

February 13, 2024

The Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria  
Ministry of Transportation  
College Park 5th Floor  
777 Bay St. Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

**Re: Investing in Northern Ontario's Highway Infrastructure**

Dear Minister Sarkaria,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is the indispensable partner of business and Canada's largest, most influential provincial chamber. We are an independent, non-profit advocacy and member services organization representing a diverse network of 60,000 members. The OCC's mission is to convene, align and advance the interests of its members through principled policy work, value-added business services and broad engagement to drive competitiveness and inclusive, sustainable economic growth in the province.

With the strong support of OCC members and our [Infrastructure Policy Council](#), we write to reiterate our [2023 budget](#) recommendation that the government continue to move forward aggressively on the expansion of Highway 69, and that the ministry communicate regularly and transparently to stakeholders about progress.

Highway 69 is a key transportation artery and the main connective road for residents, businesses, and tourists between Northern and Southern Ontario. It is also an integral link in the Trans-Canada Highway, connecting the Greater Toronto Area and Northern Ontario to Western Canada.

Since its initial development in the 1950s and 1960s, Highway 69 has served as a critical piece of infrastructure, providing significant economic benefits for Northern Ontario and the province overall. Parts of the highway see up to 11,300 average daily users, making it one of the busiest roadways in Northern Ontario.<sup>1</sup>

Plans to expand Highway 69 from two to four lanes were initially announced in 1991. However, 32 years later, the highway has yet to be fully four-laned, without clear and consistent progress updates or completion timelines on the remaining 68-kilometre section, despite additional funding for the project announced by the federal government in 2019.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.library.mto.gov.on.ca/SydneyPLUS/TechPubs/Theme.aspx?r=702797&f=files%2FProvincial+Highways+Traffic+Volumes+2019+AADT+Only.pdf&m=resource>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/major-improvements-to-highway-69-in-northern-ontario-to-support-safer-and-more-efficient-travels-808152820.html>

As your ministry knows, expanding this highway from two lanes to four is of the utmost importance. Between 2019 and 2021, Highway 69 saw a total of 38 closures due to accidents, with 16 resulting in a full highway closure.<sup>3</sup> A wider, more reliable highway would help improve driver safety, support northern economic prosperity and Indigenous communities, and attract businesses, labour, and residents to Northern Ontario.

The decline of air and rail transportation has made this issue more pressing, with Northerners becoming underserved and struggling to find safe, efficient transportation.

We urge your government to accelerate the expansion of this highway and its supportive infrastructure. This includes providing clear and timely updates, including a timeline for completing the four-laning of the highway's remaining 68 kilometres, while ensuring ongoing collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities.

We look forward to working with your government as it continues to deliver critical infrastructure across Ontario and welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Daniel Tisch, APR, FCPRS, ICD.D  
*President and CEO*  
*Ontario Chamber of Commerce*



Debbi Nicholson  
*President and CEO*  
*Sudbury Chamber of Commerce*



Rory Ring  
*CEO*  
*Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce*

CC. The Hon. George Pirie, Minister of Mines  
The Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs  
The Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
The Hon. Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure

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<sup>3</sup> Email from Ministry of Transportation Northeast Operations Staff – 06 December, 2021