

**POLICY
REPORT
CARD
2021/22**



ontario
chamber of
commerce

CONTENTS

LETTER TO THE CHAMBER NETWORK	3
ADVOCACY WINS	5
ADVOCACY IN ACTION	38
POLICY AND ADVOCACY COUNCILS	42
PUBLICATIONS	47
EVENTS.....	57
RESOLUTIONS TRACKER.....	63
THE OCC POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAMS....	81



LETTER TO THE CHAMBER NETWORK

As Ontario's largest business advocate, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has long been recognized as the indispensable partner of business. Each year, we work with local chambers of commerce and boards of trade across the province to make a meaningful impact on businesses and the broader economy.

This year, the network demonstrated its value in spades. Together, we supported businesses as they continued to navigate the impacts of the pandemic, advocating for policies to support a safe and sustainable reopening and lay the groundwork for a robust economic recovery.

The [2022 Ontario Economic Report](#) outlined our latest insights into the challenges facing Ontario's business community, including labour shortages, inflation, and supply chain disruptions. The interactive report contains regional and sector-specific data on business confidence, policy priorities, and economic indicators to help inform policymakers and business leaders on the path to economic recovery.

To continue supporting businesses directly throughout the pandemic, we released practical resources, including a [COVID-19 Government Supports Resource](#) and a [Vax-Pass Tenets](#) framework for businesses looking to implement a vaccine mandate. Moreover, our [Mental Health Playbook](#) contained practical tools for employers to support the well-being of their employees.

Our policy pipeline has continued to evolve in tandem with the economic backdrop. The [Better Budgets](#) report provided recommendations to strengthen the fiscal capacity of municipalities as they face growing pressure on their budgets, including solutions to improve property taxes, intergovernmental transfers, and accountability.

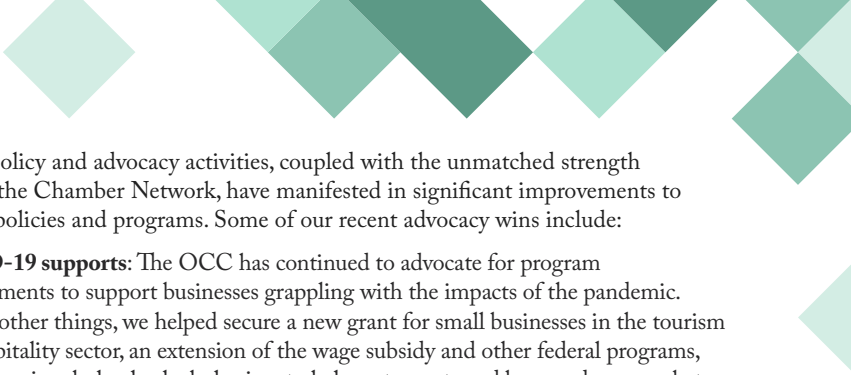
Another priority was access to capital among small businesses. Our [Capital is Key](#) paper looked at policies to finance entrepreneurship, with a focus on sectors that are less well-financed through the market.

We launched a [Climate Action Series](#), comprised of a comprehensive policy report and a series of virtual events on cleantech, hydrogen, small modular reactors, the natural resource sectors, zero-emission vehicles, and climate-proofing strategies for small businesses.

Further, we have continued producing letters and submissions to inform policymakers on a range of issues, including a [safe and sustainable reopening](#), [the iGaming initiative](#), [a health human resources strategy](#), [biomass](#), [inducements in the cannabis industry](#), [digital health](#), and [more](#).

We also completed two commissioned reports. The first report, [Filling the Talent Gap in Ontario's Food and Beverage Manufacturing Sector](#), explores local barriers and opportunities to address the shortage of workers in Brampton's food and beverage manufacturing sector. The second report evaluates the value of Ontario's aggregates industry and the economic and environmental impacts of shifting aggregate production further from markets.

Our [Policy and Advocacy Councils](#) have continued to meet throughout the year to shape the OCC's activities around health, workforce development, cannabis, energy, and infrastructure. We also launched a new product, Policy Primers, intended to provide succinct overviews of timely policy issues, accompanied by calls to action. Our first two policy primers focused on [Ontario's growing electricity needs](#) and [supply chain disruptions](#).



The OCC's policy and advocacy activities, coupled with the unmatched strength and reach of the Chamber Network, have manifested in significant improvements to government policies and programs. Some of our recent advocacy wins include:

- **COVID-19 supports:** The OCC has continued to advocate for program improvements to support businesses grappling with the impacts of the pandemic. Among other things, we helped secure a new grant for small businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector, an extension of the wage subsidy and other federal programs, a reduction in wholesale alcohol prices to help restaurants and bars, and a new rebate program for property tax and energy costs.
- **Workforce development:** As labour shortages and skills gaps continued to grow across sectors, the OCC worked with policymakers to implement critical workforce supports. These included an expansion of post-secondary healthcare programs, a temporary Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit, several federal investments, free skills training for newcomers and underrepresented groups, and administrative changes to the Temporary Foreign Workers program.
- **Low-carbon infrastructure:** Leveraging opportunities in the green economy is a priority for the OCC and its members. Our wins included new investments in electric vehicle supply chains and charging infrastructure, industrial retrofits, public transit, and several clean energy projects across Ontario.
- **Women and childcare:** On the heels of the OCC's [*She-Covery report*](#), we succeeded in advocating for a historic Ontario-Canada childcare agreement, investments in women entrepreneurs, inclusive economy task forces, and funding for women's reskilling.

Beyond influencing government, the OCC has engaged regularly with the public in media interviews, op-eds, and presentations to help influence public debate. Over the past year, the OCC has received 8,408 media hits across local, provincial and federal outlets.

As we gear up for the 2022 provincial election and its aftermath, the coming year promises to be another busy one. We will continue to work with our network and the business community to provide non-partisan advocacy and analysis during the election campaign and inform post-election mandates for Ontario's next government.

Our advocacy is only effective because of the many contributions of the Ontario Chamber Network. Your insight, experience, connections, and voice make our work stronger and maximize our reach. The current crisis has further emphasized the importance of our network. Thank you for your ongoing support of the OCC and commitment to the chamber movement. The OCC looks forward to working with you all as we help build Ontario on the path to recovery.

Sincerely,

The OCC Policy and Public Affairs Teams

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.



ADVOCACY WINS

The Ontario Chamber Network has achieved over 100 advocacy wins since the beginning of the pandemic, resulting in critical policy changes for business during the crisis. The following advocacy wins occurred between the release of our 2021 Policy Report Card and April 2022.

BRINGING PARITY TO FARMERS MARKETS BY PERMITTING THE SALE OF CRAFT BEER

Ask: In [Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario](#), the OCC examined the challenges facing wine, cider, spirits, and craft beer producers. The report urged the province to take a strategic and comprehensive approach to foster a more equitable and competitive beverage alcohol landscape. Our recommendations included that the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario allows Ontario craft beer (and spirits) producers to sell their products at farmers' markets.

- ✓ **Win:** In [Budget 2021](#), the Ontario government announced that local craft beer producers would be able to sell their products at farmers' markets in the upcoming season. This announcement provides local craft beer producers and breweries with access to a new sales channel, as well as the opportunity to reach new customers and grow their operations. Moreover, the announcement aligns with the OCC's 2019 report, which urged the province to eliminate disparities at farmers' markets for craft beer and spirits producers. On December 9, 2020, the Province [announced](#) it would permit the sale of spirits at farmers' markets. The OCC is therefore pleased to see the Ontario government continue to bring parity across all four categories of beverage alcohol.

TASK FORCE ON INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Ask: Following the pandemic's disproportionate impacts on women in Ontario, the OCC has underscored that women's issues must be front and centre in economic recovery planning. In [The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#) and briefings with decision-makers, we have called on the Government of Ontario to have women represented in decision-making regarding economic recovery and develop committees to tackle specific challenges around childcare, workforce development, and flexible work.

- ✓ **Win:** In Budget 2021, the Ontario government announced that Ontario's Minister of Finance and the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues would establish a task force to ensure inclusive economic growth. The mandate of this group will seek to address the unique and disproportionate economic barriers women face, particularly in an economy that will look different after COVID-19.

ADDRESSING TRANSPORTATION NEEDS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ask: In [Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#), the OCC examined how mass transit service within Northern Ontario has been significantly reduced or cancelled over the years, limiting mobility in a region already underserved in comparison to the rest of Ontario. In 2012, the Northlander passenger rail service ended, followed by the cancellation of inter-city Greyhound routes as well as those that link the North to Western Canada in 2018. As outlined in this 2018 report, the lack of transportation options outside of personal vehicles hampers mobility for residents, leaves communities disconnected, and limits to access jobs and business opportunities.



- ✓ **Win:** In [Budget 2021](#), the Ontario government announced that it will invest \$5 million in Ontario Northland. This investment will accelerate work planning and design work that will examine the safety and infrastructure needs for a potential future passenger rail service between Toronto, North Bay, Timmins, and Cochrane. This investment aligns with the OCC's recommendation in the above report, which urged the province to assess existing transportation assets, as well as limitations, in Northern Ontario to determine how mobility in this region can be immediately improved.

FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR SMALL BUSINESS AND TOURISM SECTORS

Ask: On March 11, the OCC sent a [letter](#) to the province that outlined concerns about the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. The grant provided small businesses that were required to close or significantly restrict their services on December 26, 2020, with up to \$20,000 to help cover decreased revenues. However, hotels and accommodations were excluded from the list of eligible businesses, the formula used to calculate revenue loss was prescriptive, and the grant was set to expire on March 31, 2021 despite the ongoing challenges facing the tourism sector during COVID-19.

- ✓ **Win:** [Budget 2021](#) announced a series of initiatives for the tourism sector. Among these is the doubling of the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. As such, small businesses that originally qualified for this grant will automatically receive a second payment. Budget 2021 also introduced the Ontario Tourism and Hospitality Small Business Support Grant. This new grant will provide up to \$20,000 in forgivable loans to tourism businesses – including hotels that did not qualify for the above grant outlined in the OCC's letter. Both announcements align with the OCC's [provincial budget submission](#), which urged the Province to target support for the hardest-hit sectors.

IMPROVING CHILDCARE AFFORDABILITY

Ask: The lack of affordable and accessible childcare in Ontario is a significant barrier to our economic prosperity. In [The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#) and briefings with decision-makers, the OCC has called on the Government of Ontario to prioritize childcare to support women's economic recovery. We noted that the solution must include increased investments, tax benefits, and other cash transfers to support both parents and childcare providers, and flexibility for families.

- ✓ **Win:** In Budget 2021, the Ontario government announced a temporary 20 percent top-up to the 2021 entitlement of the Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses (CARE) tax credit. Ontario is also providing a third round of payments through the Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit, doubling payments to \$400 per child for this round and \$500 for each child with special needs. While supporting parents is important, the OCC continues to urge the provincial and federal governments to direct more resources towards providers and fill the shortage of early childhood educators to strengthen the care economy. Although the current system leans towards supporting parents, directly subsidizing educators and providers can help address low wages and talent retention.



SUPPORTING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE TEMPORARY ONTARIO JOBS TRAINING TAX CREDIT

Ask: On May 12, 2020, the OCC sent a [letter](#) to the Province recommending workforce development measures to promote a successful economic recovery, including support for the training and reskilling of unemployed and underemployed Ontarians. Given the profound impact of COVID-19 on the business community, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), upskilling and retraining Ontario's workforce during this period will help businesses and employees better prepare for the return to post-pandemic growth and economic activity which will demand new skills and exacerbate the pervasive skills gap.

- ✓ **Win:** In [Budget 2021](#), the Ontario government announced a temporary Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit for 2021 that would cover 50 percent of eligible expenses up to a maximum \$2000 credit to support workforce development amidst a rapidly changing labour market. Like the Canada Training Credit, the Jobs Training Tax Credit provides support for eligible individuals to offset costs associated with skills training and education advancement, including tuition and other fees paid for occupational skills and postsecondary education courses as well as occupation, trade, or professional exams taken in 2021.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO BROADBAND EXPANSION

Ask: In the OCC's advocacy around broadband, we have repeatedly urged the Government of Ontario to reduce barriers to private sector expansion of digital infrastructure. In our 2019 report, [The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies](#) and subsequent communications with government, we specifically highlighted access to hydro poles as a priority.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2021, the Ontario government passed the [Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act](#), which will help ensure broadband providers can attach wirelines to hydro utility poles promptly and make it easier to install broadband on municipal land. While the regulatory mechanisms are still being developed, this legislation will go a long way in accelerating access to high-speed internet for underserved businesses and households across the province.

LAUNCHING THE CANADIAN FOOD POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL (CFPAC)

Ask: In the OCC's [2021 federal budget submission](#), the Chamber outlined how Canada's food supply chain experienced many pressures since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Recognizing the inherent complexity of the food supply chain and the many sub-sectors that make up this chain, the Chamber's submission noted that joint solutions will be critical. The OCC, therefore, encouraged the federal government to expedite the appointment of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC), which was announced in Budget 2019.

- ✓ **Win:** On February 19, 2021, the Government of Canada [announced](#) the members of the CFPAC, as well as the Council's short and long-term priorities. Given the many challenges that emerged with COVID-19, as outlined in the OCC's report entitled [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), this announcement was welcomed news. Comprised of a diverse cross-section of experts, this Council holds much promise. However, given the range of issues that the CFPAC aims to tackle, the OCC



believes the federal government should ensure this Council is sufficiently resourced. This will ensure that the group can successfully tackle one of its short-term priority areas – food insecurity which has risen during the pandemic. This will also ensure that the Council can meaningfully and directly engage communities who disproportionately experience food insecurity, such as northern and Indigenous communities.

DIGITIZATION OF REGULATORY PROCESSES

Ask: As our economy evolves, so too must the regulatory environment. In our [red tape submission](#) and subsequent discussions with the Ontario government, the OCC has emphasized the value of using digital processes where possible, as paperwork adds unnecessary administrative costs for both businesses and government and tends to be more prone to error.

- ✓ **Win:** In Ontario's 2021 Spring Red Tape Reduction Package, the Province moved forward with several initiatives to bring more regulatory processes and services online. This includes online sticker renewals for heavy commercial vehicle license plates and a digital "one-stop-shop" to help navigate Ontario's development approvals and permitting process. A modern regulatory regime that is simple and easy to navigate will help ensure Ontario continues to be an attractive place for businesses to invest, grow, innovate, and create high-quality jobs.

STREAMLINING ENVIRONMENTAL PERMISSIONS

Ask: The OCC's members have continuously raised concerns about duplicative and unproductive environmental regulations that hinder critical projects from moving forward in several sectors. In our submissions on [modernizing Ontario's environmental assessment program](#) and [reducing red tape](#), the OCC called for measures that remove outdated and onerous processes for businesses while maintaining strong protections for the environment, health, and safety.

- ✓ **Win:** Ontario's 2021 Spring Red Tape Reduction Package included several announcements to help streamline environmental permissions. These include measures to simplify approvals for transmission projects, remove barriers to brownfield redevelopments, and allow certain sectors to self-register on the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry. Meanwhile, the package contains measures to improve outcomes by strengthening enforcement penalties for polluters.

COMBINED HEAT AND POWER SYSTEMS

Ask: In June 2020, the OCC sent a [letter](#) to Ontario's Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, with energy-specific recommendations to support businesses and lay the groundwork for a strong post-pandemic rebound. Our letter highlighted the value of district energy systems that use combined heat and power technologies. These are energy-efficient systems that can be used in a variety of buildings such as hospitals, colleges and universities, residential buildings, and industrial facilities.

- ✓ **Win:** In Ontario's 2021 Spring Red Tape Reduction Package, the government announced it would be making it easier for communities and businesses to benefit from combined heat and power technologies. As noted in our letter, government support for these systems can help attract private investment, create high-quality jobs, and facilitate the sustainable development of communities across the province.



EXTENDING EMERGENCY BUSINESS SUPPORTS

Ask: Given the prolonged nature of the crisis and the public health measures implemented as a result of the third wave, the OCC has called for the extension of government support to reflect the ongoing reality of many businesses that simply would not survive without continued relief. We continued to advocate for this throughout the first quarter of 2021 in meetings with the government and through media engagements.

- ✓ **Win:** In Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government announced an extension and gradual phasing out of benefits such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) and Lockdown Support. These programs were set to expire in June and were extended until September 25, 2021. The extensions of the CEWS and CERS, along with a previously announced extension of the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), are welcome news for Ontario businesses.

EXPANDING THE CANADA SMALL BUSINESS FINANCING PROGRAM

Ask: In April 2020, the OCC wrote a letter to Canada's Minister of Finance with recommendations to enhance access to capital for businesses to support them during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. One of our recommendations was to expand the Canada Small Business Financing Program (CSBFP) to include soft costs such as training, franchise fees, and some working capital as eligible expenses under the program. This recommendation was also included in our [2021 federal budget submission](#).

- ✓ **Win:** In Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government introduced \$560 million per year to enhance the CSBFP. Amendments included expanding loan class eligibility, increasing the maximum loan amount, expanding borrower eligibility to include non-profit and charitable social enterprises, and introducing a new line of credit product to help with liquidity and cover short-term working capital needs.

SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE ENTREPRENEURS

Ask: Entrepreneurship is an engine of Ontario's economy, and its rebound will be critical to economic recovery. However, research shows that women, Black, Indigenous, and other underrepresented entrepreneurs tend to be less well-financed and have less access to markets. The OCC has called on the Government of Canada to support diverse entrepreneurs by incorporating supplier diversity programs into federal procurement and investing in resources such as the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy. For more information, see our 2020 report, [The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#), and our [2021 federal budget submission](#).

- ✓ **Win:** In Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government made several investments to support diverse entrepreneurs, including \$147 million over four years to strengthen the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (which includes access to financing, mentorship, and training); \$52 million over four years for the Black Entrepreneurship Program; \$50 million toward a new Inclusive Growth Stream under the Venture Capital Catalyst Initiative; and additional funding to help diversify the federal supplier base.



CONTINUING TO INVEST IN CANADA'S LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

Ask: In the OCC's [submission](#), the Chamber urged the federal government to prioritize funding for the life sciences sector. In Ontario, the sector encompasses 6,140 firms in a diverse cross-section of industries that includes pharmaceuticals, medical laboratories, medical devices, medical cannabis, digital health, and artificial intelligence. Together, the life sciences sector contributed over \$58 billion to the provincial GDP and supported almost 191,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs.

- ✓ **Win:** [Budget 2021](#) commits \$2.2 billion over the next seven years to strengthen Canada's biomanufacturing and life sciences sector. The OCC applauds this important investment as it will help firms invest in research and discovery, commercialize their innovations, scale their operations, and build the talent pipeline for the sector. This investment will also improve vaccine manufacturing in Canada, ensuring Canada has vaccines needed to address new COVID-19 variants and support economic recovery for the sector and country.

ADVANCING DECARBONIZATION

Ask: Combatting climate change is a historic challenge that requires collaboration from the public and private sectors. In our [2021 federal budget submission](#), the OCC called on the Government of Canada to leverage competitive advantages within Ontario's business community (such as electric vehicles, nuclear power, and carbon capture and storage) in this transition. We have also advocated for the government to incentivize retrofits, improve the climate resilience of communities and their infrastructure, and support energy-intensive industries as they make the necessary investments to decarbonize.

- ✓ **Win:** In Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government allocated \$8.75 billion in funding over the next five years to help ensure Canada is on a path to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The proposed combination of policies, funding programs, and tax incentives included a focus on clean technology, home retrofits, infrastructure resilience, zero-emission vehicles, decarbonization in the forestry and agriculture sectors, and green bonds.

CHILDCARE SUPPLY & WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS

Ask: The OCC's [2021 federal budget submission](#) and 2020 report, [The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#), called on the Government of Canada to invest in affordable, high-quality childcare spaces and address the shortage of early childhood educators. While the pandemic has amplified the challenges in the childcare system, they are long-standing issues with both economic and social impacts.

- ✓ **Win:** Through Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government is investing up to \$30 billion over the next five years, and \$8.3 billion each year after that, toward Early Learning and Childcare. This funding will aim to support a 50 percent reduction in average childcare fees (aiming to reach \$10/day by 2026), increases in affordable childcare spaces across the country, and expansions to before- and after-school care to provide more flexibility for working parents. The government also committed to working with provincial and territorial partners to improve training and development opportunities for early childhood educators.



POST-PANDEMIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ask: As Canada's economy recovers from COVID-19, a smart workforce development strategy will help ensure Canadians that lost their jobs during the crisis can re-enter the labour market, and businesses can find workers with the skillsets they need to compete. In the OCC's [budget submission](#) and [advocacy letters](#), we called for expanded on-the-job training programs, partnerships with businesses, and support for underemployed Ontarians.

- ✓ **Win:** In Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government introduced a series of new workforce development programs. This included a Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program, an Apprenticeship Service, a Skills for Success program, a Community Workforce Development Program, additional funding for Mitacs to create work-integrated learning placements, and more.

BOOSTING FOOD SECURITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Ask: As outlined in the OCC's recent policy brief, [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), food insecurity has risen – from one in eight Canadians before the pandemic to one in seven with the onset of COVID-19. This has been spurred by business closures, layoffs, and reduced hours for staff, resulting in income insecurity. As the Chamber notes, this situation is concerning as food insecurity impacts Canadians' health and mental health and associated government spending.

- ✓ **Win:** [Budget 2021](#) introduced \$140 million in 2021-22 to top up the Emergency Food Security Fund and the Local Food Infrastructure Fund, which were announced in April and June 2020, respectively. The OCC welcomes these investments. Our federal budget [submission](#) also encourages policymakers to invest in long-term solutions such as infrastructure investments that reduce the cost of food for rural and Indigenous communities. The federal government should also continue monitoring rates of food insecurity and equip the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council with the resources needed to engage directly with communities that disproportionately experience food insecurity.

SUPPORTING CANADIANS' MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

Ask: In [Realizing the Full Potential of Virtual Care in Ontario](#), the OCC explains that COVID-19, coupled with lockdown measures and physical distancing, sparked concerns for Canadians' finances, health, and mental health. Mental health advocates are warning of a potential echo pandemic – or a potential surge in mental illness because of the pandemic. Accordingly, the Chamber's [submission](#) urged the federal government to treat mental health as a priority and support frontline and healthcare workers who have faced heavier workloads in riskier work environments over the past 13 months.

- ✓ **Win:** [Budget 2021](#) introduced various mental health initiatives, including new support for veterans and Indigenous communities and additional support for Health Canada's Wellness Together Canada portal. The OCC applauds these much-needed investments. At the same time, the private sector has a role to play when it comes to supporting Ontarians' mental health and wellness in the workplace. Later this year, the Chamber will release its *2021 Mental Wellness in the Workplace Playbook for Employers*. This tool will provide Ontario businesses with a range of resources and empower them to create psychologically healthy and safe workplaces during COVID-19 and beyond.



SUPPORTING CANADA'S INNOVATION AND R&D ECOSYSTEM

Ask: The OCC's 2020 report, [In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario](#), drew attention to the growing importance of data and digital technology to economic competitiveness. Our recommendations included strengthening intellectual property frameworks, developing strategies around artificial intelligence to maximize benefits and prepare for risks, and targeting support for innovative scale-up firms.

- ✓ **Win:** In Canada's 2021 Budget, the federal government introduced several new investments aimed at accelerating innovation in Canada. This includes a Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy, an expansion of the Industrial Research Assistance Program to support innovative small and medium-sized firms, a new program called ElevateIP to help provide start-ups with access to expert intellectual property services, and funding through the Business Development Bank of Canada to help SMEs finance technology adoption.

FEDERAL BROADBAND INVESTMENTS

Ask: On April 9, 2020, the OCC sent a [letter](#) to Ontario's Minister of Infrastructure recommending immediate action on improving and accelerating internet connectivity to communities lacking critical broadband infrastructure. The recommendations outlined in the OCC's [budget submission](#) and [report](#) on virtual care further highlight the growing need for reliable broadband in all parts of the province. Namely, improving internet connectivity would better enable essential virtual services like virtual healthcare and help ensure all Ontarians can safely and easily access important information and medical advice.

- ✓ **Win:** The 2021 Budget proposes an additional \$1 billion over the next six years for the Universal Broadband Fund, which seeks to improve access to reliable, high-speed internet in rural and remote communities. The Budget also proposes amendments to the *Telecommunications Act* to facilitate broadband delivery by allowing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to share more information with federal, territorial, and provincial broadband partners and avoid unnecessary delays in funding allocations.

INVESTING IN ONTARIO INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Ask: The OCC has long advocated for more regional economic growth opportunities. In its report, [The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies](#), we recommended much-needed infrastructure investments in Indigenous communities, as well as additional measures to facilitate internal trade and regional development. Moreover, the OCC's report, [Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#), outlined several recommendations for better managing the Province's infrastructure assets to help Ontario businesses and residents. These recommendations included a call to invest in and support an assessment of infrastructure and the High-Frequency Rail Project.

- ✓ **Win:** Canada's 2021 Budget introduces new funding for several initiatives that are aimed at promoting long-term, inclusive economic growth. This includes funds to help close infrastructure gaps in Indigenous communities, support for internal trade, Canada's first-ever National Infrastructure Assessment, investments in the High-Frequency Rail Project, and funding for regional development agencies to support community infrastructure that stimulates local economics, creates jobs, and improves quality of life.



CANADA'S CYBER SECURITY INNOVATION NETWORK

Ask: The OCC's 2020 report, [In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario](#), discusses the increasing impacts that cybersecurity breaches are having on individual and national security, business operations, the stability of critical infrastructure, and public trust. Our report encourages the Government of Canada to work with the private sector to assess the strengths and weaknesses of cybersecurity defenses across the economy and, where appropriate, help to address them.

- ✓ **Win:** In May 2021, the Government of Canada launched a new Cyber Security Innovation Network program, with an investment of \$80 million over four years. This program will fund the creation of a national network composed of multiple centres of expertise on cybersecurity in collaboration with partners in the private sector, not-for-profits, provincial/territorial/municipal governments, and other Canadian post-secondary institutions. The network will work with these partners to enhance research and development, increase commercialization, and develop skilled cyber security talent across Canada.

A NEW LABOUR STRATEGY FOR THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

Ask: In [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC examined the projected labour shortage facing Canada's agricultural sector. By 2029, it is estimated that 123,000 jobs – or one in three agricultural jobs – will go unfilled, with Ontario accounting for the majority of Canada's agricultural labour gap. This situation is compounded by the fact that the average farm operator is approaching retirement, few young people are entering the sector, and the sector has faced longstanding challenges when it comes to recruitment due to the physical, rural, and seasonal nature of the work. Since this labour gap affects farmers, the agricultural sector, and the economy, the Chamber laid out a series of recommendations to the Ontario government.

- ✓ **Win:** On May 10, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) it will develop a long-term labour strategy for the agricultural and food processing sectors. The Province also announced initial investments in two projects that are addressing the labour shortage in the agri-food sector. The OCC is pleased that the Province will work with industry and other partners to not only promote careers in the agri-food sector but also support training in the sector. Further, the Province should continue to invest in post-secondary institutions and programs that provide students with both academic and hands-on training needed for careers in the agri-food sector. The Province should also address the barriers that often deter young people from pursuing a career in agriculture (e.g., access to capital and land). These steps will not only help fill the agricultural talent pipeline but also strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector.

IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION FOR THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

Ask: In [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC explored barriers preventing young people from pursuing careers in farming. Chief among these is access to capital. Farming is a capital-intensive undertaking that requires many expenditures, including farmland, equipment, technology, labour, livestock, and/or seeds. Additionally, without access to capital (as well as adequate broadband and the requisite skills), farmers may not be able to afford precision agriculture technologies. The OCC urged policymakers to develop supports or incentives to help recent graduates successfully transition from the classroom to the farm – as well as adopt innovative technologies.



- ✓ **Win:** In April 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the Agri-tech Innovation Program, a \$25.5 million investment. The [Early Adopters stream](#) provides funding to support the adoption of advanced automation or manufacturing technology to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among agri-food workers, while the [Innovators stream](#) will provide funding to boost collaboration between agri-food businesses, commodity organizations, and/or agri-food technology providers who want to pilot or demonstrate innovations. While the OCC welcomes this program, the Province should also consider providing young people with funding or incentives to consider a career in the agri-food sector.

RE-SKILLING WORKERS FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ask: In June 2020, the OCC provided the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs with eight [recommendations](#) to support Ontario's tourism and travel industry. As the submission outlines, tourism activity is found in every riding in the province – encompassing 200,000 tourism-related businesses that employ 400,000 people, contributing \$33 million to the GDP. With the onset of COVID-19, the industry was one of the first and hardest hit, and it is expected to be one of the last to fully recover. Talent and labour were a key pillar in the OCC's submission, with the OCC urging the Province to continue investing in re-skilling for tourism workers who were laid off during the pandemic.

- ✓ **Win:** In May 2021, the Ontario government [announced](#) it will be funding Destination Northern Ontario with \$1.25 million to offer 300 people free training to work in Northern Ontario's tourism industry. The funding will benefit people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19. Participants will receive online, self-directed training for a variety of roles, including guest services, housekeeping, and COVID-19-safe opening protocols. Upon completion, participants will be placed in positions throughout Northern Ontario between summer and September 2021. While this is welcome news, the OCC urges the province to also work with its federal counterparts to develop a national strategy to fill the 91,000 tourism jobs that are projected to go unfilled by 2035.

BRINGING PASSENGER RAIL BACK TO NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ask: In our 2018 report, [Moving Forward](#), the OCC explored how mass transit in Northern Ontario has been significantly reduced or cancelled in recent years, limiting mobility in a region already underserved. In 2012, the Northlander passenger rail service ended, followed in 2018 by the cancellation of inter-city Greyhound routes as well as those that link the North to Western Canada. The lack of transportation options leaves communities disconnected, hampers tourism, and limits Northerners' ability to access jobs. The OCC, therefore, called on the province to develop a plan for the restoration of passenger rail in Northern Ontario.

- ✓ **Win:** In May 2021, the Province [announced](#) it would move forward (together with Ontario Northland and Metrolinx) with the restoration of passenger rail in the North, planning a 13-stop route that would provide service from Toronto to Timmins or Cochrane. As part of the [2021 Budget](#), the Ontario government committed \$5 million to support this planning and design work. The return of passenger rail to Northern Ontario will improve Ontarians' mobility to, from, and between Northern communities. It presents a regional economic development opportunity that could facilitate trade and export markets, as well as further develop the North's tourism industry. At the same time, the Province should not lose sight of the other transportation issues facing Northern Ontario, including the need for continued investment in road infrastructure.



PREPARING YOUTH FOR SKILLED TRADES AND TECHNOLOGY CAREERS

Ask: Ontario is facing a shortage of workers in the skilled trades and technology sectors. The OCC's Workforce Development Council has met with the provincial government on several occasions to discuss the need for more education and awareness among youth about career opportunities in those fields. Further, we recently highlighted the need to support and encourage more young women to seek jobs in technology, skilled trades, engineering, and other male-dominant occupations in our 2020 report, [*The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*](#).

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Ontario government [announced](#) a new free program in partnership with Junior Achievement to help high school students across the province learn more about available skilled trades and technology careers. The project will help local communities recover more quickly from COVID-19 by addressing a shortage of workers in jobs like electrician, plumber, carpenter, computer analyst, and software developer. The government says 50 percent of students participating in the program will come from underrepresented groups, including women, people with disabilities, and racialized groups.

FORESTRY SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

Ask: Ontario's forest industry supported approximately 143,000 jobs in 2020 and generated over \$17 billion in revenue from manufactured goods and services in 2019. In the OCC's 2019 report, [*The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*](#), we note that the sector is poised to grow as a result of increasing global demand for value-added wood products but accessing the right skillsets is a challenge for employers in rural and remote regions. Our report recommends investing in targeted skills training programs in partnership with employers to enhance regional labour markets and boost productivity in key sectors such as forestry.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Ontario government [announced](#) an investment of \$5 million in the Forestry and Wood Product Manufacturing/Producing program to help people in Eastern Ontario prepare for successful careers in Ontario's forest sector. The program is an innovative skills training project in partnership with local employers. To lead this project, Algonquin College and Fleming College will form a consortium that will develop further partnerships in the initial phase to ensure broad industry reach and strong stakeholder engagement.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ask: Fiscal sustainability has long been a challenge for municipalities across Ontario as their spending responsibilities increased while revenue streams remained stagnant. The COVID-19 crisis has only put additional strain on their finances, further challenging local governments' ability to pay for the infrastructure and services needed to support businesses and residents.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Governments of Ontario and Canada [announced](#) an investment of more than \$15 million through the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream to support 99 municipalities in Northern Ontario. This funding will support several projects, including rehabilitation of water and wastewater infrastructure and repairs to municipal public works buildings and fire halls.



PHASE TWO OF ONTARIO'S NATURAL GAS EXPANSION PROGRAM

Ask: Natural gas is an affordable, reliable source of energy for households and businesses in Ontario. Currently, natural gas is the only resource capable of meeting peak demand periods year-round. Population and economic growth over the next decade will require flexible assets that can be readily deployed. In meetings and a [letter to the Province](#), the OCC has advocated for the expansion of natural gas in rural and remote communities.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Ontario government [announced](#) the second phase of its Natural Gas Expansion Program. This phase will allocate more than \$234 million to support approximately 8750 connections in 43 rural, northern, and Indigenous communities. According to the Province, the average household could save between \$250 to \$1,500 per year in energy costs by switching to natural gas from costlier fuel sources. Businesses are expected to save up to 30 percent on energy costs per year.

CONTINUING TO MODERNIZE THE AUTOMATED VEHICLE PILOT PROGRAM IN ONTARIO

Ask: In our 2018 report, [Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#), the OCC explained that Ontario is a leader when it comes to autonomous vehicle (AV) technology. In 2016, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to establish a pilot regulatory framework to allow for the testing and demonstration of automated driving systems on Ontario roads. It also invested \$2.95 million to support industry and post-secondary institutions through the Ontario Centres of Excellence Connected Vehicle/Automated Vehicle Program. Recognizing the province possesses the necessary ingredients to remain a global leader in connected/AV technologies, the OCC's report encouraged the province to continuously consult with stakeholders, including insurers, auto manufacturers, autonomous technology firms, and consumer groups, to help determine whether and how AV-relevant regulations need to be modernized.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the province passed the *Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act*, which included several regulatory changes that aim to modernize rules and accelerate business growth. Included in this piece of legislation was an announcement that the province will consult automotive and tech stakeholders on changes to its Automated Vehicle Pilot Program. This step aligns with the recommendations contained in OCC's 2018 report and will ensure Ontario maintains its AV leadership. At the same time, the Chamber encourages the province to consider how future infrastructure investments will need to consider AVs.

VENTURE CAPITAL FUNDING FOR HIGH-GROWTH SECTORS

Ask: Ontario's economic growth is largely driven by innovative sectors such as life sciences, information technology, and artificial intelligence. However, these high-growth sectors often find it difficult to raise the patient growth capital they need to scale within Ontario. The OCC's 2019 report, [The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies](#), discusses the importance of facilitating value-add innovation clusters by identifying and investing in Ontario's most competitive sectors. In our 2020 report, [In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario](#), we discussed the need for government to support business investments in artificial intelligence to capitalize on Ontario's existing advantage in that space. We also highlighted the financing challenges and opportunities for innovative start-ups in our recent report, [Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19](#).



- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) \$100 million in venture capital funding to assist high-potential technology companies innovate and grow. The Venture Ontario Fund will be overseen by the Ontario Capital Growth Corporation (OCGC), the province's venture capital agency. The fund will invest in venture capital funds focusing on in-demand, high-growth sectors where Ontario has a competitive advantage, including life sciences, medical devices, clean technology, information technology, and artificial intelligence.

TRAINING FOR INDIGENOUS WORKERS AND WOMEN IN NUCLEAR INDUSTRY TRADES

Ask: The skilled trades are a source of high-quality jobs for Ontarians. However, women and Indigenous people have long been underrepresented in the trades. In the OCC's 2020 report, [The She-Coverry Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#), we urged governments to enhance workforce development opportunities for women and other underrepresented groups and ensure training programs are more accessible through financial support, childcare benefits, virtual/flexible formats, and other supports.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Ontario government [announced](#) an investment of \$500,000 to help train Indigenous workers and women for skilled trades careers in the province's clean nuclear energy sector. This one-year program, led by the Organization of Canadian Nuclear Industries and the First Nations Power Authority, will focus on opening doors for underrepresented groups to enter in-demand careers in skilled trades such as boilermaker, carpenter, electrician, and welder. Participants will be trained in Bruce County, Grey County, and Durham Region, with a virtual training option available. They will also have access to childcare support if needed, and subsidies of up to \$3,000 for travel and accommodation during this time.

PROMOTING THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Ask: In [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC examined the projected labour shortage in the agricultural sector, with Ontario accounting for the majority of Canada's agricultural labour gap. This shortage, in part, owes to the outdated opinions many Ontarians hold about farming, as well as a lack of knowledge of modern farming practices and food production systems. Consequently, farming and agri-food careers are often overlooked. The Chamber encouraged the province to invest in a campaign that educates children and youth about the sector and the variety of science-based and tech-savvy careers available in the agri-food sector.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) it will be partnering with 4-H Ontario to develop educational content and first-land learning experiences to inspire the next generation to explore careers in the agri-food sector. Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, 4-H Ontario will receive \$700,000 per year to support the growth of the province's next generation of agri-food leaders. While this two-year investment is welcome news, the Province should also take steps to eliminate the barriers preventing young people from pursuing a career in the agri-food sector, such as access to capital needed to purchase land, equipment, and technology.



STRENGTHENING THE AGRISTABILITY PROGRAM FOR ONTARIO FARMERS

Ask: In *Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario*, the OCC examined the increasing number of challenges farmers have faced in recent years – ranging from unpredictable weather to rising input costs and international trade disputes. To mitigate these risks, farmers can participate in various business risk-management programs in Ontario. This includes the AgriStability program, which is specifically designed to help farmers who experience large income declines outside of their control. However, shortcomings associated with the program have led to industry frustration and dwindling participation rates. The OCC urged the province and federal government to implement urgent reforms and ensure the program is sufficiently funded.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) it will enhance the provincial portion of the AgriStability program, retroactive to the 2020 growing season. Although this was welcome news, the OCC encourages the federal government to enhance its contribution as well. Beyond this, the province should implement systems to process full and interim payments more quickly. A significant amount of time can elapse between when a farmer experiences a loss, makes a claim to Agricorp, and receives a payment through the AgriStability program. This will help support farmers when they need it most, ensuring they can invest in their operations and prevent the closure of cash-strapped farms.

FREE SKILLS TRAINING FOR NEWCOMERS IN ONTARIO

Ask: The Ontario Chamber Network views immigration as a key value-add for Ontario. In our 2019 report, *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*, the OCC highlighted the role that newcomers play in addressing the skills mismatches and declining workforce populations seen in some parts of the province. Our report identified several solutions to help newcomers remain in Ontario and establish their livelihoods within regions facing worker shortages, such as improving access to training opportunities.

- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) a free skills training program to help 2,700 newcomers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through 19 programs across Ontario, newcomers will gain the skills they need to work in food manufacturing, healthcare, web development, and other in-demand sectors while supporting Ontario's economic recovery and future prosperity.

TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS FOR SMALL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Ask: The lack of adequate or any transit options in Ontario's small and rural communities impacts business competitiveness and the mobility of residents. Greater collaboration between adjacent municipalities could help address these gaps. In 2019, the Ontario Chamber Network passed a [policy resolution](#) calling on the Ontario government to expand the Community Transportation Grant program to encourage and support municipal collaboration around transportation. This recommendation was most recently echoed in our [2021 Provincial Budget Submission](#). The need for rural transportation investments to support regional economies was also highlighted in two of the OCC's 2019 reports – *Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario* and *The Great Mosaic: Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies*.



- ✓ **Win:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) up to \$14 million in additional funding over two years through the Community Transportation Grant Program for communities providing transportation services in unserved and underserved regions across Ontario. Additional funding will help ensure transportation services in 38 communities across the province have additional time to fully establish their transportation services as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build transportation services up to a sustainable level. This will better position municipalities to continue operating after the program has been completed.

TAKING ACTION ON VIA RAIL'S HIGH-FREQUENCY RAIL PROJECT

Ask: In *Moving Forward: Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs*, the OCC urged the federal government to invest in VIA Rail's High-Frequency Rail (HFR) project. With HFR, trains can run at their full speed – up to 200 kilometres per hour – and on a dedicated track for commuter rail. The proposed route would connect Quebec City to Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. The project has several benefits, including reduced reliance on cars along this corridor, which lowers congestion greenhouse gas emissions.

- ✓ **Win:** In July 2021, the Government of Canada [announced](#) it will launch the procurement process in Fall 2021 to build a new train service in the Toronto to Quebec City corridor. While the trip from Quebec City to Toronto currently takes around 8 hours and 15 minutes, the HFR project would shave 90-minutes off this trip. The project will be completed by 2030 and will help connect businesses and workers along one of Canada's busiest travel corridors.

INVESTING IN ONTARIO WORKERS THROUGH ONLINE TRAINING

Ask: In its *2021 provincial budget submission*, the OCC called on the provincial government to develop new and enhanced experiential learning programs to help align skills development with the needs of Ontario businesses in the aftermath of COVID-19. The submission acknowledged the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on underrepresented segments of the labour market, calling on the government to adopt a diversity lens in the development of workforce development initiatives to ensure no one is left behind. In a [letter](#) sent to the Minister of Labour Training and Skills Development on May 12, 2020, the OCC also highlighted the importance of retraining and upskilling the workforce to support businesses as they re-open in accordance with provincial restrictions.

- ✓ **Win:** In July 2021, the Ontario government [announced](#) an investment of \$5.8 million for free online training in partnership with LinkedIn to provide 100,000 workers with the skills necessary to find work and restart their careers. This funding is part of the government's \$115 million Skills Development Fund announced as part of the Province's 2021 budget. This fund aims to address challenges that have emerged in the hiring, training, and retention of workers as a result of the pandemic. Through this partnership, individuals in traditionally underrepresented groups will be able to quickly reskill, and employers will be able to rehire to support the province's recovery. Training will be available until March 31, 2022.



SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY OF ONTARIO FARMERS

Ask: In its 2021 policy brief, [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC noted the many challenges that the agricultural sector has faced before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, including access to capital and the need for innovation to maintain Ontario's competitiveness in the international market. In addition to addressing these barriers, the report called on the Governments of Canada and Ontario to reduce administrative red tape which limits farmers' ability to access funding through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP).

- ✓ **Win:** In July 2021, the Governments of Canada and Ontario announced an investment of \$7.3 million through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) to support 600 cost-shared projects that strengthen the agri-food sector in 270 communities across Ontario. The resulting capital investments will allow Ontario farmers to meet and exceed international food safety standards, develop new products to bring to market, and take the necessary steps to preserve soil health during winter – all of which will help attract high-skilled talent into the sector. Given the high cost of production faced by Ontario farmers in addition to the hurdles resulting from climate change, such investments and innovations will ensure long-term sustainability, growth, and stability in the province's food production.

DEADLINE EXTENSION FOR ONTARIO PRIVACY CONSULTATION

Ask: On June 17, 2021, Ontario's Ministry of Government and Consumer Services launched a [white paper and public consultation](#) focused on overhauling privacy frameworks in Ontario. Given the consequential and broad nature of the proposals and discussion questions in the white paper, the original deadline for submissions (August 3) did not allow sufficient time for businesses and other organizations to provide meaningful feedback. As a result, the OCC met with the government to request an extension of the deadline.

- ✓ **Win:** On July 22, the Government of Ontario agreed to extend the consultation period by four weeks. This will give organizations more time to prepare robust submissions. Privacy rules within the private sector have a direct, significant impact on business competitiveness and consumer well-being. There is also a complex landscape of provincial, national, and international developments to consider. Providing sufficient time for consultation is essential.

FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN ONTARIO'S STEEL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Ask: In our report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), we call on government to invest in research and commercialization of cleantech. The report highlights the unique challenges in decarbonizing heavy industry, including mining and steel fabrication, given their need for vast quantities of energy and elevated temperatures.

- ✓ **Win:** In July 2021, the federal government [announced](#) that Algoma Steel Inc. would receive an investment of up to \$420 million to retrofit their operations and phase out coal in their steel manufacturing processes in Sault Ste. Marie. This funding will support Algoma's transition to Electric Arc Furnace production, cutting greenhouse gases by over three million metric tonnes.



TAKING ACTION FOR ONTARIO'S TENDER FRUIT GROWERS

Ask: In its 2021 [Ontario Economic Report](#) and subsequent policy brief, [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC reported a significant drop in business confidence within the foodservice industry, while noting that 'buy local' campaigns were boosting confidence among some. To support the sector's recovery, the OCC underscored the importance of encouraging more Ontarians to buy local to support the province's small agriculture producers. Specifically, the OCC recommended that the Government of Ontario continue to educate consumers on the benefits of buying local while also working with industry stakeholders to strengthen campaigns.

- ✓ **Win:** In July 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an investment of \$867,484 to support Ontario Tender Fruit Growers by purchasing display bins to make it easier for consumers to clearly identify locally grown fruits grown in grocery stores. As consumers increasingly want to learn more about where their food comes from, such a step by the Province will help connect Ontarians to producers, improve food literacy, and encourage consumption of locally sourced produce. By increasing the visibility of their products, such investments will boost Ontario farmers' competitiveness, job security, and income stability as we look towards a post-COVID recovery.

ONTARIO INVESTING IN AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION

Ask: In its 2019 report, [The Great Mosaic – Reviving Ontario's Regional Economies](#), and subsequent policy brief, [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC highlighted the need for technology innovation, and commercialization, and adoption in the agri-food sector with a specific focus on artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics. To support the industry, the OCC underscored the need to create incentives to attract young people to the industry while also leveraging the depth of research expertise of Ontario's post-secondary institutions and industry entrepreneurs. Specifically, the OCC called on the Government of Ontario to improve access to equipment and technology to support the next generation of farmers.

- ✓ **Win:** On August 19, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the second phase of the Agri-tech innovation program, *The Innovator Stream*, aimed at providing funding to meet the growing technology needs of the industry. The funding is targeted toward supporting advances in robotics, AI, and other innovations that are new to the sector through partnerships between leaders in technology and business. Farmers need to have access to modern technology and capital to remain competitive while encouraging more young graduates to explore careers in the field. Through this support, farmers will have the necessary tools to modernize and spur economic growth also reducing labour-intensive work practices. This funding stream will remain open until September 27, 2021.

ONTARIO AND MICHIGAN PARTNERING ON CROSS-BORDER TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGIES

Ask: In its report, [Moving Forward – Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs](#), the OCC called on the Government of Ontario to re-commit to the Michigan Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on collaboration in testing, developing, and marketing connected and automated vehicle (C/AV) technology to align Canada's regulatory framework with that of the US. Such an alignment would further support bi-lateral trade between both countries and serve as a cross-border driver of innovation.



- ✓ **Win:** In August 2021, the Government of Ontario and the State of Michigan [announced](#) the signing of an MOU to explore the implementation of a cross-border AV testing environment. This agreement will further support the implementation of a cross-border testing environment that will support the commercialization and adoption of transportation technologies in Ontario. In 2016, the province was the first jurisdiction in Canada to allow the testing and demonstration of AVs. Agreements such as these will continue to place Ontario at the forefront of technology adoption, driving job creation and setting the pace for other further inter-governmental collaboration across Canada on the future of AVs.

ONTARIO TO REQUIRE PROOF OF VACCINATION IN SELECT SETTINGS

Ask: In its July 16 [letter](#) to federal and provincial leaders, the OCC voiced support for a centralized, Canada-wide approach to COVID-19 proof-of-immunization that could easily be used to confirm vaccination status for international and domestic use. With the absence of a national standard, the OCC called on the Ontario government to review and assess the applicability of Manitoba's model in Ontario - issuing physical cards or digital QR codes to accelerate the reopening of facilities and events that have been restricted or closed since the beginning of the pandemic. Implementing such a proof-of-immunization would encourage Canadians to get vaccinated and allow more businesses to safely reopen and remain open through future outbreaks.

- ✓ **Win:** In September 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) further steps to ensure the health and safety of Ontarians by mandating full vaccination and proof of vaccination status to access certain businesses and settings starting September 22, 2021. The OCC [supports](#) the implementation of a provincial vaccination certificate for high-risk indoor settings that is verifiable, secure, standardized, accessible, and portable. A well-designed vaccine passport system can help prevent another province-wide lockdown which would further devastate businesses and the economy.

ONTARIO PROVIDING ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT INTO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FUND

Ask: In its July 30 [submission](#) to the Government of Ontario, the OCC highlighted labour market challenges that resulted from the pandemic and the need to further support the long-term recovery of the province's workforce. The OCC provided the government with several recommendations to resolve labour market gaps and competitiveness challenges faced by Ontarians. These included the need to further support upskilling and retraining of workers while also making training more accessible by providing financial incentives including training costs, subsidized childcare, and transportation. A previous OCC [submission](#) also highlighted the need to foster greater inclusivity in the skilled trades by targeting support to underrepresented demographic groups, including Indigenous peoples, women, and people with disabilities.

- ✓ **Win:** In September 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an investment of an additional \$83 million towards the Skills Development Fund to support upskilling projects, expanding the eligibility criteria to allow a wider range of organizations to apply. These include Indigenous skills and employment training centers and Indigenous Band offices. Funding can also be used to cover financial support for trainees, including expenses for transit and childcare. This investment includes \$334,487 for LiUNA Local 506 to support construction craft workers to access online skills and safety courses needed for their jobs through LinkedIn Learning. Employers applying for funding can also receive up to \$5,000 in funding to accommodate trainees and workers with disabilities.



ONTARIO SUPPORTING RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Ask: In a [policy resolution](#) passed in 2019, the Ontario Chamber Network urged the Government of Ontario to adopt virtual net metering arrangements under a time-of-use/production pricing scheme. In meetings with the government, the OCC and its Energy Policy Council emphasized the value of net-metering programs in providing more flexibility to ratepayers around their electricity consumption and encouraging the deployment of small-scale renewable resources.

- ✓ **Win:** In September 2021, the Ontario government [unveiled](#) a demonstration project in London to explore how a community can use net metering to create renewable energy and reduce electricity costs for individuals and businesses. This development will see the integration of solar panels, solar packages, electric vehicle chargers, and other innovative elements that will help to reduce energy costs while working towards a more sustainable future. The OCC encourages the government to continue to take bold steps toward reducing the cost of electricity to consumers while also further investing in innovative sources of power generation.

ONTARIO SUPPORTS PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

Ask: In its June 18, 2021, [letter](#) to federal and provincial leaders, the OCC noted the increased demand on our healthcare system as our province's aging population continues to rise. The letter highlighted that the number of Canadians living with dementia will rise from 564,000 today to 937,000 by 2031. The OCC called on the province to continue to invest in innovative models of home and community care to reduce reliance on costly, institutional-based care settings for Ontarians with Alzheimer's and dementia.

- ✓ **Win:** In September 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an investment of up to \$527,900 to support the *Finding Your Way* Program through Dementia Friendly Communities. This funding will help people living with dementia live in the community, equip families and caregivers with tips and strategies on various safety-related topics in the event someone goes missing, and support the development of dementia-friendly communities.

ONTARIO RELEASES TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS FOR DIGITAL IDENTITY

Ask: In the June 2020 report, [In Data We Trust](#), in addition to [recent](#) and [past](#) submissions to the Government of Ontario with regard to privacy, the OCC expressed support for a digital identity program in Ontario that is interoperable across platforms and Canada.

- ✓ **Win:** In September 2021, the Government of Ontario launched the technology and standards that will build Ontario's digital identity ecosystem. This will ensure simpler, faster, and better access to convenient online services securely. When launched, the province's Digital ID will allow people and businesses to prove their identity with features built-in to protect their privacy and personal information. The OCC supports the government's model and implementation citing that technology and standards align with recommendations made, including compliance with global standards, open data practices, and numerous privacy features – data minimization, anonymization, and consent.



GOVERNMENTS ADVANCING CAREER CHOICE IN ONTARIO'S AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

Ask: In its 2021 report, [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC provided the federal and provincial governments with recommendations to support the next generation of farmers in Ontario, noting the looming labour shortages as one of several challenges amplified throughout the pandemic. Specifically, the OCC called on governments to invest in campaigns to attract youth to the sector and reduce other obstacles to entry such as access to land and capital.

- ✓ **Win:** In October 2021, the Governments of Canada and Ontario announced an investment of up to \$1.5 million through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to address agri-food labour challenges and to ensure the labour force remains resilient. Funding will be used to promote and attract job seekers to careers in the agri-food sector and ensure food supply chains remain protected.

PERMANENT CANNABIS DELIVERY AND CURBSIDE PICK-UP

Ask: In a [statement released in July 2020](#), the OCC voiced the need to permanently extend the emergency order that authorized cannabis retail stores to offer curbside pick-up and delivery for products purchased online or over the phone. This measure was introduced at the start of the pandemic to support the private sector, level the playing field between cannabis and other sectors, retain jobs in the industry, and compete against the illicit market.

- ✓ **Win:** In October 2021, the Government of Ontario announced proposals to permanently enable cannabis retail stores to offer delivery and curbside pick-up services. These measures would support public health guidelines, including physical distancing while further supporting Ontario's growing cannabis businesses and workers, combatting the illicit market, and providing consumers with safe alternatives for consumption. Further recommendations to the government have been published in the OCC's report, [Supporting Ontario's Budding Cannabis Industry](#).

SUPPORT FOR THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR'S RECOVERY

Ask: In our [Ontario Business Matters](#) federal election campaign and [2021 federal budget submission](#), the OCC called on the federal government to further enhance small businesses' access to capital to ensure those hardest hit by the pandemic can operate sufficiently, maintain their operations, and adapt to a changing economy.

- ✓ **Win:** In October 2021, the federal government [announced](#) targeted support for businesses that continue to face significant challenges as a result of the pandemic. The Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program and Hardest-Hit Business Recovery Program will provide support through a wage and rent subsidy to eligible businesses, further enhancing their access to capital and ability to keep workers on the payroll. The OCC recently [announced](#) a partnership with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) and will jointly work on roundtables and a report in early 2022 discussing the industry's recovery and path forward.



ONTARIO SUPPORTING WOMEN IN POST-COVID ECONOMY

Ask: In the OCC report, [*The She-covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*](#), we called on the government to take the steps to support women in their efforts to join or re-enter the labour force. We called on the Government of Ontario to offer financial support (including loans, scholarships, and childcare subsidies) that would enable women's participation in reskilling and to design skilling, upskilling, and reskilling programs that respond to women's needs through flexible formats, customized support, and wrap-around services.

- ✓ **Win:** In November 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an additional \$500,000 in the Investing in Women's Futures Program, bringing total funding to \$2.7 million this year. The additional funding will help improve the delivery of online services to increase access for women who are not able to attend in-person due to dependent care responsibilities, mobility, and/or living in a rural or remote community and provide greater access to counselling and other wraparound supports to bolster their physical and mental health and safety.

ONTARIO STAKES ITS CLAIM TO COMPETE FOR FUTURE AUTO SECTOR INVESTMENTS

Ask: In the OCC's report, [*The Great Mosaic*](#), we called on the government to drive technology adoption and cluster development in Ontario. The Chamber's report, [*The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy*](#), also underscores the importance of zero-emissions vehicles in Canada's decarbonization efforts. The report provides recommendations to the Governments of Canada and Ontario with regards to investing in clean technology, developing a strategy for zero-emission vehicle supply chains, expanding low-carbon transportation, and taking Ontario-made innovations to global markets.

- ✓ **Win:** In November 2021, the Ontario government [released](#) the next phase of its Auto Strategy to secure production mandates for hybrid and electric vehicles, create a domestic battery ecosystem, and position Ontario as a North American automotive innovation hub. The Province will work in partnership with industry to establish and support an electric battery supply chain ecosystem that connects Northern Ontario's mineral wealth with the manufacturing strength of Southern Ontario. In addition, this work will attract a new battery assembly plant and increase exports of Ontario-made auto parts and innovations.

ONTARIO HELPING MORE IMMIGRANTS START AND GROW BUSINESSES

Ask: In its report, [*Capital is Key*](#), the OCC highlighted the value of attracting and retaining foreign talent in Ontario, noting their intellectual assets and foreign direct investment. The chamber called on the development of a pathway to permanent residence for international graduates interested in purchasing shares or ownership of existing small businesses.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2021, the Province [announced](#) it would recruit 100 international entrepreneurs to start or grow businesses outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) through the Entrepreneur Stream of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). This two-year program will allow entrepreneurs to purchase or start new companies while also hiring local workers and driving economic growth. The program will help attract foreign investment and talent, further supporting communities across Ontario hardest hit by the pandemic.



PROVINCE MAKING IT EASIER TO BUY MADE-IN-ONTARIO FOOD

Ask: In its report, [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#), the OCC called on the Province to support online resources that enable customers and the foodservice industry to easily source and purchase local food. In addition, the Chamber highlighted the need for the Government's buy local campaign to continue to educate consumers on the many benefits associated with purchasing local foods, as well as working with agricultural and food service stakeholders to improve these campaigns.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2021, the Province [announced](#) an investment of \$1 million annually to promote locally grown food and support the economic growth and success of Ontario's agri-food sector with up to \$100,000 available for marketing projects encouraging Ontarians to buy local. Such support for the local agri-food sector is crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability of our province's food system, access to jobs, and innovation.

ONTARIO CUTTING WHOLESALE ALCOHOL PRICES TO SUPPORT RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Ask: In its 2019 report, [Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario](#), the OCC called on the province to create a Universal Retail License to help address inequities retailers face as a result of a tiered licencing system in addition to modernizing alcohol pricing to establish a wholesale pricing model for the hotel/restaurant/café (HORECA) sector.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2021, the Province [announced](#) cuts to wholesale prices for alcohol purchased by businesses from the LCBO. These cuts will effectively save businesses 20% when compared to retail prices. The new framework also streamlines licensing and renewals for businesses through a single primary license. These relief measures come at a crucial time as the HORECA sector faces challenges brought forward by the pandemic coupled with a substantial increase in overhead costs in the new year with a minimum wage hike from \$12.55 to \$15 per hour starting in January 2022. Further direct support for the sector will be vital to ensuring rapid recovery.

NEW SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESSES IN RESPONSE TO OMICRON

Ask: In our [letter](#) to the Province in December 2021, we noted that several pandemic-related support programs for businesses had ended months ago, thus leaving them to absorb operating costs, including rent and electricity, despite limited business activity as a result of the Omicron variant. We called on the Province to consider further targeted grants and/or other direct measures to support impacted businesses and workers as they navigate this new wave of the pandemic.

- ✓ **Win:** In December 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) new support for businesses affected by recently imposed public health restrictions through the new Business Costs Rebate Program and a six-month interest and penalty-free period to make payments for most provincially administered taxes. The rebate program will allow eligible businesses to claim 50% of property tax and energy costs incurred while subject to capacity limits. Online applications for this program will open in mid-January 2022. Overall, this is good news for businesses and workers heading into the holiday season when they need it the most. However, we [expressed](#) concerns around timeliness and extent of support, noting an additional round of the small business grant would have provided more immediate relief.



ONTARIO OPENS NEWLY EXPANDED HIGHWAY 69

Ask: In its 2018 report, *Moving Forward – Toward a Strategic Approach to Ontario’s Transportation Needs*, the OCC highlighted the importance of road infrastructure development in the north. The report discussed the need to expand Highway 69 to support residents’ businesses and the province’s supply chain. Damage to the structure of the road coupled with harsh weather conditions has led to multiple collisions and the need for repairs, with frequent highway closures impacting inter-and intra-provincial trade, tourism, and access to services.

✓ **Win:** In December 2021, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the opening of a 14-kilometre expansion of Highway 69 in the French River Area. This is part of a project to widen a total of 152 kilometers of Highway 69. The newly widened highway will help improve traffic flow and safety, supporting economic growth for communities in Northern Ontario. Further infrastructure development will be crucial to unlocking the economic and business potential of the region.

EXTENDED PAYMENT DEADLINE FOR CANADA EMERGENCY BUSINESS ACCOUNT (CEBA) LOANS

Ask: In our [letter](#) to the federal government in December 2021, we highlighted the need to accompany any new public health restrictions with targeted relief and support programs for businesses, including loan forgiveness and extensions on payment terms.

✓ **Win:** In January 2022, the Government of Canada [announced](#) that the deadline for repayment for CEBA loans is being extended from December 31, 2022, to December 31, 2023. This measure comes at a time when many small businesses and entrepreneurs across Ontario continue to feel the disproportionate effects of public health restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of the Omicron variant. We continue to call on the government to provide further targeted relief and support for businesses severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as loan forgiveness.

ONTARIO HELPING COMMUNITIES ADDRESS CYBERCRIME

Ask: In its 2020 report, *In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario*, the OCC called on the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario to work in partnership with industry groups to assess the strengths and weaknesses of cybersecurity defenses across the economy and, where appropriate, help to address them.

✓ **Win:** In January 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an investment of approximately \$1.7 million over two years in the Safer and Vital Communities Grant Program to support community safety and well-being across the province by encouraging community collaboration to curb the rise in online crimes including hate crimes, human trafficking, and fraud.

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC TRANSIT INVESTMENTS

Ask: In its 2021 report, *Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario’s Municipalities*, the OCC called on the Province to alleviate fiscal pressure on municipalities, especially in light of revenue reductions experienced as a result of COVID-19. In addition, we highlight the need to incentivize the use of mass transit by putting more funding in the hands of municipal service providers in our report, *The Climate Catalyst: Ontario’s Leadership in the Green Global Economy*.



- ✓ **Win:** In January 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) \$375.6 million in new public transit funding to support municipalities that have felt the continued strain on their budgets because of reduced revenues from services like transit during the pandemic. Further funding will be crucial to enhancing access to public transit and driving decarbonization efforts.

MUNICIPAL MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

Ask: In our report, [Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities](#), the OCC called on the Province to support rural and small municipalities in Ontario as they manage growing budgetary constraints. Our analysis recognized the value of Ontario's existing Municipal Modernization Program and encouraged the Province to formalize the program to ensure it can continue providing value to local communities.

- ✓ **Win:** In January 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an additional \$28 million to support 322 projects through the Municipal Modernization Program. This funding will help improve the efficiency of municipal service delivery and encourage municipalities to collaborate around shared services.

NEW ONTARIO CLEAN ENERGY CREDIT REGISTRY

Ask: In our report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), we call on the government to establish a global market for voluntary carbon credits in which emissions that are offset domestically can be sold as credits abroad to meet foreign standards and vice versa. It is estimated that the market for carbon credits could be worth upward of \$50 billion by 2030 – a massive opportunity for Ontario businesses leading in sustainable innovation.

- ✓ **Win:** In January 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the development of a voluntary clean energy credit (CEC) registry. By leveraging the province's clean energy grid, the CEC will offer non-emitting energy credits to businesses looking to demonstrate progress on corporate climate targets. The program can also generate revenue to help reduce electricity rates for customers. Over the coming months, the Independent Electricity System Operator will research and provide the government with a report on the design of the provincial CEC registry. The Province aims to have the registry available by January 2023.

FURTHER INVESTMENTS IN DECARBONIZING STEEL MANUFACTURING

Ask: In our report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), we called on the government to invest in research and commercialization of cleantech. The report highlighted the unique challenges faced in decarbonizing heavy industry, including mining and steel fabrication given their need for vast quantities of energy and elevated temperatures.

- ✓ **Win:** In February 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) a contribution of \$500 million to support the shift away from coal-fed coke ovens and blast furnaces to new-low emission hydrogen-ready direct reduced iron fed arc furnaces(EAF) at ArcelorMittal Dofasco's Hamilton facility. This is in addition to an investment of \$400 million by the Government of Canada announced in July 2021. Through this project, carbon dioxide emissions will be reduced by roughly three million tonnes annually. Such innovations in green-steel manufacturing will further drive innovation and job creation in the sector.



PERMANENT REMOVAL OF TOLLS ON HIGHWAYS 412 AND 418

Ask: In our [2020 letter](#), we voiced our support for Bill 43, the *Freeing Highways 412 and 418 Act*, which aimed to end tolling on Highways 412 and 418. Tolls on these highways result in gridlock and additional pressure on local infrastructure and put Durham Region at an economic disadvantage.

- ✓ **Win:** In February 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the permanent removal of tolls on Highways 412 and 418, effective April 5, 2022. These measures will remove cost burdens and support the region's economic competitiveness.

REDUCING RED TAPE ON OUT-OF-PROVINCE SKILLED WORKERS.

Ask: In our provincial budget submissions for [2020](#) and [2021](#), we called on the province to eliminate barriers to interprovincial labour mobility. In a [submission](#) to the Province, the OCC noted the need to resolve long-standing labour gaps in the skilled trades and the need to introduce policies that support participation in the labour market.

- ✓ **Win:** In February 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) changes that would reduce red tape and help out-of-province skilled workers quickly join our workforce. These measures will address the province's long-standing labour shortages, support businesses, and drive economic growth.

MODERNIZING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY POLICY IN ONTARIO

Ask: In our report, *In Data We Trust*, we note that intellectual property (IP) is increasingly driving competitiveness in the global economy, yet Canada produces fewer patents and other forms of IP than its international partners. We call on the Government of Ontario to implement the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Intellectual Property (IP), which include establishing a centralized provincial resource to provide consistent, sophisticated legal and IP expertise and education.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the launch of Intellectual Property Ontario, an agency to help researchers and companies maximize the value of their IP. This step will support innovation and entrepreneurship, further driving the province's economic growth.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Ask: In our *2021 federal budget Submission* and a recent [letter](#) to the Province, we noted concerns about physician burnout and mental health. We recommended governments treat mental health as a priority area by supporting the needs of care providers through investments in mental health resources.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the [federal](#) and [provincial](#) governments announced they would each invest \$1 million for Runnymede Healthcare Centre's first Responders Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Rehabilitation Treatment and Assessment Centre. This investment will improve access to mental health resources for first responders and nurses, supporting their wellness and recovery.



IMPROVING PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ONTARIO BUSINESSES

Ask: In response to global supply chain disruptions and informed by conversations with our Infrastructure Policy Council, the OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission highlighted the need to address supply chain constraints and support local manufacturing. Further, last year's submission noted that improving access to public sector procurement would improve competitiveness and productivity in the public sector and the economy more broadly.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Ontario [launched](#) the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative (BOBI), aimed at strengthening supply chains and boosting domestic production of critical goods. As part of BOBI, the government passed the *Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act*, which mandates public sector entities to give Ontario businesses preference when conducting procurements for goods and services under a specified threshold amount. These actions will further provide the province's manufacturing sector with access to a larger market through Supply Ontario, drive job creation, and support post-pandemic economic recovery.

MAKING TRANSIT MORE AFFORDABLE IN THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

Ask: In meetings with the Ministry of Transportation, the OCC and its Infrastructure Policy Council encouraged the Province to reduce GO Transit fees as part of its long-term transportation plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In our report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), we requested transportation planners incentivize greater reliance on public transit by addressing barriers, such as cost.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Ontario government [announced](#) the elimination of fares for riders connecting to and from GO Transit on most municipal transit systems with GO Transit co-fare agreements. The province also announced an increase in PRESTO discounts for youth and post-secondary students. These steps will encourage greater use of transit systems, improve Ontarian's access to employment and education opportunities and reduce congestion on roads.

ADDRESSING ONTARIO'S HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES SHORTAGE

Ask: In a [letter](#) to the Province, the OCC highlighted concerns around health human resources (HHR), staffing shortages, and the impact on patients and the healthcare system. The letter provided the Government of Ontario with recommendations from our Health Policy Council as it relates to developing a coordinated, evidence based HHR strategy for Ontario. This includes increasing enrolment numbers in post-secondary institutions for healthcare programs.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) the expansion of medical school education with the addition of 160 undergraduate seats and 295 postgraduate positions over the next five years. These actions will bolster the province's HHR capacity to meet future needs and support the next generation of healthcare practitioners.

UNLOCKING ONTARIO'S CRITICAL MINERAL WEALTH

Ask: In its report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), the OCC highlights the unique role Ontario's mining sector can play in the green transition, supplying critical minerals necessary to manufacture low-carbon technologies. By tapping into these resources, Ontario could become a leader in EV supply chains. The report noted that to unlock the economic benefits of cleantech, investments in a vertically integrated supply chain would be necessary. The report also calls on the government to advance reconciliation and champion Indigenous-led clean energy projects by building equitable partnerships that provide tangible economic benefits.



- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Province [announced](#) its five-year Critical Minerals Strategy, which will aim to better connect mines in the north with manufacturing centers in the south, support electric vehicle and battery manufacturing, and create resilient strong supply chains. The strategy also aims to increase collaboration on resource development projects with Indigenous communities, further advancing reconciliation.

INCREASING ACCESS TO ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS IN ONTARIO

Ask: The OCC's report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), urges governments to fast-track investments in electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, while our 2022 provincial budget submission calls on the Province to purchase zero-emission fleets.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an investment of \$91 million to build EV charging infrastructure across the province. In addition, the introduction of the Rural Connectivity Fund will provide rural municipalities with the opportunity to apply for funding to install chargers in their communities. The Province has committed to supporting business cases for the conversion of the GO Transit network towards electric and low emissions. These actions will encourage EV adoption across Ontario and support our zero-emission future.

RECORD INVESTMENT IN EV BATTERY MANUFACTURING IN ONTARIO

Ask: The OCC's report, [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#), highlights the value of the global market for electric vehicle (EV) batteries. The report calls on the government to attract foreign investment in Ontario's cleantech, mining, and automotive sectors. While Ontario is poised to be a leader in the space, the report notes that unlocking the economic benefits of cleantech will require investments in a vertically integrated supply chain.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Province, federal government, and City of Windsor [announced](#) Ontario's first large-scale electric vehicle (EV) battery manufacturing plant under a joint venture between LG Energy Solution Ltd. and Stellantis N.V. This investment of over \$5 billion will go towards building a battery facility with a production capacity of 45 gigawatt-hours and is expected to employ 2,500 people. These investments will support the vertical integration of the EV supply chain, further cementing Ontario's position as a leader in EV and zero-emissions technology manufacturing and support job creation.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES AN ADDITIONAL ONE-TIME HEALTHCARE TRANSFER

Ask: Throughout the pandemic, the OCC and its Health Policy Council have highlighted the growing surgical backlog and the need for additional health transfers to address these historic challenges. In our 2021 Budget Submission, we called on the federal government to increase its transfer payments to provincial and territorial governments to tackle the backlog and cover costs that have emerged during the pandemic.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the federal government [announced](#) a \$2 billion one-time top-up to provinces and territories, with over \$775 million allocated to Ontario, to deliver faster access to healthcare and reduce the backlog. To further support the long-term strength and resilience of Ontario's healthcare system, our 2022 Budget Submission calls on the federal government to permanently increase the Canada Health Transfer Payment from an average of 22% to 35% of provincial healthcare spending to meet the current and future pressures facing Ontario's healthcare system.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CHAMPIONING INDIGENOUS-LED ENERGY PROJECTS

Ask: Our report, *The Climate Catalyst*, provides numerous policy recommendations to support the mobilization of clean energy solutions. The report calls on governments to champion Indigenous-led clean energy projects and build partnerships that provide tangible economic benefits to Indigenous communities.

- ✓ **Win:** As part of its [2030 Emissions Plan](#), the Government of Canada announced \$180 million in new funding through the Indigenous Leadership Fund. This initiative will support clean energy and energy efficiency projects led by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and organizations.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA SUPPORTING INVESTMENTS IN SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

Ask: Our report, *The Climate Catalyst*, highlights investments in sustainable buildings as a strategy for economic stimulus and decarbonization. We recommend that governments accelerate retrofits by offering long-term financing and guarantees for building owners while also expanding energy efficiency programs for small and medium-sized businesses.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the federal government announced numerous multi-million-dollar tranches of funding to support retrofits and the greening of existing buildings as part of its [2030 Emissions Plan](#). These include \$150 million to support the Canada Green Buildings Strategy, \$458.5 million in additional investment in the Canada Greener Homes Loan program, and \$194 million to expand the Industrial Energy Management System to support ISO 50001 certification and energy efficiency-focused retrofits for key small-to-moderate projects.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR ZERO-EMISSION VEHICLES

Ask: In our report, *The Climate Catalyst*, we make several recommendations to the government on decarbonizing Canada's transportation, including advancing transportation technology projects and fast-tracking investments in zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) charging infrastructure.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Canada [announced](#) an investment of \$400 million for ZEV charging stations and an additional \$1.7 billion to extend the Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles (iZEV) program for vehicle purchase grants. Collaboration between governments and industry will be critical to unlocking ZEV markets using both electric and low-carbon fuel technologies.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS IN CLEANTECH

Ask: In our report, *The Climate Catalyst*, we call for government investments in clean technology with promising applications while also de-risking financing with targeted loan guarantees and tax incentives.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the federal government unveiled its [2030 Emissions Plan](#). As part of the approach, new funding has been made available to trial pre-commercial cleantech and de-risk large-scale pilot projects. Additional tax incentives, such as Investment Tax Credits, have been introduced to help mobilize private capital to accelerate investment in cleantech. The government will also triple funding for the Agricultural Clean Technology Program, which supports the development and purchase among farmers of more energy-efficient equipment.



INVESTMENTS IN ONTARIO'S LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

Ask: The OCC and its Health Policy Council have long called for the province to develop a comprehensive life sciences strategy that champions the growth of the province's medical and biomanufacturing industry and helps establish Ontario as a world-leading jurisdiction for life sciences. We communicated this priority in our [2022 provincial budget submission](#) and in the Council's contributions to a [report by Life Sciences Ontario](#).

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Ontario launched [Taking Life Sciences to the Next Level](#). This strategy aims to grow the medical technology sector, secure new investments in vaccine and medicine manufacturing, ensure future pandemic preparedness, and improve patient outcomes.

CHANGES TO TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM TO ADDRESS LABOUR SHORTAGES

Ask: In our [2022 federal budget submission](#), we highlight that immigration must be front and center to resolve labour market constraints and drive economic growth and recovery. We called on the Government of Canada to address administrative barriers within the Temporary Foreign Workers program and better align with industries facing long-standing labour shortages, such as the agricultural sector.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the federal government [announced](#) the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program Workforce Solutions Road Map to address labour shortages and build a stronger workforce. Policy changes will include the removal of limits to the number of low-wage positions that employers in seasonal industries can fill through the TFW Program. Administrative burdens on employers have been reduced with the increased length of validity of Labour Market Impact Assessments. Seven sectors with demonstrated labour shortages will now be able to employ up to 30% of their workforce through the TFW Program for low-wage positions for one year. All other sectors will be able to hire up to 20% of their workforce through the TFW Program until further notice.

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS ANNOUNCE INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO'S AUTO SECTOR

Ask: Our 2021 federal election campaign, [Ontario Business Matters](#), called on policymakers to partner with industry to confront climate change by leveraging Ontario's electric vehicle and cleantech capabilities, while our report, [The Climate Catalyst](#), called on governments to attract foreign investment to these sectors.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the Governments of Canada and Ontario [announced](#) matching contributions of \$259 million in support of General Motors' (GM) Oshawa and Ingersoll plants. These investments will support the production of GM's all-electric commercial vehicle and are expected to create 2,600 new jobs.

INVESTMENTS IN TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Ask: In February 2022, the OCC wrote a [letter](#) in support of the regulatory proposal to prioritize the development and completion of urgent electricity infrastructure in Southwestern Ontario, recognizing that demand for electricity is growing in the region due to economic growth and electrification.



- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the Government of Ontario [selected](#) Hydro One to build five new transmission lines to meet the growing demand for clean and reliable electricity in Southwestern Ontario. These transmission lines will support new investments in manufacturing, greenhouse, agri-food, and other sectors across the region.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR ONTARIO'S TOURISM SECTOR

Ask: Our [2022 Ontario Economic Report](#) found that businesses in the tourism & hospitality sectors were among the least confident in the province's post-pandemic economic outlook. In a [letter](#) to Prime Minister Trudeau and our [2022 budget submission](#), we called for targeted support for sectors most affected by COVID-19.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the federal government [announced](#) an investment of \$68.5 million to support the tourism industry in Southern Ontario through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. These funds will support 1,340 organizations, create/maintain 4,200 jobs, and foster recovery.

ONTARIO'S FIRST-EVER HYDROGEN STRATEGY

Ask: Our report, [The Climate Catalyst](#), provides the government with recommendations to drive the development of low-carbon hydrogen projects in Ontario. In addition, the OCC wrote a [letter](#) in support of Atura Power's low-carbon hydrogen program in Niagara Falls, citing the economic, environmental, and commercial benefits of the additional power generation provided through its projects.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) its Low-Carbon Hydrogen Strategy to support the development of the province's hydrogen economy. As part of this plan, the government supports Atura Power's proposal to build, own, and operate Ontario's largest low-carbon hydrogen production facility in Niagara Falls. We look forward to the government's continued public-private collaboration on implementing the strategy.

REDUCING ELECTRICITY COSTS FOR NORTHERN MANUFACTURERS

Ask: In a 2019 [submission](#) to the provincial government, the OCC provided feedback on the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate (NIER) Program, noting that the program had proven critical to regional economic development and the competitiveness of Ontario's mining and natural resource sectors. We called on the government to extend contracts beyond 2022, introduce contract terms of 10 years instead of five years, and reduce administrative barriers.

- ✓ **Win:** In March 2022, the Government of Ontario [transitioned](#) the NIER into the Northern Energy Advantage Program (NEAP) to help Northern Ontario's large industrial electricity consumers continue to access reduced electricity costs. The Province announced an increased investment, expanded the program to increase eligibility, and removed the \$20 million cap for current participants. Existing participants in good standing will see extension contracts for a five-year term to March 31, 2027.

RE-ESTABLISHING ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSIT SERVICE

Ask: The OCC's report, [Moving Forward](#), highlights the significant gap in mobility experienced by northern Ontarians resulting from the end of Ontario Northland and inter-city Greyhound Routes. The report and our [2022 provincial budget submission](#) call on the government to re-establish the Ontario Northland service.



- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the Government of Ontario [announced](#) an investment of \$75 million to re-establish passenger rail service to Northeastern Ontario. Future feasibility work on a preferred route will include a rail connection to Cochrane, expanding transit availability to 5,300 more people, and connecting to the Polar Bear Express service to Moosonee. As a regional economic development tactic, the return of rail service will open markets and create opportunities for trade and export and further develop the North's tourism industry.

ADDRESSING ONTARIO'S LABOUR SHORTAGES

Ask: Our [2022 provincial budget submission](#) called on the government to work with stakeholders to address labour shortages by promoting skills training and career opportunities in sectors facing large shortages.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the government [announced](#) that public colleges in Ontario would be able to offer three and four-year degree programs in key sectors to address labour gaps in sectors including healthcare, auto manufacturing, and cybersecurity.

LAUNCH OF ONTARIO'S SINGLE WINDOW FOR BUSINESS

Ask: In our [Blueprint Letters](#), we called on the government to build a 'one-window' concierge service to help small businesses understand, navigate, and comply with regulatory requirements. Our report, [Capital is Key](#), also encourages the Province to create a one-stop information portal for small business support programs.

- ✓ **Win:** In April 2022, the Government of Ontario [launched](#) the new [Ontario.ca/business](#) website. This new resource is a step towards creating a single window for business that will reduce administrative burdens for businesses and entrepreneurs who look to invest in Ontario. We look forward to seeing government take further steps to support business growth and red-tape reduction.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE INITIATIVES - BUDGET 2022

Ask: Our report, [The Climate Catalyst](#), highlights a number of opportunities to support Canada's transition to a greener economy. This includes the unique role Ontario's mining sector can play in the green transition by supplying critical minerals needed to manufacture low-carbon technologies and solar panels. The report also discusses the growing role of emerging technologies such as carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) in reducing emissions. The report called on the federal government to support Small Modular Reactor (SMR) pilot projects in Northern and remote regions while de-risking private financing with targeted loan guarantees and tax incentives. The OCC's [federal budget submission](#) called on the government to invest in cleantech research with promising commercial applications and infrastructure to support zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) adoption.

- ✓ **Win:** Canada's Budget 2022 delivered several new funding streams to support Canada's decarbonization efforts and drive further investment in the cleantech sectors. These include \$3.8 billion over eight years to implement a national critical minerals strategy, \$2.6 billion over five years for CCUS tax credit, \$120.6 million over five years for SMR frameworks, and additional funding for ZEVs. It also expands the Canada Infrastructure Bank's mandate to invest in private sector-led projects for small modular reactors, hydrogen, and carbon capture.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ADDRESSING SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES - BUDGET 2022

Ask: Our policy primer, [Supply Chain Disruptions and Delays](#) and [2022 federal budget submission](#) provide the federal government with recommendations to address bottlenecks along Canada's supply chains, including the exploration and implementation of digitization solutions. Our budget submission calls on the government to develop additional rail capacity and invest in long-term transit infrastructure projects, including VIA Rail.

- ✓ **Win:** Budget 2022 commits to \$603.2 million over five years to improve supply chain resiliency and efficiency. This includes \$450 million to support supply chain projects through the National Trade Corridors Fund (in addition to the \$4.2 billion previously earmarked) and \$136.3 million to develop industry-driven data solutions to make supply chains more efficient and \$16.9 million for red tape reduction. Additional supply chain initiatives focus on critical mineral sectors.

FEDERAL COMMITMENTS TOWARDS INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION - BUDGET 2022

Ask: Our 2021 federal election platform, [Ontario Business Matters](#), calls on policymakers to advance reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Our report, [Capital is Key](#), highlights financing barriers faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs, and urges governments to implement targeted relief for under-financed businesses in the aftermath of COVID-19.

- ✓ **Win:** Budget 2022 commits another \$10.6 billion to support reconciliation. This includes \$398 million over two years to Indigenous Services Canada to support community infrastructure on reserve, of which at least \$247 million will be directed toward water and wastewater infrastructure. The budget commits \$500 million to support various Indigenous business ventures and commits to forgiving 50% of the COVID-Indigenous Business Initiative loans that supported businesses in need during the pandemic. It also proposes \$131 million over five years to improve Indigenous partnerships in natural resource projects.



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

The OCC's Public Affairs team continues to advocate on behalf of the business community at Queen's Park making sure our voice is amplified in the media and online.



ADVOCACY IN ACTION

We have never been more relevant, visible, or engaged. Through proactive government and media relations, dynamic social media campaigns and creative design, the OCC continues to be at the forefront of advocacy at Queen's Park.

As the independent, non-partisan, indispensable partner of Ontario business, we engage elected officials of all political parties, as well as non-elected officials, to ensure the collective voice of the Ontario Chamber Network is heard. We do this through outreach, meetings, hosting roundtables, as well as participating in consultations and government briefings.

Some key highlights include:

- Since the first session of the 42nd Parliament of Ontario in July 2018, the OCC has been mentioned 120 times in Hansard.
- Through OCC's Ontario Vaccination Support Council, we engaged with various Ministers including Christine Elliott, Victor Fedeli and Ross Romano, as well as Solicitor General Sylvia Jones and Premier Doug Ford's Chief of Staff James Wallace to discuss private sector collaboration in vaccine distribution.
- Last year, we hosted 18 Members of Provincial Parliament through our Virtual Advocacy Series including a special In Conversation with the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Finance & Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. This year, we hosted 15 MPPs for the Series.
- Since 2021, we have hosted over 20 roundtables with various Ministers to meet with our members, including a special roundtable with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions on the opioid crisis.
- We have hosted various Ministers and key subject matter experts at Ontario Chamber Network Townhalls to hear concerns first-hand on the most pressing topics for the province's business community.
- Since 2021, we provided over 15 toolkits to the Chamber Network to support their media, social media and government relations.

“Chambers of commerce have been allies, but also leaders in their own communities, helping to deliver rapid tests more efficiently and more quickly because of their role and leadership through businesses that do not always have the time or ability to look for rapid tests.”

Small businesses and business leaders have been challenged in the past 22 months. Because of the leadership and partnership on the part of chambers of commerce, we have been able to indirectly support small businesses and protect not only them, but the workers who are essential to their activities.”

– Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health (Hansard - February 14, 2022)



“The [Temporary Foreign Workers] workforce solutions road map aims to improve the program for employers while strengthening worker protection without compromising Canadians’ jobs. Canada has a low unemployment rate and an unmet demand in many sectors. Stakeholders across the country have rallied in support of these measures. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce said the measures will fill job vacancies across our economy and support our post-pandemic recovery and economic growth.”

– Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion (Hansard - April 7, 2022)

IN THE NEWS & ONLINE

8,408 media hits

6 billion+ potential reach

2.9 million impressions on twitter 

600k+ impressions on Facebook and LinkedIn  

Source: Figures are based on Meltwater, Sprout Social and Google Analytics from May 2021 to April 2022.

- Frequent coverage in Canada’s major national newspapers and publications, including The Globe and Mail, National Post, Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, Huffington Post, Canadian Press, iPolitics, National Post, and MacLean’s.
- Regular appearances on radio and television including Omni, CBC Radio, the Business News Network (BNN), TVO’s The Agenda, Global News, CTV News, CP24, Newstalk 1010, 680 News, and local talk radio stations across Ontario.
- Routine coverage in Ontario’s major daily locals, including the Timmins Daily Press, Sault Online, Windsor Star, Hamilton Spectator, Sudbury Star, and Barrie Today.



“ Proof of Vaccination

“The last thing anyone wants is to be shut down but that’s what will happen if we don’t use every tool in the toolkit,” Ontario Chamber of Commerce President Rocco Rossi said Monday. “It’s about mitigating risk as much as possible. We’re going to be living with this for a while.”

-Toronto Star (August 9, 2021)

“ 2021 Federal Election

“Canada needs leadership that is unafraid of going beyond low-hanging fruit and easy political wins to set our country’s economy up for success. In this federal election, we need Canada’s next government to look beyond new taxes on Canadian businesses and instead be bold in its willingness to adopt creative, long-term solutions.”

-Rocco Rossi, President & CEO and Michelle Eaton, VP, Public Affairs – Toronto Sun Op-ed (August 30, 2021)

“ Ontario Economic Report

“Ester Gerassime, economic analyst with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and co-author of the report, identified the supply chain shortages as another risk factor which has quickly become a pressing issue for all sectors and segments of the economy.”

-“Northwestern Ontario businesses face headwinds,” – Toronto Star (February 5, 2022)

“We also know that diverse entrepreneurs – racialized women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, and those who are non-binary or have different gender identities – face unique barriers. Canada needs you. We know that Canada’s economic recovery will largely be driven by entrepreneurs launching and scaling new enterprises. Closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship could add up to \$81 billion to Canada’s GDP.”

- Michelle Eaton, OCC’s VP of Public Affairs – Canadian SME Magazine (March 7, 2022)



POLICY AND ADVOCACY COUNCILS

The OCC has six councils
advocating on key issues
that matter to the business
community.



POLICY AND ADVOCACY COUNCILS



INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY COUNCIL

The Infrastructure Policy Council is comprised of a wide variety of stakeholders who help inform the OCC's positioning and action on timely infrastructure and transportation-related issues. The council is primarily focused on economic recovery and the intersection between climate change and infrastructure.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Advocacy wins related to housing affordability, municipal infrastructure investments, removing highway tolls, improving broadband and transportation connectivity.
- Consultations with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Transportation, and Infrastructure Ontario on the National Infrastructure Assessment, the Greater Golden Horseshoe transportation plan, and upcoming priorities on broadband roll-out.
- Supply chain initiatives, including a roundtable, a joint Dynamic Risk Assessment project with KPMG, and the policy primer: [Supply Chain Disruptions and Delays](#).
- [Letter of support](#) to the Ministry of Energy on prioritizing the development of transmission infrastructure in Southwestern Ontario.



ENERGY POLICY COUNCIL

Launched in January 2020, the OCC's Energy Policy Council is a cross-section of energy sector stakeholders that regularly informs our policy and advocacy efforts on various energy issues. The council is supported by insights and technical expertise from Sussex Strategy Group's Energy and Environment Practice.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Advocacy wins focused on combined heat and power systems, funding for cleantech, net-metering, electric vehicle supply chains, and a new Ontario Clean Energy Credit Registry.
- Consultations with the Ministry of Energy, Independent Electricity System Operator, and Ontario Energy Board (OEB) around ongoing energy sector reforms, the gas phase-out assessment, and upcoming policy priorities.
- Development of the OCC's first policy primer: [Addressing Ontario's Growing Electricity Needs](#).
 - » Joint [media release](#) with Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters on Ontario's need for gas-fired electricity.
 - » Publication of a [memorandum](#) on energy, climate change, and economic recovery.



ONTARIO CANNABIS POLICY COUNCIL

Launched in 2019, the OCC's Ontario Cannabis Policy Council (OCPC) has been the leading policy and advocacy voice for the sector since legalization. From building out a more open and competitive retail market to making online delivery permanent, the OCPC has been pushing for thoughtful, evidence-based reforms to help the sector grow and successfully displace the illegal market.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Thought leadership.** We have reached an estimated 87 million readers in nearly 40 stories in print, digital, radio and TV across Ontario and Canada over the last year, including CTV News, Toronto Star and Global News.
- **Policy Impact.** Through our submissions, statements and policy work, the Council has had measurable impact on government policy:
 - » [Making e-commerce delivery and curbside pick-up options permanent for legal retailers.](#)
 - » [Amending the rules to allow retailers to sell their data to Licensed Producers.](#)
 - » [Getting the government to reverse course on prohibiting in-house brands and white labelling.](#)
 - » Avoiding sweeping action on store clustering from the province and municipalities.
- **Exclusive meetings, briefings & roundtables.** The OCPC received an exclusive briefing from Deloitte on their economic impact report and met with senior officials and Ministers from the following ministries and agencies: Ontario Cannabis Store; Ministry of Finance; Attorney General; AGCO; and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.



HEALTH POLICY COUNCIL

Launched in April 2020, the OCC's Health Policy Council is composed of a diverse cross-section of our members who come together to exchange ideas, inform OCC priorities, and provide government with timely recommendations. The Council tackled several issues facing Ontario's health care system. We also heard from many guest speakers, including representatives from government and subject matter experts, on virtual care and digital health. The Health Policy Council brings a unique perspective at a time when informing government decisions on this file is more important than ever.



2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Letters to government on issues including delayed [routine immunizations](#), interrupted [cancer care](#), the impact an [aging population](#) will have on our health care system, and concerns around [health human resources](#).
 - » Informed the Chamber's [Playbook for Employers, federal](#) and [provincial](#) budget submissions and [election priorities document](#).
- Contributed to other seminal policy documents, including [LSO's](#) and [OMA's](#) respective reports.
- The Council's increased presence and output resulted in measurable changes in government policy: a [life sciences strategy](#) aimed at growing Ontario's medical technology sector; implementing a permanent framework for virtual care in Ontario; improving access to mental health supports for essential workers, and [measures](#) to address health care system capacity constraints.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Better understanding and addressing Ontario's skills mismatch and workforce development issues has been a longstanding priority for the OCC and its members. COVID-19 has had an undeniable impact on Ontario's labour force, accelerating trends that were already underway and exacerbating issues that predated the pandemic. The scale and severity of Ontario's labour shortages were underscored in our [2022 Ontario Economic Report](#) which found most sectors (62 percent) are facing labour shortages and expect to continue facing them over the next year.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mobilized quickly to respond to government consultations on [Phase 2 of the Skilled Trades Panel's review process](#), a [new micro-credentialing framework](#) and a submission on [the future of work in Ontario](#).
- Informed the Chamber's [federal](#) and [provincial](#) budget submissions and [election priorities document](#).
- Participated in a number of high-level meetings and roundtables with Ministers and senior bureaucrats and received exclusive briefings from the Financial Accountability Office and Statistics Canada on the latest labour data and what it means for Ontario's labour market.
- The Council's increased presence and output resulted in measurable gains in government policy: funding for skills training programs directed towards Ontarians disproportionately impacted by COVID-19; a new micro-credentialing strategy and framework; the formalization of a childcare deal with the federal government; and a jobs training credit to support workforce development amidst a rapidly changing labour market.



ONTARIO VACCINATION SUPPORT COUNCIL

The OCC established the Ontario Vaccination Support Council, founded by over 250 businesses, organizations, and the Ontario Chamber Network to harness the expertise and resources of the organizations involved to help with Ontario's historic COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Representing hundreds of thousands of employees from across the Province, the Council volunteered support in a number of critical areas for Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination effort.

“With support from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce-led vaccination support council, companies and labour groups jumped on board to help, including Alectra Utilities, Energy Solutions, Nordion, Framatome, Kinectrics, NPX, CGI, BWXT, E.S. Fox, SNC-Lavalin, LiUNA, the Power Workers’ Union and Ontario building and construction trades council. All of these groups joined forces to contribute and pull this clinic together in just five days.

Speaker, we will only end the pandemic when we end it in every region of Ontario. I offer my sincere thanks to these groups who have demonstrated true Ontario spirit by reaching out beyond their footprints to help their fellow Ontarians and for their help in powering Ontario forward through COVID-19.”

- Amarjot Sandhu, MPP – Brampton West (Hansard - June 1, 2021)



PUBLICATIONS

Credible research and analysis are at the centre of our advocacy efforts and are strengthened by the power of the chamber network.

In addition to comprehensive policy reports, we, along with our local chambers and boards of trade, respond to emerging issues through letters and submissions to government decision-makers that are based on principled thinking and crafted through direct consultation with our membership.



POLICY BRIEFS & REPORTS



Report: Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19 | May 2021

As the province recovers from the COVID-19 crisis, access to the right forms of capital will be fundamental to the rebound of small businesses and entrepreneurs. The OCC released a policy brief on May 26 called Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19. Our brief looked at existing financing options for small businesses at various stages of growth, pressure placed on capital due to the pandemic, and policy recommendations.



Report: Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities | July 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified fiscal challenges for municipalities across Ontario. The OCC feels there is a window of opportunity to re-align the funding relationship between orders of government and encourage pro-growth decision-making. Our latest policy report offered a series of recommendations for Ontario's provincial and municipal governments to support fiscal sustainability, economic development, and growth in communities across the province for years to come.

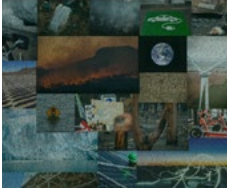


Report: 2021 Mental Wellness in the Workplace: A Playbook for Employers and SMEs | October 2021

Ahead of World Mental Health Day, the OCC released two resources for the business community in partnership with Sun Life - [Mental Wellness in the Workplace: A Playbook for Employers](#) and [SMEs](#). These resources provide employers of varying sizes with strategies and supports to help bridge the gap – from fostering a health-focused culture to effectively communicating with employees to encouraging staff to access free government resources.



THE CLIMATE CATALYST
Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy



Report: The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy | *November 2021*

Climate change poses a significant and material threat to individuals, businesses, and natural habitats across Ontario. However, confronting the climate crisis also comes with opportunities for innovation, job creation, and regional economic development. The OCC's report outlines how different sectors in Ontario are tackling climate change and how our province can lead in the global transition to net-zero. The paper provides concrete case studies and recommendations around clean energy, transportation, cleantech, finance, exports, waste, buildings, climate adaptation, and more.



Ontario Economic Report | *February 2022*

The sixth annual Ontario Economic Report included new data revealing businesses' policy priorities and challenges related to the pandemic, labour shortages, and more. It provided timely insights into business confidence and fiscal outlook in Ontario after nearly two years shrouded in uncertainty. The 2022 OER is fully digital and interactive, allowing readers to filter and compare data relevant to their sectors and communities.



Commissioned Report: "Filling the Talent Gap in Ontario's Food and Beverage Manufacturing Sector" with Food and Beverage Ontario | *April 2022*

Although Canada's food and beverage (F&B) manufacturing sector is incredibly diverse, it is estimated that 25,000 jobs will go unfilled by 2025. Food and Beverage Ontario (FBO) has commissioned the Chamber to prepare a report that examines this projected labour shortage. In addition to secondary research, the report draws on over 20 interviews with F&B manufacturing employers, post-secondary institutions, newcomer employment/settlement agencies, and business associations.



LETTERS TO GOVERNMENT

Line 5 Support Letter to Canada's Special Committee on Canada-US Relations | *March 2021*

In partnership with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the OCC submitted a letter outlining the critical benefits Line 5 provides to both sides of the border to Canada's Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States. Our letter urged federal officials to advocate for the continued operation of Line 5 to protect local jobs and energy affordability while minimizing the safety risks, environmental impacts, and strain on regional infrastructure of alternative transportation methods.

Routine Immunizations During the COVID-19 Pandemic | *April 2021*

The OCC wrote a letter to Ministers Elliott and Lecce examining how the decline in routine immunizations for children and adults during the pandemic could lead to the outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases in Ontario. This would create an additional public health challenge when the province, our healthcare system, and the economy are already grappling with COVID-19. The letter provides the Province with several recommendations in advance of National Immunization Awareness Week.

Concerns with the Ontario Small Business Grant | *April 2021*

On April 29, the OCC issued a letter to Ministers Fedeli and Sarkaria that summarized the feedback we received from the Ontario Chamber Network on the shortcomings associated with Ontario Small Business Grant. More specifically: lack of communication with applicants who were denied financial support; a lack of clarity around the appeals process; technical issues with the online system; and a short timeframe for businesses to apply. The Chamber encouraged the Province to not only address these issues with the current grant but also consider them for the Ontario Tourism and Hospitality Small Business Support Grant.

Interrupted Routine Cancer Care During COVID-19 | *May 2021*

On May 11, the OCC sent a letter to Ministers Hadju and Elliott on interrupted routine cancer care during COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, it was estimated that over 225,000 Canadians would be diagnosed with cancer in 2020. However, cancer diagnoses have fallen because patients have been reluctant to seek care during this crisis. The province is also grappling with a surgical backlog as non-emergency surgeries were postponed. The letter outlines five recommendations, including urging the Province to leverage existing public education campaigns to encourage Ontarians not to delay screenings and diagnostic tests and calling on the Province to invest in the medical laboratory sector. The letter was developed with input from the Health Policy Council.



Ontario Health Data Platform Research Agreement | *May 2021*

On May 19, the OCC wrote a letter to Ministers Romano and Elliott in response to a clause in the research agreement that the university sector was asked to sign to access the Ontario Health Data Platform (OHDP). The clause stipulated that any new intellectual property (IP) generated by universities using the OHDP would be owned by the province. The Chamber outlined concerns about the wholesale government ownership of IP generated utilizing this platform, including potentially deterring the private sector from investing in innovative health and life sciences research conducted in universities across the province. The OCC encouraged the Province to reconsider this clause and bring together representatives from Ontario's universities, the private sector, and relevant ministries to develop a common research agreement template that meets the needs of all stakeholders without stifling university-industry collaboration.

Recommendations for Ontario's Reopening Plan | *May 2021*

On May 19, the OCC wrote a letter to Premier Doug Ford outlining our recommendations for the post-pandemic reopening of Ontario's economy. Our letter stressed the importance of a clear and transparent roadmap with evidence-based metrics, safe and equitable operating guidelines that apply to all businesses regardless of establishment size, rapid testing to accompany vaccine deployment, and smart travel policies in collaboration with the federal government.

Supporting Biomass Operations in Ontario | *August 2021*

The OCC wrote to Ontario's Minister of Energy to express support for integrated forestry operations in Ontario that utilize biomass power production. Biomass, or fuel derived from organic materials, is a carbon-neutral source of energy and an important pillar of the forest products industry, mining industry, and regional economies in northern and eastern Ontario. Our letter encouraged the Province to view biomass generation holistically, to meet forecasted demand for incremental power, support energy security, unlock regional economic development opportunities, and reduce carbon emissions in Ontario.

Vax-Pass Tenets | *August 2021*

In consultation with legal experts at McCarthy Tétrault, and in absence of government guidance on workplace vaccination policies, the OCC released *Vax-Pass Tenets*, a proof-of-immunization framework outlining five guiding principles for businesses to consider: safety, science, accommodation, privacy, and transparency.

Coalition Letter: Ontario Privacy Consultation | *September 2021*

As individual businesses and associations responded to the Government of Ontario's privacy white paper, the OCC authored a coalition letter to Premier Ford and Minister Romano, co-signed by 17 associations from different sectors. The letter reinforced shared perspectives and argued why it is inadvisable to introduce privacy legislation for the private sector given existing federal protections and ongoing efforts to modernize the national framework.



Timelines and an Implementation Plan for OHS Title Protection |

September 2021

On September 23, the OCC sent a follow-up letter to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development about title protection for occupational health and safety professionals. Although the Ontario Prevention Council encouraged the province to implement title protection for these professionals in June 2021, the Chamber's letter noted comparable details and legislation have yet to be released or developed by the province. The letter encourages policymakers to establish clear timelines and an actionable plan in consultation with stakeholders. The OCC and the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals subsequently met with the Minister's Office on October 18 to discuss further.

Leveraging Therapeutics in the Fight Against COVID-19 | *October 2021*

On October 4, the OCC sent a letter to the Minister of Health on COVID-19 therapeutics. The Chamber noted proper consideration should be given to COVID-19 therapeutics that have Health Canada interim order authorization or approval in Canada. The letter offered several recommendations, including encouraging the province to develop an implementation plan as it relates to the availability of COVID-19 therapeutics, identifying a lead within Ontario Health to champion this, and improving awareness among patients.

Coalition Letter on Childcare | *October 2021*

On October 18, the OCC co-signed a coalition letter with the Ontario Non-profit Network and YWCA Toronto, urging the Government of Ontario to reach a bilateral childcare agreement with the federal government. The letter emphasized the role of childcare as a down payment on Ontario's economic recovery and outlined provisions to help create flexible, high-quality childcare options for Ontarians.

Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) | *November 2021*

In a letter to Minister Rickford, the OCC encouraged the Government of Ontario to remove barriers that preclude the industry from exploring carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) projects in Ontario. We note that CCUS is a safe, clean energy technology that would help to enable the cost-effective decarbonization of heavy industries that are more difficult to electrify while enabling businesses in the province to access new market opportunities and federal programs.

Letter to Premier Ford: Supporting Small Business | *December 2021*

As governments began imposing new restrictions in response to the Omicron variant, the OCC wrote to Premier Ford calling for targeted small business supports. Our letter noted that many provincial supports had expired, and federal ones had been greatly reduced. We urged the government to accompany new public health restrictions with direct relief and loan forgiveness. Further, we urged the government to reduce uncertainty for businesses and workers by providing a long-term plan with transparent metrics to inform future public health measures.



Letter to Prime Minister Trudeau: Supporting Small Business |

December 2021

Similar to our letter to Premier Ford, the OCC also wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau to explain the need for small business supports in response to new public health restrictions.

Ensuring Sufficient Health Human Resources (HHR) for Ontario |

January 2022

COVID-19 and the emergence of the Omicron variant have put a significant strain on the healthcare system and healthcare providers alike. This letter builds on the HPC's [previous](#) advocacy by encouraging the province to develop a coordinated, evidence-based HHR strategy for Ontario. These recommendations can ensure the area has qualified HHR professionals to meet current and future needs, and patients continue to have access to quality and timely care.

Design of an Optional Enhanced TOU Rate | *February 2022*

On February 17, the OEB presented their proposed design of an optional enhanced TOU rate to further incent the shifting of electricity demand away from peak periods, as requested by the Ministry of Energy. In the OCC's feedback letter, we raised concerns with the under-recovery of costs, which would lead to higher rates for some businesses. We stressed that savings should be balanced against anticipated benefits to the system. Benefits should only accrue to participants who make behavioural changes, and customers who do not participate should not experience increased rates.

Inducement Rules for Licensed Cannabis Retailers | *February 2022*

Following the [OCC's submission](#) to the AGCO on proposed changes to inducement rules for licensed cannabis retailers, the Chamber authored a letter to share the OCPC's concerns with the Government's decision to prohibit in-house brands or white label products. The letter outlines how the decision would undermine confidence in the regulatory process and erode the legal sector's ability to compete, differentiate and compete.

Supporting Critical Transmission Infrastructure in Ontario | *February*

2022

In response to the growing electricity needs of Southwestern Ontario, the OCC published a letter in support of the Ministry of Energy's proposal to ensure the timely development of key electricity transmission projects in the region. We further outlined the importance of proactively investing in critical infrastructure like transmission lines to support business growth and competitiveness, electrification, economic recovery, climate resiliency, and local economies of scale and supply chain networks, given the ongoing pandemic and upward trend of extreme weather events.



Internet (iGaming framework) | *February 2022*

The modernization of gaming revenue in Ontario is designed to capture revenue that might otherwise go to offshore gaming providers; however, the Government's current approach could have adverse impacts on land-based Casino jobs and operators. [This letter](#) urges the Province to conduct meaningful consultations, specifically with First Nations and Indigenous communities currently operating gaming activities.

SUBMISSIONS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Submission to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission on the Darlington New Nuclear Project | *April 2021*

On April 23, the OCC filed a submission with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) summarizing our perspectives on the value of Ontario Power Generation's Darlington New Nuclear Project. The submission emphasized the economic and environmental benefits of small modular reactors (SMRs), safety, and other considerations related to the project.

Memorandum from the OCC's Energy Policy Council on Energy, Climate, and Economic Recovery | *June 2021*

Following a meeting between our Energy Policy Council and the Government of Ontario in May, the OCC released a document outlining win-win solutions supporting economic recovery and climate action by leveraging Ontario's clean energy advantage. Our memo explored several opportunities around electrification, hydrogen, renewable natural gas, small modular reactors, carbon capture, and more.

Submission: Skilled Trades Panel Consultation (Feedback on Phase 2) | *July 2021*

Informed by the Workforce Development Council, the OCC responded to the government's consultation on ongoing skilled trade reforms, which focused on four areas: trade prescription, the criteria for de-prescribing trades, the process for classifying a trade as compulsory or voluntary, and opportunities to foster greater inclusivity and diversity within the trades.

Submission: Leading the Future of Work in Ontario | *July 2021*

Informed by the Workforce Development Council, the OCC submitted recommendations to the Government's Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee on the future of work in Ontario. The submission included a broad range of recommendations focused on three pillars: economic recovery, strengthening Ontario's competitive position, and supporting workers. Notably, our recommendations addressed the rise in technology platforms, freelance work, and the increasing proportion of the labour force engaged in the sector, calling on the Government to require app-based platforms to contribute to flexible benefit funds that meet the needs of workers.



Submission: Modernizing Privacy in Ontario | *September 2021*

With input from businesses, the OCC responded to a [white paper](#) by the Government of Ontario regarding privacy modernization. Our submission emphasized the need to avoid a patchwork of provincial rules for the private sector, which would likely have significant unintended consequences – particularly for small businesses, non-profit organizations, and individuals who increasingly rely on digital services. We also commented on specific technical proposals around data portability, consent, governance programs, automated decision-making, oversight, and de-identified information.

Submission: AGCO Cannabis Inducement Survey | *September 2021*

The OCC's Ontario Cannabis Policy Council responded to a survey from the AGCO on proposed amendments on inducements in the cannabis industry between retail stores and Licensed Producers. Our response outlined our concerns with the new Standards and the need for clarity on the underlying problems the AGCO is trying to address through the proposed regulatory changes.

Submission: Competition Bureau Notice of Study on Digital Health | *January 2022*

In addition to outlining how digital health and virtual care to benefit patients, healthcare providers, and the healthcare system, this submission examines challenges facing patients, clinicians, and the private sector, like the lack of interoperable health data infrastructure and the cumbersome nature of public sector procurement. The submission also identifies several opportunities, such as the benefits associated with pan-Canadian licensure for physicians.

Policy Primer: Addressing Ontario's Growing Electricity Needs | *February, 2022*

After more than a decade of strong electricity supply, Ontario is entering a period of growing shortfalls as demand grows and there is constrain on existing resources. In partnership with Bruce Power Net-Zero and informed by the OCC's Energy Policy Council, our first Policy Primer discusses the need for Ontario to provide a clear path forward to secure reliable, affordable, and sustainable resources for future generations.

Policy Primer: Supply Chain Disruptions and Delays | *March 2022*

The effects of global supply chain issues are widespread and impact businesses and consumers alike around the world. In addition to managing the challenges of an ongoing pandemic, Ontario businesses must now grapple with significant disruptions and delays to their supply, constraining their ability to meet consumer demand. The effects of global supply chain issues are widespread and impact businesses and consumers alike around the world. In addition to managing the challenges of an ongoing pandemic, Ontario businesses must now grapple with significant disruptions and delays to their supply, constraining their ability to meet consumer demand. This piece outlines where the issues are occurring along the supply chain and offers pragmatic policy solutions to help alleviate the problem.



2022 Provincial budget submission | *April 2022*

In this year's budget submission, the OCC urges the Government of Ontario to use Budget 2022 as an opportunity to both strengthen its immediate response to the ongoing pandemic and lay the groundwork for economic recovery. The government must ensure sufficient resources go toward the hardest-hit sectors, including small businesses, restaurants, and tourism industry operators, while women and other demographic groups warrant targeted support to assure their full labour market participation during the recovery phase. The three pillars in our submission are economic recovery, future-proofing Ontario, and modernizing regulations and fiscal policy.

2022 Federal budget submission | *April 2022*

To drive Ontario's post-pandemic recovery, we emphasized the need for the government to provide targeted support for the hardest-hit sectors in addition to addressing the disproportionate effects felt by small businesses and demographics. The submission also noted the need for partnership across all levels of government to lay the foundation for the province's long-term growth and economic resilience.



EVENTS

The OCC was proud to host numerous policy and signature events throughout the past year – all in the virtual world. Our webinars centred around advocacy, consultation, and information sharing. Additionally, our lineup of signature events celebrated business in Ontario, connected our members with government decision-makers, and demonstrated our thought leadership to major stakeholders.



SIGNATURE EVENTS

Annual General Meeting and Convention | *May 2021*

The OCC's 109th AGM and Convention was held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Ontario Chamber Network heard from the Hon. Christine Elliot, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, and Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Despite the virtual format, the network participated in a lively policy resolution debate to guide the network's advocacy for the year. The awards presentation included the introduction of a new award, The Power of the Pivot, to recognize the ability to adapt and change services to meet member needs during a challenging time.

Ontario Business Achievement Awards | *October – December 2021*

The OCC recognized business success during the Ontario Business Achievement Awards and those who support it. Following the virtual format from the previous year, each of the six episodes highlighted [Difference Makers](#). These included small businesses, teachers, food producers, and cooperation between the private and public sectors. The OCC presented Kingsdale Advisors' Executive Chairman and Founder, Wes Hall, with the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award and Paramount Fine Foods' President and CEO, Mohamad Fakhri, with the 2021 CEO of the Year Award. The awards aired on TLN on November 13, with greetings from cabinet ministers and Premier Ford.

Ontario Economic Report Launch Event | *February 2022*

To mark the launch of the sixth annual Ontario Economic Report (OER), the OCC hosted a webinar that provided attendees with key highlights from the latest member survey. This year's OER sheds light on the aggregate impacts of COVID-19 and the challenges ahead as labour shortages, inflation, and supply chain challenges continue to impact businesses. The event also included a fireside chat between Mark Poweska, President and CEO of Hydro One, and Rocco Rossi, President and CEO of the OCC.

Virtual Advocacy Series | *March 2022*

The 2022 Virtual Advocacy Series brought together the Ontario Chamber Network with elected and non-elected representatives to discuss shared priorities outlined in the OCC's 2022 election priorities document, Vote Prosperity, ahead of the 2022 provincial election. This year, the series included participation from all four of Ontario's political parties. Chambers of commerce and board of trade representatives from across the province attended fifteen meetings over the three-day event. These included meetings with cabinet ministers, the Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Hon. Nina Tangri, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, the Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Energy, Hon. Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities, Hon. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job



Creation, and Trade. The Chamber Network also heard from the Leaders of the New Democratic Party, the Ontario Liberal Party, and the Green Party of Ontario and met with key members of each caucus.

COVID-19 WEBINAR SERIES AND ROUNDTABLES

To adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OCC pivoted to virtual events with the support of our partners. These events have provided our Chamber Network, and corporate members with timely discussions focused on critical issues facing the business community.

In Conversation with Jagmeet Singh, Leader of Canada's NDP | April 2021

The Big Shift: Changes in Canadian Manufacturing | April 2021

The SME Skills Gap: Innovative Approaches to Responding | April 2021

Launch Event: *Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19* | *May 2021*

The virtual launch event featured a panel discussion with industry experts and remarks from the Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Ontario's Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Thank you to Meridian Credit Union and Innovate cities for their partnership on this project.

Roundtables: OCC & Sun Life Virtual Consultations on Mental Wellness in the Workplace | *May 2021*

As part of the Chamber's [partnership with Sun Life](#), the OCC successfully hosted two virtual consultations with representatives from the Chamber's five Policy Councils as well as mental health subject matter experts. The feedback gathered during these meetings was synthesized and used to inform the [Mental Health Playbook](#). This resource includes updated statistics and an expanded list of resources employers can leverage to promote mental wellness in the workplace. The meeting also featured Associate Ministers [Tibollo](#) and [Sarkaria](#), who delivered greetings and provided updates on government initiatives related to mental health during COVID-19.

Building a Modern Provincial Government | June 2021

Autonomous and Electric Vehicles: Opportunities for Korea and Canada's Automobile Industry | June 2021



In Conversation with Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party of Canada | June 2021

What Businesses Need to Know About Provincial and Federal Third-Party Election Rules | June 2021

The Competitiveness of Ontario's Cities | July 2021

As engines of innovation and entrepreneurship, the competitiveness of Ontario's cities will be integral to the province's long-term growth. Recently, the COVID-19 crisis has placed a tremendous fiscal strain on municipalities and their ability to invest in the infrastructure and services needed to remain competitive. The OCC partnered with KPMG Canada for a timely discussion and the launch of our report, [Better Budgets: Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities](#). A panel of experts from businesses and municipalities discussed how to advance the competitiveness of Ontario's cities in a post-pandemic era.

AI in Action: Real Applications for Your Business | September 2021

Small Business Month Series | October 2021

- [Indigenous Entrepreneurship Forum](#)
- [Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Talent Pool](#)

Event: Virtual Care and Digital Health with the Ontario Medical Association and Roche | October 2021

The OCC hosted a webinar on virtual care and digital health in partnership with the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) and Roche. The panel included experts from the OMA, OntarioMD, Roche, and the Digital Technology Supercluster and the event attracted 250 registrations. Speakers explored some of the themes outlined in the Chamber's policy brief entitled, [Realizing the Full Potential of Virtual Care in Ontario](#).

The discussion also focused on what types of digital technologies are being developed to support Canadian patients, the challenges physicians face when implementing these solutions, and what recommendations the Government of Ontario should consider.

Event: Climate Catalyst Report Launch | November 2021

As COP26 was underway in Glasgow, the OCC hosted a panel event to discuss Ontario's role in the global transition to net-zero. The event featured an overview of our report – [The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy](#) – and a panel discussion with experts from Ontario Power Generation, Enbridge Gas, the University of Toronto, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada.



Climate Seminar #1: Ontario's Advantage in Clean, Green, and Sustainable Technology | *November 2021*

When it comes to cleantech, Ontario punches well above its weight. Researchers and companies across the province are developing low-carbon solutions to support climate action – from battery storage to biochar, water treatment devices, vertical farms, carbon capture, and the world's first battery-powered underground mine. In November, the OCC hosted a virtual discussion about Ontario's cleantech advantage, key challenges faced by the sector, and opportunities to unlock its long-term potential. Speakers included representatives from the Ontario Clean Technology Industry Association, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, Business Development Bank of Canada, University of Toronto Scarborough, and Smart Prosperity Institute.

Climate Seminar #2: The Hydrogen Economy | *December 2021*

This installment of our Climate Action Series focused on low-carbon hydrogen and its various applications for energy storage, heavy industry, long-distance transportation, and buildings. At this event, we discussed how businesses in Ontario are developing and using hydrogen – and how governments are supporting them. Speakers included the Hon. Todd Smith and a panel of experts from Atura Power, Enbridge, and Bruce Power Net-Zero.

Lost Taxes: Can Addressing the Underground Economy Spur Economic Recovery? | December 2021

Climate Seminar #3: Small Modular Reactors | *February 2022*

Our third seminar in the Climate Action Series focused on small modular reactors (SMRs). While SMRs are smaller than traditional nuclear reactors, they promise the same benefits – low emissions, reliable baseload power, and the ability to operate around the clock under all weather conditions. Our event featured experts from Ontario Power Generation, BWXT Canada, GE Hitachi, SNC-Lavalin, Durham Region, and the Canadian Nuclear Association to discuss the economic and environmental benefits of Ontario-made SMRs.

Climate Seminar #4: How Sustainable Are the Natural Resource Sectors? | *February 2022*

Oil and gas, forestry, and mining account for a significant share of jobs and tax revenues in communities across Ontario. But what of their environmental impact? The OCC hosted its fourth seminar in the Climate Action Series, exploring how the natural resource sectors are investing in the global transition to net-zero. Our panel included speakers from CN, Noront Resources, Imperial Oil, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, and the Wabun Tribal Council.



Webinar: The Power of Difference | *March 2022*

The OCC, the Discover Ability Network, and the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub celebrated International Women's Day by hosting the Power of the Difference. The panel provided insight into the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and its impact on an inclusive economic recovery.

Climate Seminar #5: Zero-Emission Vehicles: The Road Ahead | *March 2022*

This webinar focused on zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). Transportation accounts for the largest share of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions. In 2021, the federal government mandated that 100% of all new cars and passenger trucks be zero-emission by 2035. Our panel of experts discussed the technology, infrastructure, and policies needed to drive ZEVs in Ontario.



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 progress made on each resolution.

COMPETITIVENESS

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

- ✓ **Action:** In 2019, the OCC prepared a submission recommending that the Province formally recognize equivalency between the Endangered Species Act and Crown Forest Sustainability Act and ensure all species-at-risk policies and prescriptions are subject to socio-economic impact analyses.

Improving the Process for Establishing Regulations That Impact Business

- ✓ **Action:** In 2020, the Government of Ontario enacted the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act, which will limit additional red tape by creating obligations for all of Ontario's ministries to follow when creating new legislation, regulations, policies, and forms.

Support Ontario's Steel Industry and its Supply Chain Clusters

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the federal government announced financial support for the electrification of Algoma Steel as part of its Net Zero Accelerator Initiative. The Government of Ontario's plan, *Driving Prosperity – The Future of Ontario's Automotive Sector*, recognizes the need to transform the province's supply chain. In 2022, the Province announced \$500 million in loan and grant support for ArcelorMittal Dofasco's transition from coal-fed coke ovens and blast furnaces with new, low-emission technology.

Supporting Ontario to Become a Leader in Global Mining Innovation

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the Government of Ontario released the next phase of its auto strategy, which aims to secure production mandates for hybrid and electric vehicles, create a domestic battery ecosystem, and position Ontario as a North American automotive innovation hub. The Province will work in partnership with industry to establish and support an electric battery supply chain ecosystem that connects Northern Ontario's mineral wealth with the manufacturing strength of Southern Ontario. In addition, this work will attract a new battery assembly plant and increase exports of Ontario-made auto parts and innovations. In March 2022, the Province announced its five-year Critical Minerals Strategy.

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

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC engaged with key industry stakeholders to discuss concerns around wholesale pricing. In December 2021, the Province announced cuts to wholesale prices for alcohol purchased by businesses from the LCBO. These cuts will effectively save businesses 20% when compared to retail prices. The new framework also streamlines licensing and renewals for businesses through a single primary license.

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:** Throughout the pandemic, the OCC has engaged with the government and published multiple public statements highlighting the continued need for predictability for Ontario's business community.

Keeping Ontario's Small Business Support Services Strong

- ✓ **Action:** During meetings with government officials, the OCC called for continued support for small businesses to aid in their reopening efforts and drive a strong economic recovery. The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission calls for any future restrictions intended to control the spread of COVID-19 to be met with targeted relief and proportionate support programs, loan forgiveness, and extensions on payment terms for impacted workers and small businesses.

Reducing Permitting Delays in Mining Exploration

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario has 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. Changes require 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. Additional measures to reduce red tape for the mining sector were announced in Ontario's 2021 Spring Red Tape Reduction Package.

Support For Free Market Opportunities to Address High Electricity Prices

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the Ontario government unveiled a demonstration project in London to explore how a community can use net-metering to create renewable energy and reduce electricity costs for individuals and businesses. This development will see the integration of solar panels, solar packages, electric vehicle chargers, and other innovative elements that will help to reduce energy costs while working towards a more sustainable future.

Addressing the Challenges of Ontario's Largest Economic Sector: Small Business

- ✓ **Action:** The Province has continued to release biannual red tape reduction bills and is currently developing a Small Business Success Strategy. Red tape issues were highlighted in our 2022 provincial and federal budget submissions, [Capital is Key](#) report, and in meetings with government.

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

- ✓ **Action:** In the 2021 Fall Economic Statement, the Province announced an investment to bolster road access to the Ring of Fire. In November 2021, the Ontario government released the next phase of its Auto Strategy to secure production mandates for hybrid and electric vehicles. The Province will work in partnership with industry to establish and support an electric battery supply chain ecosystem that connects Northern Ontario's mineral wealth with the manufacturing strength of Southern Ontario.

In the Spirit of Business

- ✓ **Action:** As part of the province's 2021 budget, the government announced that local craft beer producers would be able to sell their products at farmers' markets in the upcoming season. In December 2021, the province announced cuts to wholesale prices for alcohol purchased from the LCBO.

“I was thrilled to join the Attorney General, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ontario Craft Brewers and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce earlier this month in St. Jacobs to celebrate this change and learn about the benefits it brings to craft breweries in Waterloo region, breweries like Stockyards in Kitchener, which you can now find at the St. Jacobs market.

We are opening up new opportunities for them at a crucial time so they can grow their business and support the local economy. I, like many others, am happy to be able to add craft breweries to the list of local businesses I can support at farmers' markets across my riding.”

- Mike Harris, MPP Kitchener-Conestoga (Hansard - October 25, 2021)

Support Ontario's Forestry Industry by Establishing an Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's report, Capital is Key, called for governments to develop a loan guarantee program targeted toward costs associated with starting new ventures such as equipment, franchise fees, real estate, and marketing. Throughout the pandemic, the OCC's COVID-19 advocacy has called for financing for different sectors of the economy from both federal and provincial levels of government.

Support Ontario's Growing Cannabis Industry

- ✓ **Action:** Supporting Ontario's Budding Cannabis Industry contains several recommendations to support growth within the sector. In 2020, our Ontario Cannabis Policy Council met with the Ontario Cannabis Store and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to discuss workforce development needs and other opportunities for growth. The council also made a submission to the government discussing the potential for cannabis consumption establishments. Our 2020 and 2022 Ontario budget submissions urged the Province to allow licensed producers to directly negotiate with recreational cannabis retailers.

Make the Ring of Fire a Provincial Priority

- ✓ **Action:** In the 2021 Fall Economic Statement, the government proposed amendments to the Far North Act, 2010 that would keep current land-use plans in place and retain provisions that allow for joint land-use planning for far north First Nations while amending or repealing current prohibitions on development in areas without an approved land-use plan thus opening mineral development opportunities in the Ring of Fire. In addition, the province committed close to \$1 billion to support the planning and construction of an all-season road network and other projects in the North.

Establish a Business Energy Audit Program

- ✓ **Action:** The merits of an Energy Audit program were discussed in the OCC's 2021 report, *The Climate Catalyst*. Calls for the re-establishment of such a program were made to the Minister of Energy in letters and meetings.

Building Ontario Back Through a New Advanced Manufacturing and Industrial Strategy

- ✓ **Action:** In November 2021, the Government of Ontario released Phase 2 of their automobile strategy, *Driving Prosperity*, aimed at positioning Ontario as a North American hub for developing and building the cars of the future through emerging technologies and advanced manufacturing processes. Meetings between the Governments of Canada and the United States raised issues discussed in this resolution, calling on the US to consider a North American approach to procurement. In addition, the OCC's report, *The Climate Catalyst*, called on the Government of Ontario to outline how it will use proceeds from its Emissions Performance Standards to support industrial emitters' investments in decarbonization. The need for a comprehensive manufacturing strategy was also discussed throughout the year with the OCC's Health Policy Council.

Making Ontario a Leader in Circular Economy

- ✓ **Action:** In the OCC's report, *The Climate Catalyst*, we discuss concerns around the complexity of Ontario's new rules and waste policies that would make producers responsible for the waste they produce. We called on the government to provide sufficient guidance to facilitate the transition and improve cohesiveness across jurisdictions to reduce red tape for businesses operating across the country. These issues were discussed with the government during meetings and in prior letters.

Supporting Smaller (Local) Vendors: Embed Community Benefits Clauses into Public Contracts and Remove Irrelevant Disqualifiers

- ✓ **Action:** In the OCC's report, *Capital is Key*, we called on the Government of Ontario to improve access to public procurement opportunities for small businesses by addressing administrative, financial, and information barriers. These recommendations are echoed in the chamber's 2022 provincial budget submission. In March 2022, the Government of Ontario launched the BOBI, aimed at strengthening supply chains and boosting domestic production of critical goods.

The Case for Levelling the Field

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's Workforce Development Council has been working to address the labour shortage, and skills mismatch through written submissions and government briefings. In June 2021, we wrote to the Government calling for the development of a Health Human Resources (HHR) strategy to support Ontario's aging population. A subsequent letter was sent to the Province with recommendations from our Health Policy Council as it relates to developing a coordinated, evidence based HHR strategy for Ontario. In March 2022, the Governments of Canada and Ontario signed a historic childcare agreement that will increase the number of childcare spaces and reduce the cost to parents, further supporting increased labour market participation by women.

Vaccine Manufacturing in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** In March 2021, the Governments of Canada and Ontario announced an investment of \$470 million to Sanofi Pasteur. The company aims to build a new influenza vaccine manufacturing plant in North York. In May 2021, the federal government announced a \$200 million investment to support mRNA vaccine production by the Resilience Biotechnologies plant in Mississauga, ON. Once complete, the new plant will be able to produce as many as 640 million mRNA vaccines per year. In March 2022, the Province released its new life science strategy, *Taking Life Sciences to the Next Level*. Under Phase 1 of the plan, the government aims to “secure new vaccine and medicine manufacturing mandates and commercial-scale investments by leveraging Invest Ontario to help to grow and diversify Ontario’s biomanufacturing sector.”

FISCAL / TAXATION

Getting Ontario Back to Fiscal Balance

- ✓ **Action:** The 2021 budget projected that it would take until 2029 to balance Ontario’s budget. The need to develop a long-term plan for Ontario’s debt is a key recommendation in the OCC’s provincial election platform. The OCC’s report, *Better Budgets*, provides government with recommendations regarding local fiscal sustainability.

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

- ✓ **Action:** Recommendations from this resolution were discussed with the Minister of Finance during an Ontario Business Advisory Council meeting.

Achieving Property Tax Fairness Across Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** Our report, *Better Budgets*, provides the Province with several recommendations derived from this resolution, including the need to undertake a comprehensive, forward-looking review of Ontario’s tax system and to extend the pause on the existing property tax assessment cycle until a more equitable and efficient property tax regime can be established.

Regional Approach to Provincial Procurement Reform

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC provided the government with recommendations to improve procurement outcomes in its 2021 provincial budget submission. A 2021 submission from our Infrastructure Policy Council noted that improving access to public sector procurement would improve competitiveness and productivity in the public sector and the economy more broadly. In March 2022, the Province passed the *Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act*, which mandates public sector entities to give Ontario businesses preference when conducting procurements for goods and services under a specified threshold amount.

Increasing Mine Stimulus Through the Ontario Flow-Through Share Tax

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission includes a recommendation to "accelerate mining exploration and development further by increasing the Ontario Flow-Through Tax Credit from 5 percent to 25 percent."

Raise Tax Credits for Ontario Charities to a Competitive Level

- ✓ **Action:** Issues and recommendations discussed in this resolution were discussed with industry stakeholders, including the YWCA, throughout 2021.

Review Transfers of Responsibilities Between the Provincial and Municipal Governments to Improve Efficiency, Service Delivery, and Cost

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, OCC released a policy report on the fiscal sustainability of municipalities (*Better Budgets*), calling on the Province to review responsibilities between various levels of government to assess whether residents and taxpayers are better served by these responsibilities residing with the federal, provincial, or municipal governments. This recommendation was also included in our 2022 provincial budget submission.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

Encouraging Municipal Government Collaboration to Address Transit Needs and Gaps

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the OCC released *Better Budgets – Bolstering the Fiscal Resilience of Ontario's Municipalities* advocating for policies that enable and encourage regional collaboration. Our 2022 Provincial budget submission also called on the government to fill transit gaps by expanding GO transit and building partnerships with the private sector.

Enhancing Highway Connectivity

- ✓ **Action:** In November 2021, the Ontario government announced full funding for the Bradford Bypass, a 16.2-kilometre link that will connect Highways 400 and 404.

Improve Ontario's Transportation System with Better Quality Roadways

- ✓ **Action:** The 2021 federal and provincial budgets announced investments in numerous road and bridge projects. The OCC will be engaging with stakeholders on issues discussed in this resolution.

Investing in Northern Ontario's Highway Infrastructure

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's Infrastructure Policy Council has continued to engage with stakeholders to highlight the economic benefits of further infrastructure developments that connect Ontario's north to the south. In its Fall Economic Statement, the province announced the \$1 Billion Community Infrastructure Fund, which aims to further support road construction. In December 2021, the government announced the opening of a 14-kilometer expansion of Highway 69. Further expansions are expected to start in 2023-2024.

Empower All Municipalities to Build and Maintain Essential Infrastructure

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the OCC met with the Hon. Stan Cho, Associate Minister of Transportation, to discuss post-pandemic infrastructure investments, the Ontario Line, and Transit-Oriented Communities. Recommendations to the government were also provided in the OCC's report, *Better Budgets*, with regards to intergovernmental transfers, autonomy, and governance.

Regional Transportation Fare Integration

- ✓ **Action:** Fare integration was discussed in the OCC's report, *Better Budgets*. In March 2022, the Ontario government announced the elimination of fares for riders connecting to and from GO Transit on most municipal transit systems with GO Transit co-fare agreements.

Support for Metrolinx Big Move and Next Wave Priority Projects

- ✓ **Action:** In May 2021, the Government of Canada announced funding for transit investments, including the Yonge North Extension. In July 2021, the province and the federal government announced advanced plans for the expansion, with four stations to be constructed north of Finch Avenue.

An Economic Connection

- ✓ **Action:** The need for further expansion of broadband into rural communities was raised during meetings with Ontario's Minister of Infrastructure. The province and federal governments announced investments in high-speed internet through the Universal Broadband Fund as part of their respective 2021 budgets. In 2022, the Infrastructure Policy Council will spearhead consultations to accelerate the development of broadband regulations in Ontario.

Provincial Transportation Network Connectedness Enhancement

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's Infrastructure Policy Council continues to explore this transportation issue as part of its work around economic recovery. The recommendation from this resolution were discussed with Minister Cho during a roundtable in 2021.

Reducing Traffic Congestion on Ontario's Highways Due to Vehicular Accidents

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the government introduced the Towing and Storage Safety Enforcement Act (TSSEA) 2021 to improve provincial oversight of the towing industry by requiring tow operators, tow truck drivers, and vehicle storage operators to be certified. In 2022, the Province consulted with stakeholders on proposed regulations that outline requirements for industry to follow and how the TSSEA will be overseen.

Developing Infrastructure for the Expansion of Electric Vehicle Market in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's report, *The Climate Catalyst: Ontario's Leadership in the Green Global Economy*, discussed the value of electric vehicle manufacturing to the economy and the need to shift to zero-emission vehicles to meet Canada's climate goals. In March 2022, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of \$91 million to build EV charging infrastructure across the province. The Province also committed to supporting business cases for the conversion of the GO Transit network towards electric and low emissions.

Enbridge Line 5 and Ontario Energy Supplies

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC met with officials and trade representatives to discuss the closure of Line 5 and successfully influenced the government's advocacy with the State of Michigan and the United States Government. In 2020, the OCC wrote a letter to Governor Whitmer expressing our continued support for the operation of Line 5. In Fall 2021, the State of Michigan lost its court challenge against Enbridge. The federal government has submitted an amicus brief stating that Canada and the U.S. continue to engage in talks to settle the dispute under the terms of a 1977 bilateral treaty.

Leveraging Digital Infrastructure to Spur Economic Recovery

- ✓ **Action:** In April 2021, the OCC released *Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario*, calling on the government to create a stream in the Digital Main Street initiative for agriculture producers. In July 2021, the OCC's Workforce Development Council submitted recommendations to the Government of Ontario highlighting the need to modernize digital infrastructure given the rise of remote work. Our 2022 provincial budget submission calls on the government to expand programs targeted toward small business technology adoption, such as Digital Main Street. The OCC will be working on a report in 2022 that focuses on small business technology adoption.

Lowering Our Carbon Footprint Through Energy-Smart Building

- ✓ **Action:** In the OCC's climate report, we call on the provincial and federal governments to offer long-term financing and guarantees for building owners, encourage municipal uptake of district energy systems, and implement other policies to accelerate retrofits and low-carbon homebuilding.

HOUSING

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 consultations to inform the outcomes of these reviews.

Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act

- ✓ **Action:** In July 2020, the Ontario government passed the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, which will reform the Residential Tenancies Act. These amendments will reduce delays in the dispute resolution process and allow landlords to recover costs when tenants act in bad faith. The Chamber Network also raised the issue in meetings with the Ministry of Housing.

Addressing Housing Shortage by Updating the Approvals Process

- ✓ **Action:** In March 2022, following recommendations by the Housing Affordability Taskforce, the Province released the More Homes for Everyone Act. The act includes funding and regulatory measures to streamline municipal approvals, standardize data across municipalities, and facilitate e-permitting. The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission calls on the government to expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects, eliminating any excessive regulatory costs and red tape, including establishing a transparent and fair process around municipal zoning orders (MZOs).

Addressing the Low-Income Housing Crisis

- ✓ **Action:** In March 2022, the Province introduced the More Homes for Everyone Act. Through this Act, the government is creating a new regulatory framework under the Community Housing Renewal Strategy to protect existing community housing stock.

Resolving Ontario's Housing Crisis to Support Economic Growth

- ✓ **Action:** In March 2022, following recommendations by the Housing Affordability Taskforce, the Province released the More Homes for Everyone Act. Through this, the Province has committed to investing up to \$350 million to support municipalities in modernizing and driving the efficiency of their planning and approvals processes. In addition, the province is introducing the Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator to speed up housing and community infrastructure development. The OCC provided the Province with recommendations specific to addressing housing challenges in its 2022 Provincial budget submission.

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 its growth plans and associated regulations. Regarding building accessibility, the Ontario government's Inclusive Community Grants program invested in multiple new projects in 2021, including efforts to make public buildings more accessible in 13 rural communities. In 2022, the Province's Housing Affordability Taskforce called on the government to increase density in neighbourhoods zoned exclusively for single-family homes.

Permitting Municipalities to Use Building Permit Reserves to Encourage Affordable Housing Development

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC will explore recommendations in this resolution as part of our upcoming work on economic recovery and look for opportunities to partner with other organizations on this issue.

Supporting Ontario's Construction Sector by Streamlining the Approvals Process

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2022 Provincial budget submission called on the government to expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects, eliminating any excessive regulatory costs and red tape, including establishing a transparent and fair process around MZOs. Through the More Homes for Everyone Act, the Province is partnering with municipalities and industry to build a provincial data standard for planning and development applications.

SKILLS

Addressing Local Labour Market Needs through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission calls on the Province to work with the federal government to eliminate the current requirement for an LMIA for OINP participants to be hired in communities with populations under 200,000.

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

- ✓ **Action:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario announced a financial literacy component for the grade 9 curriculum. The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission underscored the need to work with stakeholders to address labour shortages by promoting skills training and career opportunities in sectors facing large labour shortages.

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 budget submission. Our Workforce Development Council has also raised this issue in meetings and consultations with government.

Addressing Ontario's Skills Gap at the Secondary School Level

- ✓ **Action:** In November 2021, the Province announced its intent to hire additional skilled trade recruiters to visit high schools across Ontario to address the skilled worker shortage. The government also indicated it is committed to an annual advertising campaign promoting skilled trades, hosting skilled trade job fairs, providing free apprenticeship training for marginalized youth, and simplifying the existing apprenticeship system. In March 2022, the government introduced a new science and technology curriculum and de-streamed the Grade 9 science course for the upcoming 2022-23 academic year. These changes are part of the Provinces' plan to align curriculum changes with economic needs and emphasize the skilled trades.

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

- ✓ **Action:** The province's public register continues to be accessible on the new government website. Our report, *Capital is Key*, highlighted the value of attracting and retaining foreign talent. In June 2021, the OCC made a submission to the Government of Ontario as part of its skilled trades panel consultation (feedback on phase 2). In February 2022, the Government of Ontario announced changes that would reduce red-tap and help out-of-province skilled workers to quickly join our workforce.

Strengthen Connectivity Between Businesses and Post-Secondary Institutions

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission calls on the government to work with employers and post-secondary institutions to identify and promote in-demand skilled trades to students in secondary schools.

Improving Indigenous Education in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** In September 2021, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of \$23.96 million in targeted support for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, in addition to the existing funding for school boards in the 2021-22 school year to improve overall outcomes and increase graduation rates among students from these communities.

Improve Early Childhood Educational Outcomes Through Expanded Education Opportunities, Targeted Programming, and Innovation in the Classroom

- ✓ **Action:** In March 2022, following extensive advocacy by the OCC and its partners, the Government of Ontario reached a historic childcare agreement with the Government of Canada that will reduce costs and improve access to childcare across the province. The federal investment of \$13 billion over six years will help improve the quality of care that children receive, and we will continue to emphasize the need to support developmentally vulnerable children as part of this program.

Improving Skilled Trades in the Secondary Schools

- ✓ **Action:** In June 2021, the Government of Ontario drew \$440,000 in funding from the \$115 million Skills Development Fund to teach high school students about careers in the skilled trades and technology. The Province also announced a 50-hour training program from July 2021 to March 2022 for 800 students to acquire the skills they need for careers in the trades. In November 2021, the government announced plans to end academic streaming to better support pathways into the skilled trades.

Investing in Ontario's International Undergraduate Student Entrepreneurs

- ✓ **Action:** Our report, *Capital is Key: Financing Entrepreneurship in Ontario After COVID-19*, underscored the value of Ontario's immigrant community. The report called on the government to develop a pathway to permanent residency for international graduates interested in purchasing shares or ownership of existing small businesses. The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission reiterated this recommendation.

Maintaining Investment and Innovation in Ontario's Public Education System

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

More systems are needed in place to encourage women to pursue a career in skilled trades

- ✓ **Action:** As part of the government's Skilled Trades Panel Consultation, the OCC provided a submission calling for more to be done to foster greater inclusivity and diversity within the trades. In June 2021, the Ontario government announced an investment of \$500,000 to help train Indigenous workers and women for skilled trade careers in the province's clean nuclear energy sector. In September 2021, the Province announced an investment of an additional \$83 million towards the Skills Development Fund to support upskilling.

Re-Calibrating Primary and Secondary Education to Close the Skills Deficit

- ✓ **Action:** In June 2021, the Province announced a 50-hour training program from July 2021 to March 2022 for 800 students to acquire the skills they need for careers in the trades. In November, the government announced plans to end academic streaming to better support pathways into the skilled trades. Our 2022 provincial budget submission underscored the need to work with stakeholders to address labour shortages by promoting training in sectors with skills gaps and high demand for workers.

Establishment of Small Vessel Marine Trades in Ontario to include Marine Electrician, Service Technician, and the Overall Expansion for Marine Training Certifications Across Ontario

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

Prevention - The Need for a Workplace Health and Safety Strategy to Support Small Business

- ✓ **Action:** Throughout the pandemic, the OCC has called for more clarity and information about employers' health and safety obligations. We will continue to urge the Province to support small businesses according to the recommendations in this resolution.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Addressing Employment Standards Act

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

Auto Insurance Reform: Making Premiums Affordable

- ✓ **Action:** In April 2019, the government released *Putting Drivers First: A Blueprint for Ontario's Auto Insurance System*, which commits to improving Ontario's auto insurance system and making auto insurance more affordable for Ontario drivers. According to Budget 2020, the next steps will include modernizing outdated and burdensome requirements; tackling fraudulent activities that drive up auto insurance system costs; and increasing choice for consumers by enabling insurers to offer more coverage options. In March 2021, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario received the Final Report of the Resident's Reference Panel on Automotive Insurance in Ontario. The report provides the FSRA with recommendations on how to improve auto insurance regulation in the province to enhance consumer experience and choice. Amongst these recommendations is the need to limit the need to turn to the tort system to access care or support after an accident.

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. Additional measures to reduce red tape around brownfield redevelopments were announced in Ontario's 2021 Spring Red Tape Reduction Package.

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 committing 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 facilitating economic activity in the North.

Improving Support for Employers

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

Remove Canadian Residency Requirement for Ontario Corporations

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

Accounting For Economic Outcomes in Regional Collaboration Projects

- ✓ **Action:** In our 2021 Ontario Budget Submission, the OCC urged the Province to encourage and support regional collaboration by (among other things) allowing municipalities to account for the jobs and other outcomes they have helped generate through regional projects. Our report, *Better Budgets*, also called on the Government of Ontario to help identify potential areas of alignment between municipalities with shared needs or priorities while also championing partnerships that have worked well as models that can be replicated elsewhere.

Bettering Ontario Workplaces

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC is working with the Government of Ontario on efforts to centralize and streamline business support as part of their ongoing regulatory modernization.

Healthcare Crisis: Demand Exceeds Supply

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021 and 2022, the OCC wrote letters to the provincial and federal governments calling for further action to address the health human resources shortage. Our 2022 federal budget submission calls on the government to permanently increase health transfer payments. The OCC's Health Policy Council continues to advocate for further improvements and investments in Ontario's healthcare system.

Maintaining Rural Emergency Services

- ✓ **Action:** In Budget 2021, the Province announced \$30.2 billion over the next 10 years in hospital infrastructure, which will create more than 3,100 additional hospital beds

Making Data More User Friendly

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC discussed ways to improve Ontario's open data system directly with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and in our 2020 report, *In Data We Trust: Unlocking the Value of Data in Ontario*.

Making Ontario A Leader in Smart Government

- ✓ **Action:** In September 2021, launched the technology and standards that will build the Government of Ontario's digital identity ecosystem. This will ensure simpler, faster, and better access to convenient online services securely.

Ontario's Planning for Urban Mobility - Smart Cities and Digital Transformation

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's Infrastructure Policy Council is exploring smart transportation as part of its mandate.

Making The Ontario Energy Board Hearing Process More Accessible

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC participated in a consultation with the Province to improve Ontario's long-term energy planning processes and clarify the roles of the Government, the IESO, and the OEB. Our Energy Policy Council continues to provide feedback on opportunities to improve effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and engagement with stakeholders.

Create a Provincial Pandemic-Response Strategy and Plan

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's provincial election priorities document (*Vote Prosperity*) calls on the government to evaluate the effectiveness of the Province's pandemic response and implement a government-wide strategy for crisis management and pandemic preparedness based on lessons learned in Ontario and best practices from other jurisdictions. As of February 28, 2022, the Province committed over \$55 million through the Ontario Together Fund to support 45 companies supplying emergency products including PPE. In March 2022, the Government of Ontario unveiled *Taking Life Sciences to the Next Level*, its plan to grow Ontario's life sciences sector and secure new investments in next-generation medical technology and vaccine manufacturing.

Establishment of the Provincial Termination Severance Fund

- ✓ **Action:** Throughout the pandemic, the OCC has advocated for targeted financial relief to the hardest-hit sectors. Our 2022 provincial budget submission calls on the government to ensure any further restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19 be met with proportionate support programs, loan forgiveness, and extensions on payment terms for impacted workers and small businesses. In our 2022 federal budget submission, we also advocated for debt-relief options for COVID-related, government-backed loans for SMEs that were disproportionately impacted federal budget submission through the crisis.

Implementing Virtual Healthcare in Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC continues to advocate for recommendations in our report, *Realizing the Full Potential of Virtual Care in Ontario*. Our 2022 letter to the Government of Ontario provided recommendations to support digital health interoperability. In January 2022, we submitted feedback to the Competition Bureau on its market study on digital healthcare. In March 2022, the Ontario Medical Association ratified a three-year Physician Services Agreement. The terms of this agreement include a permanent framework for virtual care by telephone and video. Aspects of recommendations in this resolution contributed to the OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission.

Improving Long-Term Care Services Across Rural and Northern Ontario

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

Managing High Water Levels on Lake Ontario

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's report, *The Climate Catalyst*, discusses the increased threat of flooding as a result of climate change. The report calls on governments to make concrete commitments to support communities with climate adaptation and asset management, backed by adequate and sustained funding. We request the Ontario government to actively support the federal Task Force on Flood Insurance and Relocation while also playing a leadership role in fulfilling the group's mandate to create a low-cost national flood insurance program and a national action plan to assist high-risk homeowners with relocation to safer areas.

Province of Ontario Oversize/Overweight Permits

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

Rapid Testing in Workplaces

- ✓ **Action:** In May 2021, the OCC, in partnership with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Ontario, and Canadian governments, launched the COVID-19 Rapid Screening Initiative. Through this initiative, participating chambers of commerce and boards of trade distributed free rapid tests for small- and medium-sized businesses in communities across the province. The program's goal was to identify asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 in the workplace that might otherwise be missed, helping to curb the spread in the workplace, at home, and around the community.

“Businesses can receive a two-week supply with enough kits to test their employees twice a week. If someone tests positive, that individual will be required to leave work, arrange for a PCR test at a COVID-19 assessment site and self-isolate at least until the results of the PCR test are received.

This program is the result of a partnership with the Ontario government, the federal government, and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Vic Fedeli, for his part in developing this program, and again, I want to recognize the work that the four Muskoka chambers of commerce have put in to make this program available in our area.”

- Norman Miller, MPP - Parry Sound- Muskoka (Hansard - May 19, 2021)

“We know that rapid tests can prevent workplace outbreaks from otherwise asymptomatic employees and keep our hard-working businesses open. That’s why we have partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, their chamber affiliates and municipalities across the province to introduce more COVID-19 rapid screening initiatives. Mr. Speaker, I’m proud to report that less than a month after the launch of this program, Ontario has shifted over 2.4 million rapid tests into these chambers and communities across the province. I look forward to continue working with these chambers and municipalities to deploy more tests.”

- Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria - President of the Treasury Board (Hansard - June 14, 2021)

“We’ve partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to distribute rapid antigen testing to any business with 150 employees or less to minimize the chance of transmission. To date, with the help of 128 participating chambers, this program has distributed more than 2.63 million tests to over 21,000 small and medium-sized businesses across the province.

“Just last week, together with some of my colleagues in Mississauga, we visited the Mississauga chamber of commerce distribution centre, and we saw and learned how rapid antigen tests were used and about the employees and employers that they were going out to serve, and they have been such a huge success. Speaker, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, and it’s never been brighter.”

- Hon. Nina Tangri, Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction (Hansard - October 26, 2021)

Resolving Business Ineligibility For COVID-19 Assistance Programs

- ✓ **Action:** Applications for most provincial business supports have expired. The OCC has called for targeted supports for businesses suffering as a result of the pandemic through several media releases, as well as through our provincial and federal budget submissions.

Responsible Business Protocol

- ✓ **Action:** Throughout the pandemic, the OCC has sent multiple letters to government, advocating for the establishment of a Safe Operating Framework. We have highlighted the need for a predictable and coordinated effort to ensure harmonized reopening that prioritizes individual safety and economic stability. We recognize the government's efforts in developing long-term measures to bolster pandemic preparedness.

Restoring Democracy in Ontario's Workplaces

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

Small Town Ontario - How to Deal with The Problem of Brownfield Sites

- ✓ **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. Additional measures to reduce red tape around brownfield redevelopments were announced in Ontario's 2021 Spring Red Tape Reduction Package.

Supporting Industry Use of Biochar as a Tool for Climate Change Mitigation and Soil Management

- ✓ **Action:** The OCC's report, *The Climate Catalyst*, provides government with several recommendations, including investing in cleantech research with promising commercial applications, including biochar. The report also highlights the environmental benefits of biochar application for soil health. Our 2022 provincial budget submission also includes a recommendation to support biochar research.

Supporting Ontario's Diverse Business Community

- ✓ **Action:** The Government of Ontario provides multilingual COVID-19 information and resources for individuals with developmental disabilities, families, and caregivers. In 2022, the Province introduced legislation that would support internationally trained immigrants to start careers in their professions by removing barriers, including language testing. The OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission called on the government to provide financial support for individuals and small businesses for reskilling, upskilling, and micro-credentials.

Workplace Mental Health Strategy

- ✓ **Action:** In 2021, the OCC published two *Mental Wellness in the Workplace* playbooks for Employers and SMEs. Aspects of recommendations brought forward in this resolution fed into the OCC's 2022 provincial budget submission.

THE OCC POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAMS

DANIEL SAFAYENI

Vice President, Policy

647-243-3543 | danielsafayeni@occ.ca

CLAUDIA DESSANTI

Senior Manager, Policy

647-243-0882 | claudiadessanti@occ.ca

ESTER GERASSIME

Economic Analyst

226-228-7859 | estergerassime@occ.ca

MICHELLE EATON

Vice President, Public Affairs

647-243-3556 | michelleaton@occ.ca

ANDREA CARMONA

Manager, Public Affairs

647-234-0255 | andreacarmona@occ.ca

SAMIR JANMOHAMED

Specialist, Policy and Public Affairs

647-243-3561 | samirjanmohamed@occ.ca

ALISSA REID

Coordinator, Public Affairs

(705) 205-1434 | alissareid@occ.ca

JAEHEE RHO

Visual Designer

647-243-3545 | jaeheerho@occ.ca



ontario
chamber of
commerce

**LEARN MORE ABOUT OCC POLICY WORK
AND STAY INFORMED**

FOLLOW US



[ontchamberofcommerce](https://www.facebook.com/ontchamberofcommerce)



[@OntarioCofC](https://twitter.com/OntarioCofC)



[company/ontario-chamber-of-commerce](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ontario-chamber-of-commerce)



www.occ.ca