



ONTARIO COMPETES

2025 Provincial Election Priorities

A 4-Point Plan to Support Business Competitiveness



ontario
chamber of
commerce



Overview

Ontario stands at a critical juncture. As we navigate an evolving economic landscape marked by shifting global dynamics, technological advancements, and urgent threats to the well-being of our communities, the choices we make today will define our province's future. To ensure Ontario remains a competitive, prosperous, and resilient place to live and work, we need bold leadership.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is proud to present *Ontario Competes*, outlining strategic priorities to strengthen Ontario's economy, communities, and workforce. Drawing on insights from businesses across the province, this document identifies practical solutions to tackle pressing challenges, from interprovincial trade barriers to labour market gaps and infrastructure needs.

Centered on four pillars—A Competitive Business and Trade Environment; Qualified People, Diverse Talent; Healthy and Sustainable Communities; and Growth-Enabling Infrastructure—our recommendations are designed to foster economic growth, support Ontario's communities, and position the province as a global leader in innovation and investment.

As the voice of Ontario's business community, we urge policymakers to adopt this forward-thinking agenda. By working together, we can build an Ontario that not only recovers from today's challenges but thrives in the years ahead.

Pillar 1

A Competitive Business and Trade Environment

A robust and predictable business environment is the foundation for economic growth and resilience, particularly as Ontario confronts rising protectionism from abroad. As global competition for investment intensifies and our trading relationships evolve, Ontario must sharpen its competitive edge. That means driving productivity and removing barriers to the movement of goods and services within Canada's borders.

Key Recommendations:

- ✔ Set a public goal to dismantle all interprovincial trade barriers. Take bold leadership on interprovincial trade by signing mutual recognition agreements and consider unilaterally recognizing standards in other parts of the country, where appropriate, to promote trade and labour mobility.
- ✔ Engage with the federal government, business leaders, and chambers of commerce to ensure that trade negotiations and dispute resolutions with the United States safeguard Ontario's key industries, including forestry, automotive, manufacturing, and agriculture, from adverse impacts.
- ✔ Identify opportunities to simplify and streamline the provincial tax framework for small and medium-sized businesses, alongside ongoing efforts to reduce regulatory burden and improve access to capital.



Pillar 2

Qualified People, Diverse Talent

People are the driving force behind economic success. To support Ontario's economic competitiveness, it is essential to invest in post-secondary institutions and skills training systems that address labour shortages and prepare the workforce for the demands of a rapidly evolving economy. This will ensure Ontario meets future labour market needs, safeguards access to education, and invests boldly in the quality of its universities, colleges, and Indigenous Institutes.

Key Recommendations:

- ✔ Fully fund enrolment expansion to reflect changing demographics and growing demand from Ontario high school students, ensuring post-secondary institutions maintain program quality and build capacity to meet future demand. Aim, over time, to have the best-funded post-secondary system in Canada.
- ✔ Increase funding for skills training and applied research to improve workforce development and support innovation.
- ✔ Partner with post-secondary institutions to align program funding, enrollment planning, and student job placements with labour market demands, leveraging data to ensure workforce readiness. These efforts could be accompanied by the development of a workforce strategy that responds to the needs of sectors facing acute labour shortages - such as hospitality, tourism agriculture and mining.



Pillar 3

Healthy and Sustainable Communities

Ontario's economic success relies on healthy and sustainable communities. Local governments need tools and resources to address emerging challenges and enable connected, cohesive communities. Most notably, Ontario must work with municipalities to address the impact of the substance use crisis. The crisis poses long-term socioeconomic risks, requiring urgent public-private collaboration to improve access, address gaps and deliver meaningful solutions across Ontario.

Key Recommendations:

- ✔ Take a whole-of-government approach to addressing mental health and substance use challenges for Ontario's business community and workforce; involve people with experience in the design and delivery of mental health and substance use tools and supports.
- ✔ Modernize the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship to ensure municipalities are equipped with the tools needed to tackle issues such as homelessness, inadequate public transit, and community safety, reducing reliance on property taxes.
- ✔ Accelerate the development of an integrated health data system with a focus on data interoperability and transparency to ensure Ontarians can access the appropriate care at the right time.



Pillar 4

Growth-Enabling Infrastructure

Investments in infrastructure are critical to strengthening Ontario's economic competitiveness, ensuring resilience against global disruptions, and supporting vibrant local communities. To achieve this, Ontario must prioritize the development of modernized transportation corridors, advanced logistics hubs and cutting-edge digital infrastructure that enable growth and help us adapt to emerging challenges. Equally important is addressing the housing crisis, which is crucial to attracting and retaining talent and ensuring sustainable growth for the future.

Key Recommendations:

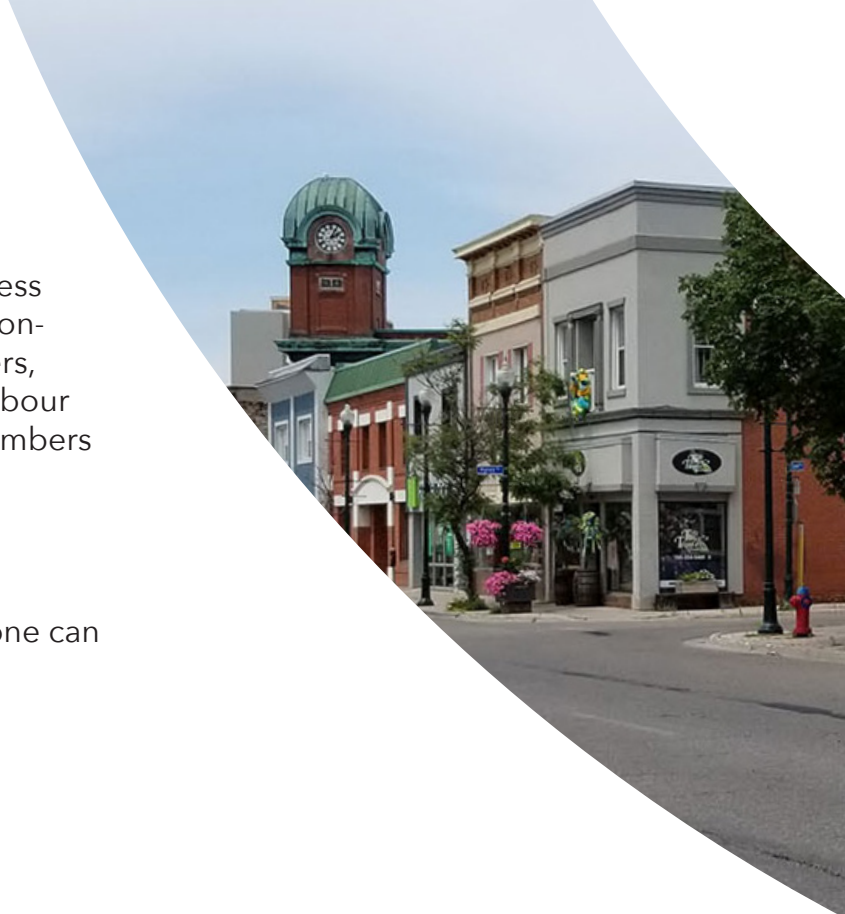
- ✔ Maintain and enable better goods movement along Ontario's transportation corridors, identifying and addressing gaps to develop alternative routes to mitigate the impact of potential disruptions, including protests, border issues, and climate-related events.
- ✔ Leverage partnerships to build and preserve affordable housing along the continuum, including promoting innovative construction technologies, developing housing strategies tailored to address regional challenges, and supporting the renewal and expansion of non-profit and cooperative housing.
- ✔ Explore digital technologies, such as digital twinning, to identify gaps in electricity distribution and transmission infrastructure projects as part of a larger, long-term system planning strategy.



About the Ontario Chamber of Commerce

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is the indispensable partner of business and Canada's largest, most influential provincial chamber. It is an independent, non-profit advocacy and member services organization. The OCC has 60,000 members, including large multinational corporations, small-to-medium-sized enterprises, labour unions, postsecondary institutions, non-profits, associations and close to 150 chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

The OCC's purpose is to bring inclusive and sustainable prosperity to Ontario's businesses, workers, and communities. Its mission is to convene, mobilize, and empower business and local chambers to lead positive change - something no one can achieve alone.



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