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August 13, 2018

Hon. Ahmed Hussen
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

RE: Business Community Supports Further Increase in OINP Allocation

Dear Minister Hussen,

In November 2017, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) wrote to your office expressing support for an increase in Ontario's annual allocation of economic immigrants under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). In 2018, we were pleased to see that Ontario received an allocation of 6,600 nominations, up from 6,000 in 2017. While welcoming this improvement, the OCC would like to reiterate our support for a further increase in Ontario's allocation. We believe this is a necessary step to Ontario's economic immigrant allocation proportional to the size and economic needs of the province.

The OCC's diverse network of over 60,000 members has expressed concern that the recent expansion of the OINP does not go far enough. As identified in the 2018 Ontario Economic Report, 77 percent of businesses in Ontario note that access to talent has the largest impact on their competitiveness. The OINP offers employers the opportunity to recruit and retain highly skilled foreign workers and international students that Ontario businesses need to scale and remain competitive. Recognizing that much of the province's future net labour growth will come from immigration, the OCC would like to ensure that Ontario businesses are well positioned to attract and retain skilled international talent.

Economic class immigrants are needed to weather the demographic changes shaping Canada and Ontario, including the erosion of the tax base from an aging population, low labour productivity, and the skills mismatch. Of the 62 percent of Ontario businesses that attempted to recruit staff in the last six months of 2016, 82 percent experienced at least one challenge in doing so. The top challenge – cited by 60 percent of businesses – was finding candidates with the proper qualifications. Expansion of the OINP's allocation would enhance Ontario's ability to respond to its unique labour market needs and maximize the economic benefits of immigrants.

Annual allocations for the OINP should be renegotiated to bring them in line with those of other provinces. Although Ontario has the largest Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) in Canada, the number of economic immigrants that Ontario can nominate remains the smallest in proportion to its population. In 2017, Ontario received only 14 percent of Canada's PNP admissions, despite the province accounting for 38 percent of the national population. Moreover, under current levels, the OINP only covers around 6 percent of Ontario's total immigrant intake, compared to around 20 percent in British Columbia and Alberta, and over 50 percent in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

The fact that Ontario has proportionately lower allocations than other provinces greatly limits the province's prosperity. Economic immigration is a key factor in enabling employers in Ontario to recruit and retain appropriate skilled talent and thus support economic competitiveness, including boosting innovation, entrepreneurship, investment, and international trade. The OCC asks that the Government of Canada work with the Government of Ontario to introduce greater flexibility and increase Ontario's nomination allocation to meet the evolving economic needs of the province.

We look forward to your response and welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues outlined in further detail.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi,
President and CEO,
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

CC:

Hon. Doug Ford, *Premier of Ontario*

Steve Orsini, *Secretary of the Cabinet*

Hon. Lisa MacLeod, *Minister of Children, Community and Social Services*

Hon. Jim Wilson, *Minister of Economic Develop, Job Creation and Trade*

Marta Morgan, *Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*

Janet Menard, *Deputy Minister, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services*