

March 4, 2025

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

## **Stronger Together, Capable on Our Own: Ensuring Ontario's Resiliency in a Shifting Global Order**

Dear Premier Ford,

Congratulations on your re-election, and your new mandate to both protect Ontario's economy and enhance its competitiveness over the next four years. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) looks forward to collaborating with you and your government.

We write today on behalf of the [Ontario Business and Trade Leadership Coalition](#) (OBTLC), convened by the OCC to present a united voice from Ontario's trade-focused sectors. The industries we represent are both at risk from economic and policy shifts, and strategic to Ontario's global competitiveness. We appreciated the chance to meet with you on February 3, 2025, and are eager to turn that first conversation into ongoing collaboration.

Our shared challenge is clear: For decades, Ontario's deep reliance on U.S. markets has fueled investment, created jobs, and raised our standard of living. It has driven our prosperity – but at high risk due to our lack of diversification. As geopolitical tensions rise, trade disruptions mount, and global economic shifts intensify, Ontario must now act decisively to secure its supply chains, fortify critical industries, and expand its export reach beyond the U.S. to other markets. This is a path we must pursue regardless of trade action being taken against our exports.

We therefore recommend both immediate and longer-term actions.

### **Protecting Ontario from U.S. tariffs**

Now that the U.S. has proceeded with implementing tariffs on Canadian exports, we recommend that your government do the following:

- 1. Defend and Strengthen Business Resilience in Critical Sectors**

We cannot afford to lose business capacity overnight. Immediate supports will be needed to ensure Ontario's most trade-exposed sectors – including but not limited to automotive manufacturing, forestry, food and beverages, and mining and primary metals – remain competitive. Targeted support programs should be introduced to help businesses invest in capacity improvements, innovate and adapt to global economic shifts. Rather than short-

term cash injections, the government should focus on lowering investor risk, and making investments that protect capacity, and enhance business productivity and sustainability.

## 2. **Ensure a Strategic and Coordinated Trade Response**

We agree with your often-stated view that we cannot accept tariffs without a proportional response. Canada's response, however, must be carefully calibrated given the prospect of instability and uncertainty at a time when investment is most at risk. According to a [recent survey](#) commissioned for the OCC, more than half of Ontario businesses expect to be negatively impacted by Canadian retaliatory tariffs imposed on U.S. goods. Therefore, as you work with the federal government to evaluate potential responses, it is crucial to engage business leaders and chambers of commerce. This will help to reduce uncertainty for business and ensure that mission-critical sectors are not inadvertently harmed.

In addition, Ontario must act to reduce its vulnerability to U.S. policies and secure new opportunities for long-term economic growth. To that end, we recommend the following actions:

### 3. **Start at Home: Dismantle Interprovincial Trade Barriers**

Ontario must lead by example in breaking down internal trade barriers and expanding market opportunities within Canada. This includes enabling labour mobility, improving east-west transportation corridors, and advocating for reducing the time and risks involved in regulatory approvals for major projects. We suggest setting a clear public goal to eliminate interprovincial trade restrictions, sign mutual recognition agreements with all willing provinces, and unilaterally recognize standards where appropriate. Ontario should also build on recent efforts to enhance domestic procurement by ensuring public procurement policies align with national and provincial priorities, including strategic coordination with federal and provincial partners to strengthen local industries amid global trade volatility. These actions will reduce costs for businesses and position Ontario as a champion for freer trade across Canada.

### 4. **Look Abroad: Expand Ontario's Trading Relationships**

No matter the outcome of U.S.-Canada trade negotiations, Ontario needs a strategy to incentivize and support our businesses in accessing new markets for their goods, services, and natural resources. Businesses need greater financial stability, access to trade resources and market intelligence, and logistical support to mitigate export risks. Investing in global trade expansion will not only reduce our vulnerability to U.S. policies but also unlock new opportunities for long-term economic growth.

### 5. **Enhance Ontario's Business and Investment Climate**

To attract new investment and prevent job losses to competing markets, Ontario must offer a predictable and competitive business environment. Your government should further streamline regulatory approvals, simplify the provincial tax framework for small and medium-sized enterprises, and reduce administrative and regulatory burdens, including delaying regulatory implementation where appropriate. Provincial support is also needed to safeguard upstream investments into our resource sector to help grow our manufacturing capacity. Overall, a more transparent and efficient system will position Ontario as a top-tier destination for both domestic and international investment.

6. **Expand Workforce Training and Talent Supply**

Labour shortages continue to hinder Ontario’s economic growth. According to OCC’s 2025 [Ontario Economic Report](#), 33 per cent of organizations report experiencing a labour shortage – a challenge that would only be amplified with U.S. tariffs. To close this gap, your government should fully fund enrolment expansion at post-secondary institutions, align program funding with labour market needs, and enhance workforce training initiatives. Additionally, addressing immigration backlogs and expediting credential recognition for skilled workers will be critical to meet demand across key sectors.

7. **Strengthen Ontario’s Infrastructure and Supply Chains**

Economic growth depends on reliable infrastructure. We recommend prioritizing investments in transportation corridors, domestic procurement, expanding broadband access and energy infrastructure, as well as leveraging public-private partnerships for housing. Creating the economic conditions for continued investments into expanding our energy capacity, including exploring future opportunity for integration with the U.S., can help ensure both our national and energy security. Finally, developing alternative trade routes and improving logistics hubs will also help mitigate the impact of global supply chain disruptions and future economic shocks.

As we deal with shifting economic headwinds, there has never been greater need for a coordinated industrial strategy that seeks to support the industries of today and strengthen the foundation for the industries of tomorrow – from AI to life sciences. The OCC and the OBTLIC remain committed to working collaboratively with you to weather today’s threats and build towards our future economic prosperity.

Thank you for your continued leadership – both as Premier and as Chair of the Council of the Federation – during this critical time and we welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

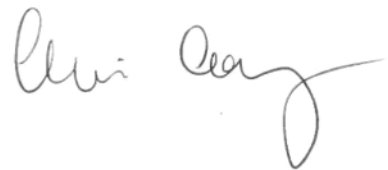
Sincerely,



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*Ontario Chamber of Commerce*



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