

**POLICY
REPORT
CARD**

2019/20



ontario
chamber of
commerce

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LETTER TO THE CHAMBER NETWORK

As Ontario's largest business advocate, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has long been recognized as the indispensable voice of business in this province. The last seven months have brought new meaning and emphasis to that role, as businesses across Ontario have had to grapple with unprecedented circumstances.

In March 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic, as many governments around the world began following containment measures being recommended by public health officials to mitigate the spread of the virus. In Ontario, this included travel restrictions and the closure of non-essential workplaces.

Understanding the unique disruptions the COVID-19 pandemic would have on the business community, the OCC quickly mobilized, rethinking much of our previously planned policy projects to focus instead on timely products intended to support our members and inform government decision-making through the crisis.

Within days of the government shutdown, the OCC launched an online **COVID-19 hub** with a number of public facing resources, including a Pandemic Preparedness Toolkit for Business, a government news tracker, information about business and employee supports, mental health resources, free webinars, and an online form for businesses to share needs and concerns related to COVID-19. Together with the national Chamber Network and RBC, we launched Canada United, a nationwide "buy local" campaign and relief fund that generated over 200 million media impressions and raised over \$2 million to support local businesses through recovery grants.

As governments accelerated their policy development efforts to respond to the crisis, so too did the OCC. Based on conversations with the business community, our staff worked with the Governments of Canada and Ontario as they developed policies to offer relief to employers, workers, and communities. Since the onset of the pandemic, the OCC has sent 50 letters to government with specific recommendations, including solutions to **provide urgent support to commercial landlords and tenants, retrain the workforce, design effective electricity rate relief, introduce permanent health policy reforms, and more.**

Our policy pipeline during this time has necessarily focused on pressing issues, both top of mind and forward looking, requiring the attention of policy makers. As jurisdictions across Canada began to take steps to reopen their economies, ***Collaboration in Crisis: A memo from COVID-19*** underscored the importance of maintaining the unparalleled alignment between businesses and all orders of government that had emerged. Meanwhile, ***Uncharted Territory: Assessing the Landscape of Ontario's Economic Recovery Post COVID-19*** examined the policy tools capable of providing critical economic relief, and the economic risks of failing to act appropriately. Given that Ontario's small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been at the center of the economic crisis, ***Small Business, Big Impact: How SMEs are Pivoting During COVID-19*** and the associated Difference Makers media campaign outlined the economic and societal contributions SMEs make in Canada and documented 30 businesses who successfully pivoted their operations. We also released a comprehensive report titled, ***In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario***, which contains policy recommendations for privacy, cybersecurity, data sharing, and artificial intelligence, all of which became more important during the pandemic. Most recently, ***The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*** lays out a path to address the disproportionate economic impact the crisis has had on women by offering practical recommendations to confront both immediate and longer-term challenges faced by women in the workforce.

The combined efforts of the OCC's policy and advocacy activities, coupled with the unmatched strength and reach of the Chamber Network, has manifested in significant policy reforms and improvements to government programs aimed at supporting Ontario's business community. Among others, our recent advocacy wins include:

- **Commercial rent assistance.** The OCC urged governments to provide rent relief to commercial tenants and in April the Government of Canada announced its intention to introduce a Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) for small businesses. In June, the Government of Ontario passed the *Protecting Small Business Act*, temporarily halting or reversing evictions of commercial tenants and protecting them from being locked out or having their assets seized during COVID-19. This moratorium was recently extended.
- **Expanding access to capital.** The OCC asked the federal government to expand the payroll criteria for the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) to provide relief to more small businesses. Subsequently, the Government of Canada expanded the criteria to include companies with payroll between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million.
- **Preventing layoffs:** The OCC recommended the Government of Ontario temporarily amend the *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) to help prevent permanent layoffs due to COVID-19. In June the Government of Ontario enacted a new regulatory amendment that has helped to ensure businesses are not forced to terminate employees after their ESA temporary layoff periods have expired.
- **Supporting businesses with electricity costs:** The OCC wrote to the Government of Ontario proposing a series of measures to address the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses' electricity rates. Our letter included a recommendation to adjust eligibility for the 2020/21 Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI) and temporarily limit increases in Global Adjustment (GA) charges for businesses during the crisis. In May, the Province moved forward with both recommendations.

Beyond influencing government decisionmakers, the OCC has had more television interviews, op-eds, and media stories than ever before, helping to move the dial and inform public debate. Since the beginning of the crisis, the OCC has seen a 60 percent increase in our media coverage when compared to the same period last year: from 2,982 media hits to 4,899.

Looking ahead, we will continue to provide thoughtful analysis and strong advocacy, ensuring that the government's recovery priorities are aligned with our members' needs. As the provincial government re-examines its approach to workforce development and training, regulation, and infrastructure, now, more than ever, there is a need for the OCC's non-partisan, evidenced-based policy solutions.

But these solutions would not be as effective or impactful if it weren't for the contributions of the Ontario Chamber Network – your insight, experience, connections, and voice make our work stronger and give it the widest possible reach. The importance of our network has only been further emphasized by the current crisis. I want to offer you my genuine thanks for your on-going support of the OCC and commitment to the chamber movement. Together we can do – and have done – incredible things. The entire OCC team looks forward to working with you all as we help build a stronger Ontario.

Thank you,



Ashley Challinor
Vice President, Policy
Ontario Chamber of Commerce



ADVOCACY WINS

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



○ BUDGET 2020 WINS

IMPROVEMENTS TO ENERGY SYSTEM PLANNING

Ask: Transparency, affordability, and flexibility are critical to provincial energy planning, helping to promote economic competitiveness and strengthen ratepayer confidence. In a submission in May 2018, the OCC made a series of recommendations to strengthen the independence and transparency of the Ontario Energy Board (OEB)'s governance framework. Further, the chamber network has long called on the Ontario government to clearly display electricity costs on consumers' electricity bills, including the Global Adjustment. Energy rate transparency ensures that consumers understand the cost drivers associated with their bills and the rationale for government decisions.

- ✓ **Win:** In May 2019, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 87, *Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019*, which will reform OEB governance and help the board fulfill its mandate of consumer protection and rate mitigation. The bill also includes a provision that will display the Global Adjustment as a separate line item on electricity bills.

ADDRESSING THE AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING

Ask: In many of Ontario's cities, the high cost of shelter is tied to a lack of housing supply and a lack of the right types of housing close to transit. Challenges with the affordability and availability of housing are limiting employers' ability to attract and retain the talent they need to be competitive. In our Blueprint Letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the OCC called on the Province to confront these challenges by removing barriers that stand in the way of residential development.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2019, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 108, the *More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019*. The act introduces a series of legislative changes to streamline planning approvals, provide developers more certainty around what they can build and how much it will cost, and reduce the costs of building second units.

THE BRADFORD BYPASS: ENHANCING HIGHWAY CONNECTIVITY

Ask: Highways 400 and 404 serve as backbones of Ontario's economy, together carrying all North/South traffic across the province. The current lack of connectivity between these two highways is limiting Ontario's economic productivity. In a 2019 resolution, the Ontario Chamber Network called on the Government of Ontario to complete the extension of Highway 404 to intersect with Highway 400, known as the Bradford Bypass.

- ✓ **Win:** In August 2019, Ontario's Ministry of Transportation announced that it would be moving forward with the Bradford Bypass. Once completed, this route will bring about significant economic benefits to the region through reduced traffic congestion, more efficient transport of goods and services, faster access to airports, back-up options for emergency shut downs, and new employment and investment opportunities.

OPEN ALLOCATION MODEL FOR PRIVATE RETAIL CANNABIS LICENSES

Ask: Ontario's cannabis industry presents a significant economic opportunity for the province. Unfortunately, the provincial government's decision to proceed with a lottery system for the second round of licenses resulted in a great deal of uncertainty for industry players and investors, as well as lost economic potential. In Supporting Ontario's Budding Cannabis Industry, the

OCC called on the Government of Ontario to move to an open allocation model for private retail cannabis licenses. This recommendation was echoed by our Ontario Cannabis Policy Council.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2019, the Government of Ontario announced it would end the lottery system and move towards an open allocation model for private retail cannabis licenses beginning in January 2020. Ensuring a robust private retail market will not only generate more tax revenues, create jobs, and support the long-term viability of the sector, but is also critical to combatting the illicit market.

EXPANDING ALCOHOL SERVICE IN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

Ask: In our 2019 report, *Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario*, the OCC outlines the economic potential of allowing Ontario's international airports to sell beverage alcohol 24-hours a day, in post-security areas for both international and domestic partners.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2019, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 132, the *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act*, intended to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses. Among other things, this will permit licenced bars and restaurants in certain commercial airports located after airport security to serve alcohol to customers 24 hours a day. We are pleased to see the Government of Ontario move forward in joining other airports around the world.

IMPROVING THE REGULATORY PROCESS FOR ONTARIO'S MINING INDUSTRY

Ask: The OCC has long advocated for improvements to the regulatory environment as a means to strengthen the competitiveness of Ontario's mining sector. Recommendations to reduce regulatory uncertainty and costs are outlined in *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies and Digging Deeper: Strengthening Ontario's Mining Advantage*.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2019, the *Government of Ontario amended the Mining Act, 1990* to streamline processes to allow clients to merge mining claims and improve business certainty for proponents of the mining industry by requiring the government to acknowledge mine closure plan amendments within 45 days. These measures were introduced through Bill 132, the *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*.

REDUCING RED TAPE FOR DRUG MANUFACTURERS AND PHARMACIES

Ask: For years, Ontario's health and life sciences sectors have faced unnecessary reporting requirements. Drug manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies have had to fill entire rooms with binders of paperwork, known in the sector as the 'Ontario Binder Rooms,' to meet these requirements. This issue was raised at the OCC's Red Tape Roundtable in November 2018 and highlighted in our *red tape submission* to Giles Gherson, Deputy Minister of Red Tape and Regulatory Burden Reduction.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2019, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 132, the *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*. Among various other changes, Bill 132 proposes to reduce the regulatory burden for drug manufacturers and pharmacists by digitizing and streamlining reporting requirements. These changes will help bring down administrative costs and help protect the competitiveness of Ontario's health and life sciences sectors.

REDUCING THE AVIATION FUEL TAX IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ask: Since 2014, Ontario's aviation fuel tax increased by nearly 150 percent, making it the highest in Canada. This acts as a financial barrier to the movement of people and goods, particularly in northern and remote communities, where other forms of transportation may be infeasible. We outlined this challenge in our [blueprint letters](#) to cabinet ministers and our report, [Closing the Tourism Gap: Creating a Long-Term Advantage for Ontario](#).

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2019, the Government of Ontario passes the *Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019*. Among various other changes, the act reduces the aviation fuel tax rate in Northern Ontario to 2.7 cents per litre from the current 6.7 cents per litre, returning it to 2014 levels. While this is a good first step, the OCC would like to see the aviation fuel tax in all communities be lowered to match other Canadian provinces.

STREAMLINING APPROVALS FOR ONTARIO'S FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Ask: Consistent access to affordable wood is a challenge for Ontario's forestry sector. As a result of government restrictions, the industry's access to harvest volume is only sufficient to meet today's demand, leaving no room to grow Ontario's renewable forestry sector, despite a healthy and growing forest supply. In our 2018 [blueprint letters](#), the OCC calls on the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to increase reliable access to harvest volumes by removing made-in-Ontario barriers.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2019, the Government of Ontario amended the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994* to streamline the approvals process for cutting trees on Crown lands. This was one of several red tape measures introduced through Bill 132, the *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*.

ALLOWING REAL ESTATE SALESPEOPLE TO INCORPORATE

Ask: In 2017, the Ontario Chamber Network passed a resolution calling on the government to amend the *Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 (REBBA)* to allow real estate salespeople to incorporate. This policy would make it easier for real estate professionals to do business in Ontario.

- ✓ **Win:** In February 2020, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 145, the *Trust in Real Estate Services Act, 2020*. The Act made several changes to *REBBA*, which included laying the foundation for allowing real estate professionals to incorporate and be paid through the corporation while maintaining measures that protect consumers.

IMPROVING INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN ONTARIO

Ask: Indigenous peoples are essential partners in addressing Ontario's skills needs. Closing the gaps in educational and labour market outcomes between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations could increase Canada's GDP by up to \$36 billion per year by 2026. In 2017, the Ontario Chamber Network passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to identify and earmark the resources needed to ensure consistent operation and long-term sustainability of Ontario's Indigenous Institutes. This recommendation was echoed in the OCC's 2019 report on regional economic development, [The Great Mosaic](#).

- ✓ **Win:** In February 2020, the Government of Ontario announced it would increase annual funding by \$1.8 million to Indigenous Institutes. This funding will help the Institutes

provide high-quality education that responds to community and local labour market needs. Moving forward, the OCC would like to see the government fully implement Indigenous learner reporting mechanisms to allow for collection of reliable data needed to measure progress on academic achievement.

ROAD ACCESS TO THE RING OF FIRE

Ask: In our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*, the OCC highlighted the importance of investing in multi-use transportation infrastructure, including an all-season access road to the Ring of Fire. The report notes that, once completed, this road will serve an industrial purpose (providing access to the mining district) as well as a social one (connecting remote communities to other regions).

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2020, the Government of Ontario entered into a historic agreement with Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations to advance the planning and development of a proposed Northern Road Link.

CANNABIS INDUSTRY'S ACCESS TO COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDING

Ask: When the federal government initially rolled out its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, cannabis companies were excluded from accessing the Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP). On March 20, 2020, the OCC partnered with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and cannabis industry representatives to write *a letter* asking the government to give regulated cannabis companies equal access to stimulus funding.

- ✓ **Win:** On April 6, the Business Development Bank of Canada *announced* that all legal businesses – including regulated cannabis companies – would be eligible for the BCAP for the duration of the program.

CURBSIDE DELIVERY AND PICK-UP OF LEGAL CANNABIS DURING COVID-19

Ask: On April 4, 2020, as part of the Government of Ontario's efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, cannabis retail stores were ordered to close. On April 6, the OCC wrote *a letter* asking the Province to consider a regulatory amendment to the *Cannabis License Act* to allow cannabis retailers to deliver products purchased online or over the phone to a customer's residence (same-day delivery) or to the customer's vehicle outside of the licensed cannabis retail store (curbside pick-up). Our letter noted the consequences of limiting access to legal cannabis, including an expansion of the illicit market and financial hardship for independent retailers and their employees.

- ✓ **Win:** On April 7, the Government of Ontario issued an Emergency Order to temporarily allow authorized cannabis retail stores to offer delivery and curbside pick-up.

RELIEF FOR PENSION PLAN SPONSORS DURING COVID-19

Ask: During the COVID-19 crisis, the *OCC asked* for urgent relief to pension plan sponsors. Our letter recommended deferring pension benefit contributions and Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund premiums, freezing the level of required pension contributions for three years at pre-pandemic levels, and eliminating solvency funding.

- ✓ **Win:** On April 15, 2020, the Government of Canada announced it would provide immediate, temporary relief to sponsors of federally regulated, defined benefit pension

plans by introducing a moratorium on solvency payment requirements through the remainder of 2020. The government has also committed to consulting with stakeholders on options to provide relief from 2021 funding obligations, as necessary.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO CAPITAL DURING COVID-19

Ask: For years, access to capital has been a major limitation to Canadian business competitiveness, but the COVID-19 crisis added great urgency. The Government of Canada introduced the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) to help small businesses access interest-free loans during the pandemic. Initial eligibility criteria required companies to have between \$50,000 and \$1 million in T4 payroll, effectively excluding many small businesses that fall outside those bounds and/or rely on investment income. *The OCC asked* the federal government to expand the payroll criteria to provide relief to more small businesses.

- ✓ **Win:** On April 16, the Government of Canada expanded the CERB criteria to include companies with payroll between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million.

COMMERCIAL RENT ASSISTANCE DURING COVID-19

Ask: During the COVID-19 crisis, *the OCC urged* governments to provide rent relief to commercial tenants. We recommended a series of policy options, including a halt on commercial evictions and loans for commercial landlords.

- ✓ **Win:** On April 16, 2020, the Government of Canada announced its intention to introduce a Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) for small businesses. The program will seek to provide loans to commercial property owners who in turn will lower or forgo the rent of small businesses for the months of April (retroactive), May, and June.

DELAYING NEW REGULATIONS DURING COVID-19

Ask: During the COVID-19 crisis, organizations were overwhelmed with business continuity planning and supporting public health efforts. Their ability to respond to new regulations and participate in consultations was limited. In a *letter* to Premier Doug Ford on March 18, as well as subsequent communications with government, the OCC called on the Province to put a hold on all pending non-urgent regulatory proposals.

- ✓ **Win:** On April 28, the Government of Ontario announced it would pause or extend any ongoing public consultations, delay non-urgent related consultations during the emergency situation, and consider extending deadlines for reports and audits. These changes will allow businesses to focus on navigating and responding to the crisis.

SUPPORTING ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS DURING COVID-19

Ask: In April 2020, the OCC wrote to the Government of Ontario proposing a series of measures to address the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses' electricity rates. *Our letter* included a recommendation to adjust eligibility for the 2020/21 Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI), noting that customers that were on the cusp of eligibility would not qualify because of reduced demand in March and April due to the pandemic. We also recommended temporarily limiting increases in Global Adjustment (GA) charges for businesses during the crisis.

- ✓ **Win:** In May, the Government of Ontario moved forward with both recommendations. The Ontario Energy Board *amended* O. Reg. 429/04 under the *Electricity Act, 1998* to allow

consumers to qualify for the ICI if they would have satisfied conditions had the base period ended on February 29. The Province also *announced* that GA costs would be deferred for both Class A and Class B businesses. These measures will help businesses avoid some of the increased costs associated with the pandemic.

PREVENTING LAYOFFS DURING COVID-19

Ask: In April 2020, the OCC *recommended* the Government of Ontario temporarily amend the *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) to help prevent permanent layoffs due to COVID-19. The ESA allows employers to avoid notice and severance obligations when they lay off employees with the expectation that they will return, unless the layoff exceeds 13 weeks in a 20-week period. As it became clear that the COVID-19 crisis would continue for more than 13 weeks, the OCC encouraged the government to protect employers and businesses during an unprecedented period of disruption.

✓ **Win:** On June 1, the Government of Ontario *enacted* a new regulatory amendment to place non-unionized employees on Infectious Disease Emergency Leave during the COVID-19 outbreak any time their hours of work are temporarily reduced due to COVID-19. This will ensure businesses are not forced to terminate employees after their ESA temporary layoff periods have expired.

PATIO LIQUOR LICENSES DURING COVID-19

Ask: As businesses across Ontario prepared for the reopening phase of COVID-19, many restaurants and bards explored options to expand their outdoor patios and sidewalks to facilitate physical distancing among patrons. However, given the length of time it takes to receive a new or expanded liquor license from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO), many establishment owners would not receive the necessary license in time for patio season. The OCC raised this issue in a *letter* to the Government of Ontario on June 5, 2020, calling on the Province to expedite the approval process for restaurants and bars looking to obtain a seasonal liquor license and those who currently have a liquor license but need to expand to facilitate physical distancing.

✓ **Win:** On June 8, the Government of Ontario *announced* that it would allow restaurants and bars to temporarily extend licensed outdoor patio spaces once licensed establishments are permitted to fully reopen. The AGCO will not require licensees to apply or pay a fee for these temporary extensions, which will remain in effect until January 1, 2021. This measure will help support workers and businesses in the hospitality sector impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

MORATORIUM ON COMMERCIAL EVICTIONS DURING COVID-19

Ask: The COVID-19 crisis has challenged the ability of many small businesses and residents across Ontario to make their rent payments. Government support programs – while helpful – have been insufficient and too slow to protect many tenants from eviction. On March 26, after the Government of Ontario introduced a temporary ban on residential evictions, the OCC wrote a *letter* calling for the measure to be extended to commercial tenants. We *continued* to make this recommendation in the following months as the situation became increasingly dire for many businesses.

- ✓ **Win:** On June 17, the Government of Ontario *passed* the *Protecting Small Business Act*, temporarily halting or reversing evictions of commercial tenants and protecting them from being locked out or having their assets seized during COVID-19. The legislation applies to businesses that are eligible for federal/provincial rent assistance for evictions from May 1, 2020 until August 31, 2020.

A FINANCIAL LITERACY CURRICULUM FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Ask: Financial literacy is essential to the economic well-being and productivity of Ontarians. In our 2018 *Blueprint Letter* to the Minister of Education and in subsequent meetings with government, the OCC has continually emphasized the need to develop a comprehensive financial literacy curriculum for elementary- and secondary-level students in Ontario.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2020, the Government of Ontario *introduced* a new math curriculum for elementary school students. The updated curriculum includes a focus on financial literacy, as well as coding and computer programming skills, starting in Grade 1. It was developed over two years in consultation with parents, educators, and academics and will be available to students across the province beginning in September 2020.

INVESTING IN ONTARIO'S CIDERIES AND DISTILLERIES

Ask: In the OCC's *2019 report, Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol*, the Ontario Chamber expressed concerns about the end of the Small Cidery and Small Distillery Support Program. The program provided much needed financial support for these industries. Eligible cideries and distillers were granted up to 74 cents per litre on eligible sales, with up to a maximum of \$220,000 per year per producer. The end of the program in December 2018, however, put the growth of Ontario's craft cideries and distilleries in jeopardy. Not only does the craft cider and spirit industry rely on inputs from Ontario farms, like apples, pears, and grains, they also contribute to regional economic development, and almost \$13 million and \$1.5 billion respectively to the provincial GDP.

- ✓ **Win:** On June 17, 2020, the province *announced* it would extend the Small Cidery and Small Distillery Support Program to 2021-22, providing \$2.6 million annually to help eligible businesses grow and scale their operations. This interim measure will provide the funding needed to strengthen Ontario's craft cider and spirit industry. However, the OCC encourages the province to address long-standing taxation issues surrounding both industries as outlined in the 2019 report, to reduce the tax burden and ensure the competitiveness of craft producers.

SUPPORTING CRAFT DISTILLERS

Ask: In the OCC's *2019 report, Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol*, the Ontario Chamber recommended that LCBO stores provide craft distillers with dedicated shelf space/displays in the spirits category. This would help showcase made-in-Ontario products, improve consumer awareness of craft spirits, and better support local distillers. Craft distillers face a significant challenge as it relates to market access as they compete for shelf space with established, international brands. The current set-up makes it difficult for emerging Ontario craft distillers to compete and maintain their shelf space once they introduce a product in the LCBO.

- ✓ **Win:** On June 17, the province *announced* it would expand made-in-Ontario options at the LCBO, effective June 21 to October 2020. In its news release, the province notes LCBO locations would make more Ontario-made products available for sale, invest in increased

marketing to promote Ontario products, and convert available shelf space to profile Ontario products. This is a welcome step to support the recovery of local distillers, as well as Ontario wineries, breweries, and cideries.

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY IN ONTARIO

Ask: While broadband expansion has long been a priority for the OCC and its members, the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated its urgency as reliable internet connectivity has been a prerequisite to accessing everything from e-learning and healthcare, to working from home and selling products online. In April 2020, the OCC wrote a letter calling on the Government of Ontario to improve connectivity across the province by fast-tracking the \$150 million in provincial funding that was committed to a broadband and cellular infrastructure program, working with the federal government to speed up and augment existing investment programs, and collaborating with municipalities to boost Wi-Fi hotspots.

✓ **Win:** In June 2020, the Government of Ontario announced a new program – Improving Connectivity in Ontario (ICON) – to accelerate a \$150 million investment in reliable broadband and cellular service expansion. By leveraging partnerships with telecommunications companies, municipalities, and other partners, ICON has the potential to result in a total investment of up to \$500 million.

ONTARIO'S RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT

Ask: In meetings and consultations with Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the OCC has advocated for changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* to make the dispute resolution process more equitable for landlords, reflecting a policy resolution passed by the chamber network in 2017.

✓ **Win:** In July 2020, the Ontario government passed the *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020*, which will reform the *Residential Tenancies Act*. Among other things, these amendments will reduce delays in the dispute resolution process and allow landlords to recover costs when tenants act in bad faith.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ACTION PLAN

Ask: While Ontario excels at generating innovative research through its post-secondary institutions, it underperforms at commercializing that innovation. With Ontario producing fewer patents and other forms of intellectual property (IP) than its international peers, the OCC has long asserted that the province needs a commercialization strategy to avoid providing other countries with research that fuels their growth without realizing the benefits locally.

In early 2020, Ontario's Expert Panel on Intellectual Property made a series of recommendations to help mitigate the commercialization gap. In the OCC's recent report, *In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario*, we called on the Government of Ontario to immediately implement those recommendations.

✓ **Win:** In July 2020, the Government of Ontario announced a made-in-Ontario Intellectual Property Action Plan and establishment of a Special Implementation Team on Intellectual Property – comprised of the experts who previously served on Ontario's Expert Panel on Intellectual Property – to advise the implementation of the Action Plan. These measures will help ensure the tremendous social and economic benefits of research and innovation remain in Ontario.

CRTC WHOLESALE RATES

Ask: Broadband expansion – a top priority for the OCC and its members – will require continued private sector investments. In 2019, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) reduced the wholesale rates Internet resellers pay to use the networks of facilities-based carriers. In a *letter* to the Government of Canada, the OCC expressed concern about the new rates, which would require facilities-based carriers to incur a negative rate of return and therefore reduce their investments in broadband networks, especially in rural and remote areas.

- ✓ **Win:** In August 2020, the Government of Canada *recognized* the 2019 wholesale rates would undermine private sector investment in high-quality networks. The rates are currently being reconsidered, and the government has emphasized its expectation for a more appropriate balance among the complementary objectives of improved consumer choice and competition, further investment in high-quality networks, innovative service offerings and reasonable prices for consumers.

ONTARIO'S FOREST SECTOR STRATEGY

Ask: The OCC has long called on the government to develop a strategy that will unlock the potential of Ontario's forest industry. In particular, our recommendations have emphasized the need to increase sustainable access to wood and protect public forest access roads. Our asks are outlined in several policy resolutions, a *letter* to government, and *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.

- ✓ **Win:** In August 2020, the Government of Ontario released *Sustainable Growth: Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy*, a plan to create jobs and encourage economic growth in the forest industry. The strategy includes plans to remove barriers to accessing wood, invest in critical infrastructure (including forest access roads), enable technology adoption, and more.

PROMOTING THE SKILLED TRADES AMONG YOUTH

Ask: Addressing skills mismatches in the trades is essential to Ontario's economic prosperity, but youth and their parents are often unaware of how lucrative and rewarding a career in the trades can be. The OCC has emphasized this issue consistently in our advocacy with the Government of Ontario and made it a priority in our 2018 *Blueprint Letters to Cabinet Ministers*.

- ✓ **Win:** In August 2020, the Government of Ontario *announced* new investments to attract and train youth in the skilled trades, including additional funding for Skills Ontario and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. The Province also announced the appointment of three Youth Advisors to engage with youth, educators, business, parents, and other stakeholders to reduce stigma and make the trades a viable first choice for young people.



RESOLUTIONS TRACKER

The policy resolutions passed by the Ontario Chamber Network represent the cornerstone of the OCC's policy and advocacy work. Every year, we take stock of how the OCC has seen progress on each resolution.

COMPETITIVENESS

Expanding Ontario's Trade Capacity through Maximizing Export Market Opportunities in Japan

- ✓ **Action:** The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) entered into force between Japan and Canada in December 2018. The OCC continued to explore the topic of trade opportunities in the Pacific with a panel at its 2019 Ontario Economic Summit, which featured Takako Ito, the Consul-General of Japan in Toronto.

Creating Northern Ontario Economic Hubs, Technology Clusters and the Innovation Ecosystem

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC offered several policy recommendations to help drive technology adoption and cluster development in Northern Ontario in its 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.

In the Spirit of Business

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2019 report, *Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario*, contained a series of policy recommendations aimed at modernizing Ontario's beverage alcohol system and leveling the playing field across all four categories: beer, wine, cider, and spirits. The specific asks made in this resolution were included in the report

Addressing the challenges of Ontario's largest economic sector: Small Business

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario has continued to emphasize the needs of small businesses in its red tape reduction initiatives. In 2019, it launched a website that allows businesses to directly submit their ideas on regulatory modernization and the government is currently in the process of developing a Small Business Success Strategy. As the OCC participates in consultations, we will use this resolution, among others, to inform our recommendations.

Helping Industries and Communities Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario cancelled the cap-and-trade program in 2018.

Reducing Energy Costs in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** In June 2019, the OCC wrote a submission to inform the government's review of industrial electricity rates, in which we offered feedback on the Industrial Conservation Initiative, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program, and Market Renewal. In 2020, the OCC continues to advocate for energy affordability through its newly formed Ontario Energy Council.

Lowering Ontario's Energy Costs for a more Competitive Province

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario has implemented a few of the recommendations in this resolution, including canceling the *Green Energy Act*, showing the Global Adjustment as a separate line item on electricity bills, and reviewing generation contracts. In June 2019, the OCC wrote a submission to inform the government's review of industrial electricity rates, in which we offered feedback on the Industrial Conservation Initiative, the Northern

Industrial Electricity Rate program, and Market Renewal. In 2020, the OCC continues to advocate for energy affordability through its newly formed Ontario Energy Council.

Making the Ontario Energy Board Hearing Process More Accessible

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019, the Government of Ontario passed the *Fixing the Hydro Mess Act*, which will reform OEB governance and help the board fulfill its mandate of consumer protection and rate mitigation.

Improving Canada's Trade Policy for Greater Business Prosperity in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continuously advocated for both a deepening of trade ties with the United States while also diversifying our trade portfolio where possible. To that end, the OCC has hosted a series of trade events with other countries and the Ontario government to help establish and strengthen those trade ties.

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

- ✓ **Action:** In our 2020 pre-Budget submission, we continued to call on the government to improve the productivity of Ontario's public sector economy by deploying a commissioning approach – where appropriate – to improve the design of service delivery value chains.

Advance Ontario's Bioeconomy

- ✓ **Action:** In our 2020 federal pre-Budget submission, the OCC recommends that the Government of Canada work with both public and private stakeholders to develop a national bioeconomy strategy.

Putting Wood to Work for Ontarians

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario released a draft forestry strategy in 2019. Our policy report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*, specifically called on government to release socioeconomic impact analyses of all new regulations.

Improving Digital Services and Identity for Ontario Businesses

- ✓ **Action:** The Ontario government is moving forward with digitization through its Building Smarter Government Initiative, the *Simpler, Faster, Better Services Act, 2019*, and other efforts. As of 2019, Ontario is allowing insurers to offer an electronic option for proof of auto insurance.

Address Ontario-Quebec Economic Mobility

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC signed an MOU with the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ) which outlines eight areas to strengthen trade and economic cooperation between Quebec and Ontario. Specifically, the MOU calls on both chambers to actively seek opportunities to harmonize interprovincial regulatory differences and eliminate trade barriers to enable greater economic mobility.

Make Carbon Pricing Revenue Neutral

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to call on the federal and provincial governments to design revenue-neutral carbon pricing policies that protect the competitiveness of businesses in energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries. The output-based performance

standard regimes introduced by both the federal and provincial governments include such provisions. The OCC also co-authored a resolution, which passed at the 2019 Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM, calling on the federal government to direct carbon tax revenues towards efforts that directly facilitate businesses' transition to a low-carbon economy.

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

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario cancelled the cap-and-trade program in 2018.

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

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019, the Government of Ontario directed the IESO to review existing generation contracts to identify opportunities to lower electricity costs (through the Global Adjustment). The Province is currently reviewing the outcome of that process. In 2020, the OCC continues to advocate for energy affordability through its newly formed Ontario Energy Council.

Scale back the "One-size fits all" Scheduling Provision of Bill 148

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's campaign against Bill 148 successfully led to the near-full repeal of the legislation in November 2018.

Correct Calculations for Statutory Holiday Pay

- ✓ **Action:** In 2018, the Ontario government announced it would return to the previous public holiday pay formula.

Mitigating the impact of Bill 148

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's campaign against Bill 148 successfully led to the near-full repeal of the legislation in November 2018.

Improving the Process for Establishing Regulations That Impact Business

- ✓ **Action:** As the Ontario government pursues its commitment to reducing the regulatory burden on businesses by 25 percent by 2022, the OCC has continued to advocate for regulatory harmonization and cost-benefit analyses directly with the government and various submissions, including our letter regarding the 2019 Fall Economic Statement.

Support Ontario's Steel Industry and its Supply Chain Clusters

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2019 report, The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies, offered recommendations to support value-add cluster development, including investments in trade-enabling infrastructure near major steel clusters.

Supporting Ontario to Become a Leader in Global Mining Innovation

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2019 report, The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies, called on the Ontario government to support mining sector innovation by further reducing regulatory barriers and investing in commercialization and technology adoption within the sector.

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

- ✓ **Action:** The recommendations made in this resolution were echoed in the OCC's 2019 report, *Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario*, which contained a series of policy solutions aimed at modernizing Ontario's beverage alcohol system and leveling the playing field across all four categories: beer, wine, cider, and spirits.

Ensuring Access to Export Markets for SMEs

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has engaged with Export Development Canada and the Insurance Bureau of Canada on this issue.

Fair Business Practices to Ensure Ontario Stays Competitive

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has spoken with the provincial government about the need to protect investor confidence with fair contract terms and commit to greater transparency around contract cancellations.

Keeping Ontario's Small Business Support Services Strong

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC asked for long-term funding for Ontario's Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBECs) in our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.

Reducing Permitting Delays in Mining Exploration

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019, the Government of Ontario amended the *Mining Act, 1990* to streamline processes to allow clients to merge mining claims and improve business certainty for proponents of the mining industry by requiring the government to acknowledge mine closure plan amendments within 45 days. These measures were introduced through the *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*.

Support for free market opportunities to address high electricity prices

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's recently formed Ontario Energy Council continues to advocate for energy policies that balance innovation, affordability, flexibility, and reliability for different classes of ratepayers.

FISCAL/ TAXATION

Maintaining Provincial Tax Exemptions on Employer Health and Dental Plans

- ✓ **Action:** The government has maintained provincial tax exemptions on employer health and dental plans, as recommended in our 2019 pre-Budget submission.

Reforming Ontario Auto Rate Regulation for Competitive Insurance

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has participated in several consultations with the Ontario government in an effort to reduce red tape and modernize compliance systems, including with respect to the auto industry.

Protect Public Sector Services by Monitoring the Public Sector's Total Compensation Premium

- ✓ **Action:** In its 2019 Budget, the government promised to implement a new approach to managing compensation within the public sector as part of its broader plan to improve the fiscal sustainability of its programs and services.

Increasing Transparency in Crown Corporation Divestment

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has spoken to the Government of Ontario about adopting a comprehensive and transparent policy on asset recycling.

Protect Canadian Business by keeping the De Minimis Threshold Low

- ✓ **Action:** The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) increases Canada's de minimis threshold from \$20 to \$150 for duties and \$40 for sales taxes.

Collecting 'Share' Revenue

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC contributed to the Government of Ontario's final report on *The Changing Workplaces Review* published in 2019.

Ontario's Debt Reduction Strategy

- ✓ **Action:** The Ontario government laid out a plan in Budget 2019 to balance the budget by 2023-4. In light of COVID-19, the OCC has focused its 2020 pre-Budget submission on policy recommendations designed to enable economic growth while improving fiscal responsibility, including through alternative finance and service delivery.

Essential Service Designation for Provincially Funded Transit Services

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has advocated to fix the interest arbitration system to reflect the current capacity of municipalities to pay for increased service costs, including in our 2019 Provincial Pre-Budget submission.

Unrealized "Heads and Beds Levy" hurts Ontario's Economic Competitiveness

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's upcoming report on municipal revenue tools will address municipal financing and competitiveness challenges.

Maintaining Ontario Mining Tax Rates

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario has maintained mining tax rates, as recommended in our 2019 pre-Budget submission. The OCC has continued to advocate for the importance of mining sector competitiveness, including in our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.

Addressing US Tax Cuts and Maintaining Ontario Business Competitiveness

- ✓ **Action:** Our 2020 federal pre-Budget submission called for a comprehensive review of Canada's tax system. As promised, the Government of Ontario has made progress reducing the regulatory burden by releasing biannual reform packages.

Cannabis Excise Tax

- ✓ **Action:** As a result of OCC advocacy, the Ontario government agreed to help municipalities offset the costs associated with the legalization and distribution of cannabis in Ontario by providing them with \$40 million over two years and 50 percent of Ontario's portion of the federal excise duty if the surplus exceeds \$100 million.

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

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's upcoming report on municipal revenue tools will address municipal financing and competitiveness challenges.

Protect tourism industry competitiveness within the Municipal Accommodation Tax

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2019 provincial pre-Budget submission called on the government to cap the Municipal Accommodation Tax at four percent and allow businesses that pay the tax to participate in the oversight and distribution of the tourism-focused portion of revenues.

Auto Insurance Reform: Making Premiums Affordable

- ✓ **Action:** Ontario's Budget 2019 committed to substantial reforms for the auto insurance sector, with a view to reduce fraud, reform medical assessment, improve access to legal supports, allow insurers and consumers to utilize electronic communications channels, enable electronic proof of auto insurance, introduce new business models, and make it easier for insurance companies to offer discounts. The OCC will continue to advocate for the delivery of these reforms.

Getting Ontario Back to Fiscal Balance

- ✓ **Action:** The Ontario government laid out a plan in Budget 2019 to balance the budget by 2023-4. In light of COVID-19, the OCC has focused its 2020 pre-Budget submission on policy recommendations designed to enable economic growth while improving fiscal responsibility, including through alternative finance and service delivery.

INFRASTRUCTURE/ TRANSPORTATION

Link Investment in Core Infrastructure to Productivity Performance and Enhancement

- ✓ **Action:** Our 2020 provincial pre-Budget submission emphasized the need for principled investments in growth-enabling infrastructure, delivered in partnership with the private sector. Our Infrastructure Council developed principles for investment (including how it is linked to productivity and economy growth), as well as met with the Canada Infrastructure Bank to determine how chambers can support improved funding for municipal projects.

Empower all Municipalities to Build and Maintain Essential Infrastructure

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's forthcoming Municipal Revenue Tools Report will examine the revenue generation tools and methods available to local governments in Ontario and assess them for their ability to efficiently and effectively fund the services and investments controlled by the government. Being a critical capital investment, the ability of, and efficiency by which, local governments can fund and maintain essential infrastructure will be underscored in the report.

Addressing the impact of Climate Change on Transportation Infrastructure in Ontario's Far North

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario has launched the province's first ever multi-sector assessment of how climate change will affect Ontario's infrastructure and communities. The assessment will be complete in 2022.

Addressing the Niagara to GTA Transportation Corridor

- ✓ **Action:** In August 2020, the Ontario government announced that it will add 84 more train trips and extend 65 existing train trips each week across GO Transit's network, providing more rush-hour, midday, and evening service. As part of this announcement, the Province announced new, year-long weekend GO Train service between Niagara Falls and Union Station. This brings GO train service to Niagara Falls seven days a week.

Support for Metrolinx Big Move and 'Next Wave' Priority Projects

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2018 transportation report, *Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*, urged the Ontario government to support Metrolinx and unlock its potential to improve integration between regional transit services in the GTHA. Transportation infrastructure continues to be a priority for the OCC in 2020-21.

Regional Transportation Fare Integration

- ✓ **Action:** In March 2020, the OCC participated in a roundtable discussion with Ministers Surma and Sarkaria to discuss transit-oriented communities in the GTHA. The OCC shared findings from recent reports, including emphasizing the need to not lose sight of the transit and transportation needs in other parts of the province, the importance of adopting technology for future subway lines, and how investing in transit can alleviate congestion on the roads to allow for goods movement.

Goods and People Movement Long-Range, Multimodal, Integrated Transportation Plan

- ✓ **Action:** Ontario is in the process of developing region-specific transportation plans and has so far released its first plan for Southwestern Ontario. The OCC will continue advocating for a province-wide plan with a comprehensive approach to goods movement, as recommended in our 2018 report, *Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*.

Develop a Provincial Long-Term Broadband Strategy

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to prioritize accelerated expansion in our advocacy. Most recently, we championed broadband expansion in our COVID-19 advocacy, federal and provincial pre-Budget submissions, meetings with the Ministry of Infrastructure, and *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*. In response to COVID-19, the Government of Ontario announced Improving Connectivity in Ontario (ICON), a new program to accelerate a \$150 million investment in reliable broadband and cellular service expansion and leverage partnerships with telecommunications companies and municipalities.

Providing transportation for small communities to help Small Businesses move and employ people

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2018 report – *Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs* – recommended that the Province help smaller municipal governments develop innovative solutions and engage in public-private partnerships to address transportation needs. In March 2020, Ontario announced \$365 million to expand and improve local transportation. Through the Gas Tax program, 111 municipalities will receive funding to upgrade infrastructure, purchase vehicles, add more routes, extend hours of service, and increase accessibility.

Land Use Planning, Housing Affordability and Talent Attraction

- ✓ **Action:** In 2020, the Province updated the Provincial Policy Statement to give municipalities greater flexibility over density requirements and help ensure an adequate supply of land on which to build more housing. Additionally, the government passed the *More Homes, More Choice Act in 2019*, with reforms designed to shorten approvals, incentivize the building of a variety of housing types, and provide certainty in the calculation of development levies.

Maximizing Growth in Built Areas

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to advocate for a balance between intensification and heritage preservation as the Ontario government updates the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Provincial Policy Statement, and regulations around development. We will continue to meet with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to offer recommendations on the network's behalf.

Amend the Ontario Labour Relations Act to Enable Fair and Open Tendering for Public Infrastructure Projects

- ✓ **Action:** In April 2019, Ontario passed the *Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018*. Among other things, this will amend the *Labour Relations Act* to explicitly classify public bodies, including municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities, as non-construction employers. This will enable fair and open tendering for public infrastructure projects.

Reinvest in Our Communities - Ontario Version of the Michigan Community Revitalization Program

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019-20, the OCC called on the Ontario government to introduce a Rural Investment Tax Credit to encourage private-sector investment into communities across the province. This ask was included in our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*. Community revitalization will remain a priority for the OCC going forward.

Encouraging Municipal Government Collaboration to Address Transit Needs and Gaps

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC advocated for this resolution in our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.

Enhancing Highway Connectivity

- ✓ **Action:** In August 2019, Ontario's Ministry of Transportation announced that it would be moving forward with the Bradford Bypass.

Improve Ontario's Transportation System with Better Quality Roadways

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019-20, the OCC advocated for better quality roadways in meetings with the Ministry of Transportation and in our report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.

Investing in Northern Ontario's Highway Infrastructure

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC highlighted the importance of investing in Northern Ontario's transportation infrastructure in *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies, Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*, and meetings with the Ministry of Transportation.

SKILLS

Implementing an Innovative Approach for the Regulation of Skilled Trades

- ✓ **Action:** The Province dissolved the Ontario College of Trades in 2018. The OCC has continued to advocate for effective oversight of skilled trades, including through its Workforce Development Council.

Improving Indigenous Education in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC called on the Ontario government to provide long-term funding for Indigenous Institutes in our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*. In February 2020, the Government of Ontario announced it would increase annual funding for Indigenous Institutes by \$1.8 million.

Promoting Skilled Trades by Ensuring an Adequate Supply of Secondary School Technical Teachers

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's Workforce Development Council has met with government officials at both the provincial and federal level to discuss a range of issues including various different avenues to promote and educate children and parents on the importance of skilled trades.

Implementing a Moratorium on School Closures

- ✓ **Action:** While school closure decisions are ultimately the purview of school boards, the OCC has repeatedly underscored the importance of ensuring that rural and remote communities in Ontario have access to education and better infrastructure such as broadband internet connection and upgraded rural road networks.

Providing Post-Secondary Students with the Supports Needed to Gain Employment

- ✓ **Action:** The federal and provincial governments are both investing in new internships and experiential learning opportunities to connect employers with post-secondary students before graduation. Many of these commitments were outlined in the 2019 Budgets. Workforce development continues to be an advocacy priority for the OCC, with recommendations offered in our 2020 pre-Budget submissions and through our Workforce Development Council.

Creating Pan-Canadian Training and Certification Standards

- ✓ **Action:** Harmonization of certification standards was emphasized as a priority in our 2020 provincial pre-Budget submission. The OCC's Workforce Development Council has participated in a number of government consultations and discussions in which this issue was raised.

Strengthening Labour Market Information for Business Competitiveness

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC offered recommendations to strengthen labour market information in its 2020 federal and provincial pre-Budget submissions.

Closing the Skills Gap

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to call on governments to invest in skills development, including recent recommendations in our 2020 provincial and federal pre-Budget submissions, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*, and through our Workforce Development Council.

Open Canada Ontario Job Grant Eligibility to Small Business Owners

- ✓ **Action:** Our 2020 federal and provincial pre-Budget submissions called on the government to increase the supports available to small businesses and non-profit organizations that have fewer resources available to dedicate to skills development.

Improve Workforce Competitiveness by Adopting Select for Success as a Vital Support Service for Small Business owners in Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres

- ✓ **Action:** Our 2019 federal election document (*Business Priorities for the Incoming Federal Government*) called on the Government of Canada to promote Select for Success and scale the program to engage a broader number of businesses.

Reform of Ontario Apprenticeships and Retraining

- ✓ **Action:** The Province took steps to improve the apprenticeship system through Bill 47 (the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018*) by dissolving the Ontario College of Trades and lowering the journey person-to-apprenticeship ratios to 1:1 across all trades. The OCC continues to advocate for a stronger apprenticeship system through our Workforce Development Council and with specific asks related to apprenticeships in our 2020 provincial pre-Budget submission.

Closing the Gap on Financial Literacy for Ontario's Youth

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019, the Government of Ontario announced a new education plan, which included mandatory elementary- and secondary-level courses on financial literacy.

Addressing Local Labour Market Needs through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program

- ✓ **Action:** The federal and provincial governments both introduced regional immigration pilot programs in 2019 to help address local labour market needs. The OCC has also asked for an expansion to the list of eligible National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes in our 2020 federal pre-Budget submission, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Regional Economies*, and federal election document (*Business Priorities for the Incoming Federal Government*).

Address the Growing Labour Force Disconnect by Creating a Stronger Business/Commerce Curriculum

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019, the Government of Ontario announced a new education plan, which included mandatory elementary- and secondary-level courses on financial literacy.

Improve Workforce Competitiveness for Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres by Creating a Flexible Apprenticeship Program

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC called for a flexible apprenticeship system to address local workforce development needs in our 2020 provincial pre-Budget submission.

Addressing Ontario's Skills Gap at the Secondary School Level

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's Workforce Development Council met with Ontario's Minister of Education and members of the Council had the opportunity to underscore the importance of educating and promoting skilled trades at the secondary school level, noting that the audience for this education extends beyond students and must also include parents and guidance counsellors.

Keeping the Best Pieces of the Ontario College of Trades in the Wind Down

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has discussed the wind down of the Ontario College of Trades with the provincial government and recommended that the government retain the public registry and create clear pathways for international and interprovincial skilled tradespeople to transition easily into Ontario's workforce.

Strengthen Connectivity Between Businesses and Post-Secondary Institutions

- ✓ **Action:** Recommendations to strengthen connectivity between businesses and post-secondary institutions were most recently made in the OCC's 2020 provincial pre-Budget submission.



SPECIAL ISSUES

Personal Real Estate Corporations

- ✓ **Action:** Bill 145, the *Trust in Real Estate Services Act, 2020*, laid the foundation for allowing real estate professionals to incorporate and be paid through the corporation while maintaining measures that protect consumers.

Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act

- ✓ **Action:** In July 2020, the Ontario government passed the *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020*, which will reform the *Residential Tenancies Act*. Among other things, these amendments will reduce delays in the dispute resolution process and allow landlords to recover costs when tenants act in bad faith.

Providing More Clarity for Industry's Duty to Consult

- ✓ **Action:** Our 2019 federal election document (*Business Priorities for the Incoming Federal Government*) called for the establishment of a duty to consult and accommodate framework that clearly and consistently defines the roles, expectations, and rights of the Crown, Indigenous peoples, and industry.

Remove Requirement for Canadian Directors on Ontario Corporations

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has advocated for policies at the provincial and federal level that would improve Ontario's competitiveness and our ability to attract foreign direct investment. The OCC's 2019 Ontario Economic Report noted Canada's share of global FDI has declined over the years and urged the government to reduce barriers to FDI that will help Ontario become a more attractive place for both domestic and international firms to invest.

Finding Balance in the Endangered Species Act and Crown Forest Sustainability Act

- ✓ **Action:** In February 2019, the OCC prepared a submission recommending that the Province formally recognize equivalency between the *Endangered Species Act* and the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* and to ensure all species at risk policies and prescriptions are subject to socioeconomic impact analyses. The Government of Ontario released a forestry strategy in August 2020 – *Sustainable Growth: Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy* – which includes a plan to remove barriers to accessing wood.

Fairness for Businesses in Customer Initiated Transactions

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC will endeavour to take appropriate action on this issue in the future.

Workplace Mental Health Strategy

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to promote its mental health toolkit for employers and support programs and campaigns originating from our members dedicated to raising awareness and improving mental wellness practices in the workplace.

Canadian Nuclear Innovation

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to support the advocacy efforts of its nuclear members this year, building on our energy and environment work from previous years. This includes ongoing engagements with the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council and through our own Ontario Energy Council.

Province of Ontario Wide Load Permit

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has continued to support efforts to harmonize regulation between jurisdictions and eliminate barriers that present a financial burden for companies in Ontario to do business. The OCC will continue its work to reduce red tape where possible, including with respect to Ontario's Provincial Wide Load Permit System.

Expanding Ontario's Leadership on Climate Change Mitigation through Supporting Net-Zero Homebuilding

- ✓ **Action:** In June 2020, the OCC made several recommendations around energy efficiency in a letter to Minister Rickford, including net-zero building codes and retrofit programs. The OCC's Energy Council will continue to advocate for energy efficient infrastructure as a cornerstone of Ontario's sustainable economy.

Increasing Democracy in Ontario's Workplaces

- ✓ **Action:** Through Bill 47, the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018*, the Ontario government returned to previous union certification policies in place before Bill 148.

Bill 2, Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2018

- ✓ **Action:** In 2018, the Ontario government introduced Bill 50, the *Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act*. If passed, it will amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to allow certain auto dealers to license vehicles directly.

Protect Employers Rights to Screen for Police Records

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC will endeavour to take appropriate action on this issue in the future.

Addressing Employment Standards Act

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC will continue to advocate for transparency and fairness as it relates to employer rights under the *Employment Standards Act*, including in instances where a claim is filed with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the employer does not receive it.

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

- ✓ **Action:** In February 2019, the OCC prepared a submission recommending that the Province formally recognize equivalency between the *Endangered Species Act and the*

Crown Forest Sustainability Act and to ensure all species at risk policies and prescriptions are subject to socioeconomic impact analyses. The Government of Ontario released a forestry strategy in August 2020 – *Sustainable Growth: Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy* – which includes a plan to remove barriers to accessing wood.

Brownfield Act Overhaul

- ✓ **Action:** In December 2019, the government introduced several amendments to Ontario's Brownfield Regulation (O. Reg. 153/04) to facilitate a more flexible approach to obtaining approvals for redevelopment.

Forestry Strategy: Fireproofing Communities through Public Forest Access Roads

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario released a forestry strategy in August 2020 – *Sustainable Growth: Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy* – which includes commits to protecting critical forest access road infrastructure. Our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*, called on the government to reinstate the original funding level to ensure Forest Access Roads can continue to facilitate economic activity in the North.

Taking a Principled Approach to Growth and the Planning Process

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019-20, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing updated the Provincial Policy Statement, passed the *More Homes, More Choice Act*, and reviewed various growth plans and regulations around development to help reduce red tape and support principled economic growth in communities across Ontario. The OCC participated in several consultations to inform the outcomes of these reviews.

Improving Support for Employers

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC has called on the Ontario government to ensure that all businesses looking for support and information on how to comply with different regulations and obligations are able to do so, be that under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* or the Ontario Human Rights Code.

THE OCC POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAMS

ASHLEY CHALLINOR

Vice President, Policy

647-243-3538 | ashleychallinor@occ.ca

DANIEL SAFAYENI

Director, Policy

647-243-3543 | danielsafayeni@occ.ca

CATRINA KRONFLI

Senior Policy Analyst

647-243-3560 | catrinakronfli@occ.ca

CLAUDIA DESSANTI

Senior Policy Analyst

647-243-0882 | claudiadessanti@occ.ca

MICHELLE EATON

Vice President, Public Affairs

647-243-3556 | michelleaton@occ.ca

CEARA COPPS-EDWARDS

Manager, Public Affairs

647-243-3562 | cearacoppsedwards@occ.ca

ARIEL BENJAMIN

Specialist, Public Affairs

647-243-3561 | arielbenjamin@occ.ca

JAEHEE RHO

Junior Graphic Designer

647-243-3545 | jaeheerho@occ.ca



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