed by adequate and sustained funding. The ministry should also actively support the federal Task Force on Flood Insurance and Relocation.

Improving building efficiency and resilience. Retrofits are necessary to reduce emissions from existing buildings. For brick-and-mortar businesses, these measures help lower overhead costs by reducing energy consumption, but there is often a capacity gap that prevents small and medium-sized businesses from adopting them.

To support demand, we encourage your ministry to work with the federal government to expand energy efficiency grants or low-interest loans. Concurrently, Ontario should continue to incrementally evolve its building codes to improve climate resilience and net-zero readiness, taking direction from Infrastructure Canada's Climate-Resilient Buildings and Core Public Infrastructure Initiative and continued upgrades to Canada's National Building Code.

Protecting municipalities' fiscal capacity. Ontario's post-pandemic recovery and long-term success will depend on the economic potential of its 444 municipalities. In recent decades, the downloading of provincial government responsibilities onto municipal governments has resulted in a multi-billion-dollar funding gap, as revenue streams were not downloaded to match. Now is the time for municipalities and the Province to review revenue generation and spending mechanisms, including property taxes, to ensure communities can continue investing in their economic development opportunities and attracting talent and businesses. For further details, please see our report [Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities](#).

Bridging the digital divide. Although access to reliable broadband internet has been a longstanding issue in Ontario, it has been magnified by COVID-19. Broadband enabled many businesses to sell their products online and consumers to purchase food and other products virtually. The digital shift, however, presents significant challenges for businesses, farmers, workers, and consumers with unreliable or nonexistent internet connectivity in Ontario, particularly in rural, remote, and northern communities. Access to high-speed broadband will be critical to supporting the growing use of precision agriculture. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the federal government to expand broadband infrastructure in rural communities to support access to new markets and spur regional economic growth. For details, see our [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Michael Parsa, Associate Minister of Housing

Kevin Holland, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Graydon Smith
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W.
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Smith,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Removing barriers to carbon capture and storage (CCS). CCS is a safe, clean energy technology that will be critical to the competitiveness of many carbon-intensive and trade-exposed sectors of Ontario's economy. Current legislation prohibits CCS in Ontario. We encourage your ministry to work with stakeholders to develop a regulatory framework for CCS that positions Ontario as a leader in the technology, removes regulatory barriers, creates a streamlined approval regime, encourages commercial-scale projects, and facilitates scalable projects. For details, see our letter [Geologic Carbon Storage in Ontario \(ERP: 019-4770\)](#).

Supporting industry use of biochar. When biochar is added to soil, it absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequesters it in the ground. Biochar also enriches soil by improving water retention and moderates soil acidity which in turn improves crop production.

In Ontario, the application of this material is being explored in the agriculture and forestry industries. Well-funded research is essential to better understanding the potential uses, risks, and regulations necessary for the implementation of emerging technologies. For details, see our report, [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy.*](#)

Strengthening Ontario's forestry, natural resources, and bioeconomy sectors. Forestry represents an important source of jobs and economic development for Ontario, particularly within northern, rural, and Indigenous communities. The sector is poised to grow as a result of increasing global demand for value-added wood products such as furniture and construction materials. Biomass electrical generating facilities are a core element of growing a more robust forest industry and a more prosperous Northern Ontario. Long-term certainty for bioenergy production will help improve system capacity, support communities, and help Ontario move towards a low-carbon future. We urge you to implement recommendations from the *Forest Sector Strategy's Advisory Committee* to reduce costs, improve infrastructure, increase the use of forest biomass, and remove trade and market barriers. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Ministry of Northern Development and First Nations to streamline environmental approvals around key development projects that will support Ontario's leadership in the green economy.

Investing in Northern Ontario's highway and forest road infrastructure. Northerners continue to suffer from an infrastructure deficit limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and investment opportunities. Indigenous communities in particular face higher costs when it comes to accessing healthy and nutritious foods, often leading to food insecurity. Construction of all-season roads, including continued investments to complete the four-laning of Highway 69, will unlock the region's economic potential, drive job creation, and improve inter- and intra- provincial connectivity. Furthermore, forest road and bridge infrastructure support tens of thousands of people and businesses from all regions of Ontario that participate in important sectors such as tourism, prospecting and mining, and energy.

Working with industry partners, there is an opportunity to enhance Ontario's *Forest Access Roads Funding Program* and usher in a new, golden era of modernized, multi-use, forest road infrastructure.

For details see our reports, [*Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*](#) and [*Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario.*](#)

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Ric Bresee, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Monique Rolf von den Baumen-Clark, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Natural Resource and Forestry

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Greg Rickford
Minister of Northern Development
160 Bloor St., 4th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2E6

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Rickford,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Northern Development.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Northern Development, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Unlocking the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire is one of the most promising mineral development opportunities in Ontario. Recent geopolitical events and supply chain disruptions highlight the need for government to tap into this key source of critical minerals that will drive electric battery and computer chip manufacturing, and Canada's transition to a net-zero economy. We ask your ministry to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs to ensure Indigenous communities are active participants and proponents of these long-term projects.

Developing critical minerals and electric vehicle supply chains. The province is well positioned to support investment in mining innovation that amplifies the critical minerals strategy and takes advantage of the quickly evolving battery value-chain. We encourage your ministry to engage with the mining industry and Indigenous communities in discussions that aim to support these projects.

The establishment of proactive public policies and collaboration with First Nations, federal government, and municipalities to develop a fast-track process for permitting and land leasing will also be crucial to attract battery cell manufacturers.

Making regional immigration pilots permanent. Employers in small and rural communities who are unable to attract residents from major urban centres are often denied the opportunity to hire temporary foreign workers because Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) show that sufficient talent is available within Ontario to fill the role, even if these individuals are unwilling to relocate to that area. Regional pilots have been introduced to help fill local labour shortages and support economic growth in select rural and small communities. We encourage you to work with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and the federal government to make these pilots permanent in order to resolve long-standing labour gaps, spur economic growth and support job creation in northern Ontario.

Bridging the digital divide. Although access to reliable broadband internet has been a longstanding issue in Northern Ontario, it has been magnified by COVID-19. With unreliable, even nonexistent, internet connectivity in northern and Indigenous communities, many businesses and investors are unable to access local and international markets. Access to high-speed broadband will be critical to improving quality of life in the north by increasing access to virtual health care, employment, and education opportunities. We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the federal government to expand broadband infrastructure in northern and Indigenous communities to support access to new markets and spur regional economic growth. For details, see our [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure. Northerners continue to suffer from an infrastructure deficit limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and investment opportunities. At the same time, these communities are facing greater impacts of climate change and lack the necessary infrastructure to mitigate risk. Indigenous communities in particular face higher costs when it comes to accessing healthy and nutritious foods, often leading to food insecurity and other health challenges. Construction of all-season roads could lower the cost of transporting goods to the north, making healthy food more accessible and affordable in these communities. This will include continued investments to complete the four-laning of Highway 69, which will unlock the region's economic potential, drive job creation, and improve the community's inter- and intra- provincial connectivity.

We urge you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to address these issues. For details see our reports, [Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#) and [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Dave Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Northern Development
Shawn Batisse, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Northern Development

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Kaleed Rasheed
Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery
777 Bay Street, 5th floor
Toronto, ON M5B 2H7

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Rasheed:

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you in your new role as Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Improving the outcomes of public sector procurement. Public-sector request for proposal (RFP) processes are typically driven by short-term cost considerations. We encourage you support access to procurement for small businesses, sustainable businesses, and businesses with strong diversity and inclusion models. Beyond supporting value and innovation, diversifying public procurement will also help to build more robust supply chains thereby supporting economic growth.

Avoiding a patchwork of privacy legislation. Businesses of all sizes use data to operate, innovate, and serve their customers. They need clear and effective legal frameworks within which they can operate, innovate responsibly, and continue advancing our economic and social progress with data and technology. In June 2021, the Government of Ontario released a white paper proposing to develop a provincial data privacy framework for the private sector.

However, as federal modernization efforts are underway, introducing a provincial framework would add unnecessary confusion and costs for small businesses, deter innovation and investments in Ontario, and make it more difficult for Ontarians to access digital services. Therefore, we urge your ministry to refrain from introducing duplicative provincial privacy legislation for the private sector. For more information, see our recent [submission](#) on privacy modernization, our [joint association letter](#), and our report, [In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario](#).

Putting taxpayers at the centre of government service delivery. Improving customer service is an important goal for your ministry, one which can be achieved through the use of a ‘client-centric’ delivery model. This entails:

- Building capacity at the staff level to reduce delays and improve one-on-one encounters.
- Advancing digital design and delivery to ensure a modern and streamlined experience.
- Undertaking internal reviews to identify opportunities for transformation within existing service delivery models.
- Collaborating with industry partners to identify best practices in service delivery.

Creating efficiencies through value-based health care. The Ontario public health care system needs to be aligned around a tangible definition of value, with a renewed focus on patient outcomes for money spent. Substantial investment should be made in enhanced data collection, analysis, and dissemination capabilities, so as to improve decision-making across all points of the system (particularly in procurement and supply chain processes). We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of Health to focus on how to create a procurement process that emphasizes value, not lowest cost, as health care purchasing is generally not commodity purchasing. Your ministry should also investigate broader use of the commissioning approach to generating solutions, purchasing innovation, and improving service delivery.

Modernize real estate legislation to protect Ontarians in the housing market. Outdated policies are often exploited in the real estate market at the disadvantage of consumers. For example, a loophole in The Trust in Real Estate Services Act currently exempts auctioneers from registration or licensing requirements that traditional real estate brokers are subject to thus keeping them from being subject to the same regulatory framework or oversight. We recommend your ministry work in partnership with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and industry stakeholders to close long-standing loopholes and deliver an enhanced regulatory framework that will protect Ontarians’ looking to buy or sell real estate.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc.

Vincent Ke, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery
Brian Riddell, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery
Renu Kulendran, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Parm Gill
Minister of Red Tape Reduction
7th Floor, 56 Wellesley St W
Toronto, ON M5S 2S3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Gill,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Taking swift action to reduce unproductive regulation. Regulatory burdens hamper business productivity with outsized administrative costs, dissuading foreign investment and limiting economic growth. We encourage your ministry to continue taking action to streamline and modernize regulation with the goal of increasing business competitiveness through its quarterly red tape reduction bills. Ongoing efforts in this area should be informed by robust engagement with businesses and other stakeholders. Further, Ontario should avoid a piecemeal approach to new legislation in areas such as data privacy, where a federal framework will reduce friction for businesses and support compliance. For more details, please see our election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Removing barriers to interprovincial trade and labour mobility. Interprovincial barriers to trade and labour mobility continue to limit Ontario's competitiveness and deter further investment. Economic activity is hampered by inconsistent rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, marketing, and more. Removing interprovincial trade barriers would increase Ontario's GDP by \$23 billion and annual provincial tax revenues by \$5 billion. We urge your ministry to take bold action by signing mutual recognition agreements and/or unilaterally recognizing standards in other parts of the country, where appropriate.

Measuring the economic impact of regulation. Ontario should move to a regulatory model whereby all proposed legislation and regulations are supported by publicly available cost-benefit analysis and an examination of the regulation's economic impact versus its effectiveness in achieving other goals. Consultations with the private sector and other stakeholders are critical to ensure government understands and factors in potential unintended consequences of any new policies.

Modernizing cannabis sector regulations. Since legalization, and against the backdrop of a pandemic, the cannabis sector continued to grow, contributing \$13.3 billion to Ontario's GDP, generating \$3 billion of tax revenue and sustaining 31,000 jobs annually, in addition to safeguarding public health by working to displace the illegal market. Despite this progress, major hurdles persist, including an overly restrictive regulatory regime. We encourage your ministry to work with the Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of Finance to look for ways to reduce regulatory burdens in this sector. For details, see our [2022 provincial budget submission](#).

Promoting Ontario as a place to invest long-term. Ontario must create the right environment for business competitiveness, predictability, and sustained long-term economic growth. While we encourage you to champion Ontario's brand in Canada and abroad, we also encourage you to work with other ministries to further improve Ontario's business environment by modernizing regulations and ensuring timelines and consultations are transparent and give sufficient time for businesses to plan for the future. Publishing a cost-of-doing-business index would be an effective means to track and improve business competitiveness relative to other jurisdictions. For more details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Streamlining the development and permitting process to address Ontario's housing crisis.

Access to affordable housing is essential to attracting, retaining, and developing a diverse and productive workforce. High housing costs put a strain on the local economy by preventing employees from living near their jobs, which increases commute times and makes it more challenging for businesses to hire workers with the right skillsets. We recommend your ministry work with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects and eliminate any excessive regulatory hurdles, including establishing a transparent and fair process around municipal zoning orders (MZOs).

Supporting economic growth in the beverage alcohol industries. The OCC's report, [*Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario*](#), outlines how the Province should modernize the sale and distribution of beverage alcohol to responsibly promote growth across all four categories – wine, beer, spirits, and cider. The recommendations include but are not limited to alleviating tax burdens, cutting red tape, and removing antiquated inter-provincial trade barriers.

Capitalizing on autonomous vehicles. Ontario possesses the necessary ingredients to be a leader in the development of autonomous vehicle (AV) technologies. Given the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area's status as one of the most congested regions in North America, AVs have the potential to help alleviate congestion and improve commute times. As the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, we call on you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure to regularly review and update the existing AV pilot regulatory framework and evaluate current legislation to determine if AV-relevant modernization is required while ensuring road safety is maintained for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists alike. For details, see the OCC's report, [*Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Sam Oosterhoff, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Maud Murray, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Red Tape Reduction

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Raymond Cho
Minister of Seniors and Accessibility
College Park, 777 Bay St., 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Cho,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Seniors and Accessibility.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Supporting succession planning for Ontario's aging business owners. With nearly three-quarters of business owners poised to retire within the next decade, there is a need to support succession planning and transition existing businesses to the next generation of entrepreneurs. In Budget 2021, the federal government committed to examining ways to reduce barriers to employee ownership. The OCC encourages the Province to begin work on an employee ownership policy framework with the objectives of reducing barriers, promoting awareness, and creating targeted incentives to complement the federal government's approach. For example, your ministry could develop a pathway for international students who purchase shares or ownership of a small business in Ontario to apply for Permanent Residency. Concurrently, we encourage the government to support and encourage accommodations related to aging to ensure workers are able to work effectively as they age. For more details, please see our [2022 provincial budget submission](#).

Resolving the labour market shortage for seniors' care. The LTC sector is facing a workforce shortage that has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and the province's aging population. During the pandemic, your government took steps to assist the sector by launching the Personal Support Worker Return of Service Program in partnership with Ontario Health. Such programs, however, put extreme pressure on the private sector to keep their fees low. As such, we recommend you work with the Ministry of Labour, Skills Training and Workforce Development and Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility to strike a taskforce to study best practices in closing the sectors wage gap and develop a strategy to recruit and retain skilled labour in the LTC sector.

Prioritizing demographic shifts within human health resources planning. As Canada's population ages, the prevalence of chronic conditions is expected to rise, which will increase demand on the health care system. As one example, 564,000 Canadians currently live with dementia – a number that is expected to increase to 937,000 by 2031.³ In comparison to other jurisdictions, Canada has few neurologists, geriatricians, and psychiatrists who can support family physicians with the diagnosis and management of Alzheimer's and dementia. This situation could create a bottleneck and delay diagnosis, testing, and treatment if demographic shifts are not taken into consideration for health systems planning. For details, see [Ensuring Sufficient Health Human Resources in Ontario](#).

Enabling investments towards innovative models of home and community care for seniors. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, most Canadian seniors with dementia live at home, where they can maintain their independence and engage with their community. A well-resourced home and community care sector would alleviate constraints in LTC and create long-term savings for the Province. For further details, see [Supporting Ontario's Aging Population](#).

Providing employers with tools to meet accessibility training requirements. Training on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Human Rights Code allows small businesses to understand their obligations under the act and contributes to an inclusive economy.

We recommend your ministry expand free training opportunities and awareness campaigns in partnership with the business community while also further providing tools and templates to ensure all staff have the requisite training. Moreover, government can further support accessibility and inclusion in workplaces by providing business owners, entrepreneurs, and staff with training on inclusive design thinking.

³ Alzheimer Society of Canada. Latest information and statistics. <https://alzheimer.ca/cornwall/en/take-action/change-minds/alzheimers-awareness-month/new-way-looking-impact-dementia-canada>

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Daisy Wai, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility
Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Michael Kerzner
Solicitor General
25 Grosvenor Street, 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Kerzner,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Solicitor General of Ontario.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Preparing for the next crisis. Emergency management preparedness should be seen as an integral part of Ontario's planning to quickly manage threats to human health caused by any emergency. We ask the Province to evaluate the effectiveness of its pandemic response, including business support programs, supports for the health care system, and public health restrictions implemented throughout the pandemic. In addition, we recommend a government-wide strategy for crisis management and pandemic preparedness based on lessons learned in Ontario and best practices from other jurisdictions. For further details, please see OCC's election priorities document, [Vote Prosperity](#).

Safeguarding our borders and cities. Given the importance of ensuring that the supply of food, medical products, and industrial goods continues, any disruption at our borders and cities is an attack on the well-being of our citizens and the businesses that employ them. We encourage your team to develop and communicate a strategy to prevent any further disruptions to business, economic, and trade activity.

Mitigating climate threats. The climate crisis is a growing threat to businesses, governments, and individuals around the world, but Ontario is well positioned to lead in the global green economy. Positioning Ontario for success will involve ensuring we are ready to protect against current and future threats. We recommend you work with the Ministry of Environment on a climate mitigation and adaptation strategy to protect Ontario's environment and economy. For further details please see, [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Robert Bailey, Parliamentary Assistant to the Solicitor General
Christine Hogarth, Parliamentary Assistant to the Solicitor General
Mario Di Tommaso, Deputy Solicitor General

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Neil Lumsden
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
438 University Avenue, 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Lumsden,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Developing a provincial workforce strategy for the tourism, hospitality, and culture industries. Representing \$36 billion of Ontario's GDP, these sectors are vital for Ontario's economy and critical for our post-pandemic recovery. However, they face labour shortages that predate and have been exacerbated by the pandemic. We encourage your ministry to work closely with industry to develop a workforce development strategy that will assist these industries through the economic recovery and beyond.

Providing continued support to the hardest hit industries. All available data suggests the ongoing crisis has been most severe for workers and businesses in certain industries, including those in the tourism, hospitality, entertainment, recreation, and retail sectors. We encourage your ministry to continue focusing on targeted support for these industries to help stem their losses and accelerate Ontario's economic recovery and growth.

Incentivizing year-round economic incentives for leisure and business travel. Providing incentives for both business and leisure travel will help reinvigorate regional tourism economies by delivering a much-needed boost to local and small businesses. We encourage your ministry to consider initiatives similar to the Ontario Staycation Tax Credit to encourage Ontarians to explore their own province and make travel within it more affordable.

Supporting capacity to operate and addressing obstacles to travel. With high vaccination rates and an easing of many public health measures, some of the public health measures introduced to contain the spread of COVID-19 are now outdated. We encourage your ministry to work with the federal government to undertake a full review of health regulations introduced throughout the pandemic and remove those that are no longer required.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Sheref Sabawy, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Laura Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Nina Chiarelli, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Caroline Mulroney
Minister of Transportation
777 Bay St, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Mulroney,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Minister of Transportation.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Ministry of Transportation, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Collaborating on transportation and transit infrastructure projects. Public transit and transportation infrastructure will play a key role in driving Ontario's economic recovery, job creation, and decarbonization efforts. Efficient access to effective transit and transportation networks is also critical for attracting business investments, in addition to supporting local tourism. The pandemic resulted in record-low ridership across municipalities in Canada, with major transit authorities reporting historic shortfalls in revenue. To encourage the use of public transit and attract more investments in Ontario, the Province must work closely with municipalities and the federal government to ensure that essential transit links are affordable while also improving accessibility by expanding GO Transit services, investing in transportation infrastructure projects, and supporting fleet and transit electrification.

In conjunction with these investments, we encourage you to work with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Workforce Development to resolve driver and transit operator shortages. For details, see the OCC's [2022 Provincial Budget Submission](#) and [Vote Prosperity](#).

Connecting the North. Re-establishing the Ontario Northland service will be a crucial step towards meeting the needs of those living and working in Northern Ontario. The OCC's report, [Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#), highlights that a lack of transportation options continues to hamper access to jobs, healthcare, post-secondary education, and business opportunities in the region.

Expanding low-carbon transportation. Given the share of emissions generated from transportation, the Government of Ontario should make decarbonization an explicit objective within all regional transportation plans. Both supply- and demand-side solutions will be necessary to address the various challenges associated with passenger and freight mobility in urban, rural, and remote communities. We recommend the Government of Ontario create a comprehensive zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) strategy, including a policy framework that would encourage auto manufacturers to expand ZEV production into heavy-duty utility trucks, provide incentives for corporations to fully electrify their fleets, and outline the government's plan to expand charging stations across the province. For details, please see the OCC's report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#).

Improving regional fare integration. Connectivity between neighbouring transit authorities is essential for regional economic competitiveness and passenger mobility across regions and especially those as large and diverse as the Greater Golden Horseshoe. While some progress has been made towards a one-card fare integration system, significant gaps remain. To ensure a seamless transportation network, opportunities for integration must continue to be explored between transit agencies, rail, and other local service providers with the Province as an enabler.

Strengthening the aviation sector. The onset of COVID-19 as well as subsequent border restrictions and public health measures have deeply impacted tourism in Ontario. With fewer restrictions on cross-border travel, Canadians and Americans will increasingly look to prioritize local and domestic travel.

Building the requisite infrastructure to provide business and leisure travelers with an efficient and convenient experience – such as improvements to last-mile public transit connections and the construction of a pre-clearance facility at Billy Bishop Airport – will be critical to supporting local tourism and economic growth and recovery. For details, see the OCC's letter, [Investing in the development of a new US Customs and Border Protection Facility at Billy Bishop Airport](#).

Additionally, given the rise in air travel in recent months, it will be crucial to address labour shortages and legacy public health measures, in partnership with the federal Ministers of Transport, Health, and Public Safety, as well as Ontario's Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, unions, airports, and other stakeholders.

Capitalizing on autonomous vehicles. Ontario possesses the necessary ingredients to be a leader in the development of autonomous vehicle (AV) technologies. Given the GTHA's status as one of the most congested regions in North America, AVs have the potential to help alleviate congestion and improve commute times. As the Minister of Transportation, we call on you to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure to regularly review and update the existing AV pilot regulatory framework and evaluate existing legislation to determine if AV-relevant modernization is required, while ensuring road safety is maintained for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists alike. In addition, we urge your office to work alongside the insurance industry to address issues around auto-collision liability. For details, see the OCC's report, [*Moving Forward: A Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*](#).

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Stan Cho, Associate Minister of Transportation

Hardeep Singh Grewal, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Transportation

Douglas Jones, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation

August 3, 2022

The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria
President of the Treasury Board
315 Front Street West, 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8

RE: Blueprint to Bolster Ontario's Prosperity

Dear Minister Sarkaria,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as President of the Treasury Board Secretariat.

For more than a century, the OCC has been the independent, non-partisan, and indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in the province by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members and 157 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Ontario businesses have faced unprecedented years characterized by a prolonged pandemic, record high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. In [Vote Prosperity](#), the OCC underscores the need for measures that support business confidence and predictability, encourage economic growth, and build resilient communities.

Our province is strongest when government supports the right conditions for businesses to thrive. As you prepare to lead the Treasury Board Secretariat, the OCC has outlined key priorities below to support the province's business community.

Recommendations:

Advancing Ontario's Digital and Data Strategy. Digitization of government and improved use of data can transform outcomes in the public and private sectors alike. We encourage your office to continue building on efforts to lead government's digital transition by:

- **Improving Ontario's open data framework.** Sharing government data with individuals can have immense potential in improving transparency and spurring innovation. Through its Open Data Directive, the Province has committed to taking an open-by default approach by requiring government data to be public unless exempted for specific reasons. There is, however, the need for a broader range of data to be released, including open contacting to improve transparency around procurement.

- **Modernizing privacy regulations.** Ontario must refrain from duplicating federal government laws pertaining to the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by private sector organizations. A patchwork of rules across Canada would pose significant competitiveness and compliance challenges for businesses.
- **Developing a government-issued digital identity.** The OCC supports work on a digital identity for Ontarians that could enable them to access and hold driver's licenses, OHIP cards, vaccine cards and other forms of identity in one secure place. The Province must prioritize the development of digital identity to support individuals and businesses to engage in day-to-day activities in-person and online. This could be integrated with private sector accounts and cards as well, and eventually integrated with federal identity cards.

Demonstrating accountability to Ontario taxpayers. Accountability and transparency in fiscal decision-making are paramount to building trust and confidence in government. We encourage your office to take the following steps to enhance return on investment for tax dollars through evidenced-based, outcomes-focused policymaking:

- **Ensure value-for-money in government spending.** We encourage your ministry to consult widely with the private sector on potential opportunities to improve the efficiency and quality of public services.
- **Adopt a formal policy on asset recycling.** Asset recycling – the process of generating proceeds from existing government assets to pay for new infrastructure – is a tool that could have a substantial impact on the Province's infrastructure deficit in the context of reduced fiscal capacity. It is important for the government to establish transparent policies and parameters around the practice.

Leading sound measurement and evaluation practices. The increased availability of data, and the capability to analyze that data through advanced analytics, has given policymakers an expanded ability to evaluate the costs and benefits of new initiatives – including assessing whether they will achieve their intended outcomes. We encourage your office to lead the government in this capacity, through:

- **Ensuring all proposed policies, regulations and legislations has been evaluated against sound evidence.** Government decisions should be based on reliable and evidence that is shared openly with stakeholders and the public.
- **Establishing targets around economic recovery and growth.** The government's long-term planning cycles should include a framework for specific and measurable growth targets, as well as a timeline to achieve those goals (a practice adopted by many other jurisdictions).
- **Placing increased emphasis on stakeholder consultation.** Your office should ensure all Ministries create closer, more permanent partnerships with stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, labour, and civil society organizations. Such partnerships will increase the information available to policymakers, leading to more informed decisions.

- **Publishing a cost of doing business (CODB) index.** A CODB index would be an effective snapshot of Ontario's competitiveness, as well as a benchmark against which your office could measure our competitiveness relative to neighbouring jurisdictions. Where the province performs well, this measure could be used to attract new business and investment; where we perform poorly, your office would have direction for improving government service delivery and spending

Modernizing government services. By expanding digital offerings, investing in customer service, and streamlining regulations and compliance systems, Ontario can improve its competitiveness and help businesses prosper. We encourage your Ministry to continue to *modernize* programs and *services* and break down silos across *government*.

At your earliest convenience, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide an in-depth briefing on the importance of these priorities for Ontario's business community. We look forward to working with your Ministry as you deliver on these commitments, building prosperity across Ontario for all.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Rudy Cuzzetto, Parliamentary Assistant to the President of the Treasury Board

Todd J. McCarthy, Parliamentary Assistant to the President of the Treasury Board

Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister, Treasury Board Secretariat

Bernard Derible, Deputy Minister, Emergency Management, Treasury Board Secretariat