



2022 OCC AGM PROPOSED  
POLICY RESOLUTIONS  
COMPENDIUM



## Preface

This booklet contains the proposed policy resolutions for debate at the Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce on **April 30, 2022**. These resolutions were developed and submitted by our network of chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

Each resolution has been reviewed by the Policy and Advocacy Committee (PAC), a subcommittee of the OCC's Board of Directors, comprised of representatives from both our chamber and corporate memberships

The PAC is mandated to ensure that all resolutions presented on the floor for discussion are:

- Business issues.
- Provincial in scope or impact.
- Deemed important enough to be on the legislative agenda of the government or be of considerable concern to a majority of members.
- Not pitting one industry or region of Ontario against another.
- Not duplicative of any existing resolutions.

During the debate, resolutions will be discussed before voting delegates are asked to **adopt, defeat, or refer the resolution to the Board of Directors for further study**.

Policy resolutions adopted at the AGM will become part of the Ontario Chamber's advocacy agenda for the next three years.

The resolutions contained within this book are also available on the OCC website at [occ.ca](http://occ.ca)

## Resolutions Debate Procedures

Prior to debating the proposed resolutions, a motion will be presented to place the entire policy book on the floor (this prevents the need for a motion to adopt each resolution as it comes up).

### Resolution Debate

1. The discussion of each resolution will open with the moderator naming the resolution. A representative of the sponsoring group (submitting chamber/board of trade) is entitled to make a brief comment (approximately one minute) to amplify or clarify their resolutions. If the OCC PAC has indicated that they do not support the proposed resolution, a committee representative will be offered an opportunity to comment briefly before the resolution is opened for discussion by all delegates.
2. Although everyone is allowed to participate in the debate, only voting delegates have the right to move or second motions, amendments or other motions to vote.
3. Wait to be recognized by the moderator and then identify yourself and your organization before you begin your remarks.
4. Due to limited time for policy debates, we encourage all delegates to keep their commentary concise.
5. You are responsible to make your voting decisions in accordance with your beliefs about what is in the best interests of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce policy agenda. Delegates have three possible courses of action for each resolution:
  - a. **To adopt it** – with or without amendments – thus making it official OCC policy
  - b. **To defeat it**; or
  - c. **To refer it to the Board of Directors for further study**. While this precludes the item from becoming official policy at the time of the AGM, it does permit the board to act upon it.
6. The policy debate is governed by Robert's Rules of Order. It is OCC policy to require a 50% plus one of the voting delegates to pass any motion or amendment.

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Proposed Policy Resolutions**

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## 1. The Capacity to Operate

Submitted by: The 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

The tourism economy has been heavily hit by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and measures introduced to contain its spread. Depending on the duration of the crisis, revised scenarios indicate that the potential shock could range between a 60-80% decline in the international tourism economy. Beyond immediate measures to support the tourism sector, countries are also shifting to develop recovery measures. These include considerations on lifting travel restrictions, restoring traveller confidence and rethinking the tourism sector for the future.

### Background

Domestic tourism, which accounts for around 75% of the tourism economy in OECD countries, is expected to recover more quickly. It offers the main chance for driving recovery, particularly in countries, regions and cities where the sector supports many jobs and businesses.

Looking ahead, the measures put in place today will shape tourism of tomorrow. Governments need to already consider the longer term implications of the crisis, while staying ahead of the digital curve and promoting the structural transformation needed to build a stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism economy. The crisis is an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future.

Tourism is a significant part of many national economies, and the immediate and immense shock to the tourism sector resulting from the coronavirus pandemic is affecting the wider economy. As governments around the world have introduced unprecedented measures to contain the virus, restrictions on travel, business operations and people-to-people interactions have brought the tourism economy to a standstill. Many countries are **now entering a new phase in fighting the virus while at the same time managing the re-opening of the tourism economy.** This is a complex and challenging task, and quantifying the impact on the tourism economy is difficult.

In the near term, the expectation is that **domestic tourism offers the main chance for driving recovery and supporting the tourism sector.** The domestic tourism economy is significant and accounts for around 75% of the total tourism economy in OECD countries. Domestic tourism flows have also been heavily affected by restrictions on the movement of people, but are expected to recover more quickly once containment measures are lifted. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that domestic tourism could compensate for the decline of international tourism flows, particularly in destinations heavily dependent on international markets. This will translate into significant macro-economic effects in countries, regions and cities where the sector supports many jobs and businesses.

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Work with the federal government to remove barriers to travel, such as testing requirements.
2. Change the narrative around travel to show Ontario is open for tourism.
3. Extend relief programs critical to the tourism sector, such as the Ontario Business Rebate and the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program, to support cash flow as businesses reopen.
4. Develop a province-wide workforce strategy to address labour shortages in the sector.
5. Ensure vaccine passport requirements are consistent with the latest public health recommendations and neighbouring jurisdictions.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy & Advocacy Committee. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

## 2. International Students

Submitted by: Brampton Board of Trade

### Issue

Ontario, particularly the Greater Toronto Area, has become a destination of choice for international students. While international students are important to our economy and our communities this has put additional pressure on housing markets and on social services.

### Background

Over the past decade Ontario has become a destination of choice for international students wishing to obtain an education. According to the Auditor General of Ontario, in 2019 there were approximately 114,000 international students studying in Ontario, with approximately 104,000 studying at Public Colleges and approximately 10,000 studying at Private Career Colleges.<sup>1</sup> Overall public colleges have seen growth of 342% of international students over the last ten years, with a decline of 15% of domestic students. Approximately 62% of the international students are from India.

To obtain a student visa, the student must have a GIC with a Canadian Bank and the student is limited to working 22 hours per week. International students also must have mandatory health insurance as a condition of their visa.

International students overwhelmingly attend public institutions. As a graduate from a public university or college international students automatically qualify for a post graduate work permit when they graduate. This opens a path to obtaining Canadian citizenship. Statistics show international students are important for the growth of the Canadian economy.

Colleges and Universities use immigration consultants and agents to recruit international students to their institutions. Only recently has the Federal Government moved to regulate immigration consultants but there are no such regulations for educational agents operating in other countries.

With the increase in international students in the GTA it has put additional pressure on an already tight housing market. Student housing is very hard to find, and it presents the opportunity for international students to be exploited by unscrupulous landlords. There is also tremendous pressure put on social service agencies serving these communities and they are seeing an increase volume of cases of international students suffering from physical and mental illness while studying.

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Take steps to establish minimum quality standards for recruitment agents who represent international students that are applying to study at the province's Colleges and Universities.
2. Work with Municipalities to enact and enforce housing bylaws and give the Landlord Tenant Board the resources necessary to undertake a public education campaign to ensure international students understand their rights as tenants.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy & Advocacy Committee. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Ontario 2021 Annual Report, Value for Money Audit entitled "Private Career Colleges Oversight" and Value for Money Audit entitled "Public Colleges Oversight"

### **3. Bridging the Digital Divide by Supporting Rural, Remote, and First Nations Communities Broadband Accessibility Through Coordinated *Dig Once* Policies**

Submitted by: Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Sault Ste Marie Chamber of Commerce.

#### **Issue**

Rural, Remote, and First Nations Communities have historically lacked access to reliable broadband connectivity. With broadband infrastructure becoming increasingly expensive to provide to communities with smaller populations, compounded by the great distances between them, more efficient strategies are needed to ensure that all Ontarians have equitable access to reliable, affordable broadband services. Current policies focus less on the direct deployment of fibre to communities which poses challenges for remote and First Nations communities. By increasing the available conduit through sound P3 partnerships, telecommunications providers can move into a previously disadvantaged region more easily. By coordinating with municipalities, a provincial "Dig Once" strategy could significantly reduce costs for future fibre deployments, particularly when coupled with infrastructure-sharing provisions that can benefit these isolated communities.

#### **Background**

"Dig Once" is a policy that reduces broadband deployment costs by placing conduits (plastic pipes that hold fibre-optic cable) during road construction when access to the trench is easy. Using this method, a conduit can be placed while minimizing the need and cost of excavation and restoration. Later, the fibreoptic cable can then be pulled through the conduit without any excavation.

Digging Once facilitates the installation of conduits in more and more locations in the public right-of-way, encouraging competition among regions with access to modern technology. Ideally, by Digging Once, conduit is being installed in more and more locations in the public right-of-way, encouraging competition, thus lowering the cost of broadband internet. A more robust network also increases economic development, encourages community growth, and creates a more qualified and connected workforce. While other initiatives are in place to close the digital divide, Dig Once policies work to deploy more conduit and fibre at a lower cost in more locations, thus getting Ontario closer to allowing everyone access to reliable internet networks.

As identified in the Ontario Economic Report released by the Ontario Chamber, population decline and other significant economic barriers can clearly be tied to inadequate broadband, an essential driver of intra-provincial migration thanks to the pandemic's push towards digital adoption and work from home. Additionally, many rural, remote, and Far North communities—many of them First Nations, continue to be severely impacted by a lack of access to reliable, affordable broadband, which leaves many of them at risk of falling behind the rest of the province. Providing this vast, expansive resource to these far-reaching "last mile" communities can be costly to both the provider and end-user and would urge governments to consider legislation to alleviate the cost of laying broadband infrastructure to these regions, encouraging investment.

A key means of reducing the cost of future broadband deployments is to have "Dig Once" policies that require the construction of fibre-optic conduit as part of any public works project. Proponents of these policies see this as a crucial part of an enabling framework to empower rural and remote communities to advance broadband connectivity at the local level. Some reasons to implement a Dig Once policy include reducing deployment costs, encouraging competition among internet service providers, and working to close the digital divide.

If reliable, affordable access to broadband technology continues to dampen economic prosperity in rural, remote, and First Nations communities, then the Provincial Government, in partnership with the Ontario Municipalities, must look to coordinated Dig Once strategies to promote investment from the private sector to encourage the expansion of broadband infrastructure.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Coordinate with Ontario Municipalities, in partnership with telecommunications and broadband companies, to develop a uniform Dig Once strategy to increase the accessibility of broadband and fibre assets to rural, remote, and First Nations communities.
2. Along with the Municipalities, create regulations that make the laying of conduit/fibre assets mandatory for public infrastructure builds.
3. Through consultation with municipalities and broadband companies, identify best practices for constructing telecom networks in rights-of-way to ensure that municipal assets are protected, including, for example, through the use of permitting and Municipal Access Agreements.
4. Consult with the Federal Government to identify how financial tools can be leveraged to offset investment and provide affordable, equitable access to underserved communities.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy & Advocacy Committee. The committee supports the resolution as amended.



#### **4. Supporting Ontario's Supply Chain by Establishing a Focal Point Within the Provincial Government and Investing in the Manufacturing Workforce**

Submitted by: the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

##### **Issue**

The supply chain in Ontario lacks sufficient direction and planning to operate a modern and secure supply chain despite the high demand present in the manufacturing sector.

##### **Background**

The manufacturing industry faced immediate impact when COVID-19 hit and Canada launched its lockdown measures at all levels of government. In particular, 72% stated their company's supply chains are being disrupted by COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. They are experiencing workforce impacts, supply shortages, reduced access to PPE, project shutdowns, unplanned spending, and layoffs. As the pandemic and lockdown measures continue to hit Ontario, manufacturers face high demand with virtually no supply readiness and reliable government support.

At the same time, the manufacturing sector has been experiencing delays in receiving inbound containers, and dealing with increased global shipping costs up to 50-80%. Although some manufacturers turned to airfreight to access critical components that were produced offshore, the airfreight capacity constraints and expensive costs did not withstand the continuation of this solution.<sup>3</sup>

With the impacts of the lockdowns and long global supply chains for many manufacturing components, York Region manufacturers face countless challenges, with many forced to rethink production and supply in order to survive. The Government of Ontario recognized the benefit of this support by announcing the Supply Chain Management Act in the beginning of the pandemic, to make sure the demand for crucial suppliers are visible and trackable<sup>4</sup>. The regulations allowed the collection of key data on inventories, orders and supply constraints, and the development of a virtual inventory tool.

The launch of this act and Ontario Together, a new website that is bridging some gaps between the private and public sector, showcases the potential steps necessary to protect the province's supply chain and make sure businesses have the support they need. Notwithstanding the steps to protect the province's supply chain and make sure the front lines have the essential goods and services, this strategy needs to be developed beyond its capacities by fully executing a solution for all sectors impacted by the supply chain issues.

Similarly, with respect to advancing the coordination of all regulation, this can also mean providing the manufacturing sector with a strategy that provides investments in tech operations, nearshoring opportunities, and reskilling and upskilling in the workforce. Reshoring the manufacturing sector has popular interest. However, offshoring has introduced cheaper labour and environmental standards offered in the global market. Since the 1980s, Canadian manufacturing has been significantly declining and many manufacturers have benefited from high profit margins.

For Ontario, the real challenges are in responding and recovering from the risky supply chain, and increasing its global competitiveness. By responding to protectionist policies, tech advancements, the need to upskill and reskill, York Region could become a provincial hub for advanced manufacturing and prepare for the unexpected global market.<sup>5</sup> The provincial government must support career pathways programs to connect

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.supplychaincanada.com/coronavirus-covid19-resources>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.supplychaincanada.com/media/reports/Supply\\_Chain\\_Resiliency\\_Report.pdf](https://www.supplychaincanada.com/media/reports/Supply_Chain_Resiliency_Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/56488/ontario-protecting-supply-chains-to-support-covid-19-emergency-response>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJPDLM-05-2013-0128/full/html>

young people to the endless career options in supply chain. For businesses to respond quickly and effectively to the supply chain issues, building skills will be important for the supply chain to recover.

The provincial government needs to consider the necessary steps to invest in technology and people, in order for companies to operate and produce, while being competitive in the economy. Developing a modernized strategy is vital for the manufacturing sector. The government should coordinate and oversee the regulations that manage the supply chain, and establish specific measures that address reduction from financial harm and lessen barriers from major global disruptions. This proactive approach can make it faster to respond to global markets and interprovincial transportation networks<sup>6</sup>.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce calls on the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement a supply chain department within the provincial government tasked with the coordination and oversight of all regulations that directly manages the efficiency of the supply chain. This would bring together public and private sector and establish fast response and recovery, allowing for the planning and coordination of suggested best measures for reducing financial harm and major disruptions.
2. Invest in educational programs aimed toward future economic activity to introduce students to the importance of supply chain to our economy, and to the many career opportunities that exist in logistics, data protection, risk management to support security against cybercrime, customs brokerage, distribution, and sea, air and land transportation.
3. Develop a two-year pilot project to provide funding and resources to encourage greater research and development in the areas of supply chain logistics, and the safe adoption of cutting-edge technologies. Sufficient use of technologies will be vital to support a resilient supply chain that is increasingly digitized and vulnerable to cyber attacks in hardware, services, or software from third-party providers.
4. Work with businesses to explore opportunities for nearshoring and investments in supply chain resilience.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy & Advocacy Committee. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://ppforum.ca/publications/revitalizing-canadas-manufacturing-economy-for-a-post-covid-world/>

## 5. Addressing Ontario's labour gaps through industry and post-secondary partnerships

Submitted by: Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

In order to ensure Ontario's ongoing prosperity and a strong economic recovery from COVID-19, Ontario requires access to a highly skilled, adaptable workforce.

### Background:

With the shortage of skilled talent facing the province, a recent [Stokes Economics](#) report found that the demand for occupations requiring university education will continue to increase. Between now and 2030, Ontario will require a total of 928,700 workers to fill new job openings for roles that require a university education, including:

- 233,000 positions for jobs in STEM
- 148,000 positions for jobs in health care
- 128,000 positions for jobs in business, finance, and administration

Over the same period, Ontario will also need more than 950,000 positions in skilled trades and apprenticeships to meet Ontario's growing economy. Given these critical skills shortages, both colleges and universities will be called upon to continue to produce the skilled workforce that Ontario needs to grow and prosper.

University graduates are job ready and resilient. For example, according to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' Ontario's Universities Graduate Survey of 2017 graduates, university graduates have a 95.6 % employment rate after two years, 89.6 % are employed full-time and have found work that is either closely or somewhat related to the skills they developed at university.

Universities have adapted to meet the growing demand for programs in new and emerging fields including healthcare and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and meet Ontario's workforce needs. For example, Ontario's universities are developing innovative nursing programs to graduate nurses faster to help address the health-care sector's growing patient backlog and staffing concerns resulting from COVID-19.

The need to ensure a stable supply of highly trained, adaptable workers has been raised as an issue by industry to York University in their regular consultations and at their recent employer roundtables to inform their planning of their Markham campus. The concerns shared with York regarding this issue had also been voiced by industry to Ontario universities across the province.

Universities are also actively collaborating with the business community to provide work integrated learning opportunities, including co-op placements, internships and other industry-university student workplace partnerships. These partnerships are critical to ensuring students graduate with job ready skills and employers are able to identify and recruit talent. At this time however, demand for these programs outstrips the sectors ability to provide them.

**High Demand Programs:** The job market in Ontario continues to evolve and respond to changes in the environment requiring skilled trades as well as growing demand for a university educated workforce. In order for Ontario's businesses to succeed in these conditions it is essential employers have access to a stable supply of highly skilled, adaptable workers. Ontario needs to secure a talent "pipeline" that is future-proofed with the foundational skills and innovative learning experiences for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Raising the enrolment corridor to allow universities and students to better respond to labour market demands will assist industry and the economy in recovering from the pandemic and help build stronger, more resilient communities.

Ontario's universities are continuing to adapt and meet the growing demand for programs in health care and STEM to ensure students have the skills they need to enter high-growth fields:

- As such, universities are prepared to increase capacity in high-demand programs by more than **53,000 funded domestic student spaces** over the next five years, including 17,000 in health professions.

This work, integrated into a multi-year framework with financial flexibility will allow for effective, long-term financial planning and a stable supply of highly skilled, adaptable workers in all sectors of the Ontario economy.

**Work Integrated Learning:** Ontario employers require a stable supply of new, university educated graduates with the right skillset and experience needed to adapt and contribute as quickly as possible. Ensuring university students have access to workplace centered, hands-on learning opportunities while still in school creates a significant opportunity for students and employers alike.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises in particular perceive barriers to providing these experiential learning opportunities to students, such as, costs of student compensation and training and other administrative and operational requirements. Working with government to further streamline access to these opportunities, remove barriers and develop further incentives for employers will benefit students, business and local economies across Ontario.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Work with Ontario universities to identify high demand programs of study where a current or anticipated labour shortage exists such as engineering, health professions, AI and other STEM programs. Universities and government should work to expand enrollment in these areas to ensure the necessary workforce needed for regional economic development.
2. Work with post-secondary institutions to ensure that course content is up-to-date and reflects the needs of industry.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy & Advocacy Committee. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

## 6. Strengthening the Employee Pipeline for the “Hardest Hit Sectors”

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

### Issue

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused untold hardship on Ontario businesses across all sectors. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the “Hardest Hit Sectors”. The hospitality, tourism, and entertainment operators that have managed to survive the ups and downs of the pandemic are all facing the same issue: trying to recruit from a labour pool that has migrated to other industries. The threat of an uncertain future, coupled with government programs designed to facilitate this migration, has left these hardest hit employers with a non-existent labour pool to draw from. This results in businesses who are unable to fill current vacancies leaving them ill-equipped to surmount a post-pandemic recovery – even if they’ve managed to survive this long.

### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked untold havoc across all sectors. Although the impacts of the pandemic have been broad, no sector has been more negatively impacted than the recently coined “Hardest Hit Sectors”. Ontario businesses in this sector were the first to be impacted and will be the last to recover. While businesses were forced to reduced operations and even close shop, the people that relied on this sector for their livelihood were forced to look elsewhere for employment, often encouraged by government programs to facilitate this transition.

In a September 2021 report from the Business Development Bank of Canada<sup>7</sup>, it was found that, when surveyed in May of 2021, 55% of Ontario businesses were having trouble hiring the talent they needed to fill the vacancies required to grow. In the same survey, nationally, it was found that nearly 2/3 (64%) of entrepreneurs were forced to limit the growth of their business, and miss out on opportunities, because of the lack of labour.

Representative of these challenges across the “Hardest Hit Sectors” at large, Restaurants Canada<sup>8</sup> noted that “while total employment in Canada returned to pre-pandemic levels in September 2021, restaurants still haven’t recovered at least 200,000 of the 8000,000+ workers they had to let go in the spring of 2020”. 1 in 4 workers in the food industry have migrated away leaving a massive gap in the talent pool.

The two most pressing reasons cited in the BDC survey for the failure to recruit new talent are: a lack of candidates (45%), and a lack of required hard or soft skills (44%). Both of these issues can be resolved by leveraging the domestic and international students of Ontario’s Private Career Colleges.

International graduates of Ontario’s regulated Private Career Colleges are ready and willing to help solve Ontario’s labour market crisis. This overlooked demographic of educated and skilled workers is eager to fill the in-demand job vacancies that are holding back Ontario’s post-pandemic economic recovery. International Graduates of Ontario’s Private Career Colleges have the potential to significantly contribute to Ontario’s workforce, however, the international students of Ontario’s approved, government regulated career colleges are not permitted to work in Canada after they graduate. International students who elect to study at a Quebec private institution, however, do qualify for a Post-Graduation Work Permit which drives talent away from Ontario and hinders our economic recovery.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bdc.ca/en/about/analysis-research/labour-shortage>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.restaurantscanada.org/support-restaurants/#page2>

Under current Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) rules, for an Ontario Private Career College program to qualify for student aid, a student must attend a 100% course load with a minimum of 20 hours per week, with no provisions for part-time study. This contrasts sharply to the public system, where as little as 60% of a fulltime course load would qualify a student for full OSAP funding. Public college students also have part-time OSAP funding available. By requiring 20 hours of instruction per week, and the associated homework, PCC students that rely on OSAP support are limited in their ability to seek employment, ultimately resulting in fewer people participating in the Ontario work force.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Revise the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) regulations as they relate to the ability of Ontario Private Career College Students studying in approved programs at registered schools to contribute to the Ontario workforce during their education.
2. Work with the Government of Canada to enable international graduates of Ontario Private Career Colleges, where the PCC is qualified as a Designated Learning Institution (DLIs) for the purposes of student visas and the program attributes meet or exceed established IRCC thresholds, to qualify for a Post-Graduation Work Permit.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee did not reach a unanimous decision on this resolution. Part of the committee expressed concern that the second recommendation would lead to quality control issues in light of a recent [Auditor General's report](#), which indicated issues with enforcement of standards among private career colleges. Others felt private career colleges can fill an important gap in addressing labour shortages.

## 7. Protecting The Economy, Jobs and Housing Affordability By Eliminating The Expansion of Municipal Land Transfer Taxes

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Timmins Chamber of Commerce and Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

### Issue

Currently, Toronto is the only municipality in Ontario that charges a second, municipal, land transfer tax (MLTT). Over the last year, several municipalities have passed motions asking the Province to amend the Municipal Act to give all municipalities the power to charge their own MLTT. Municipalities are looking for additional revenue sources while in some circumstance reporting record surpluses, due to the differences in Budget setting and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and for Municipalities, Public Sector Accounting Standards.

Implanting a Provincewide Municipal Land Transfer Tax will effectively and unjustly remove billions of dollars from the economy and have severe effects on job substantiality, housing affordability and economic recovery.

### Background

Ontario is in the middle of a housing affordability crisis. Home prices in Ontario have risen at historic rates in the last ten years. Year-over-year price growth in Ontario was over [30% in December 2021](#). A recent poll by [Abacus Data](#) shows that Ontarians see high home prices and the rising cost of living as top issues facing the province. The rising cost of living (50%) and housing affordability (39%) are critical for Ontarians, ahead of June's election.

High cost of living and an inability to enter the housing market will result in families leaving their communities and even the province further exacerbating the labour shortages plaguing economic recovery and sustainability. Research conducted this past summer by [Abacus Data on behalf of the Ontario Real Estate Association](#) found nearly half of prospective home buyers were considering leaving the province to find an affordable home elsewhere.

As of December 2021, the average price of a home in Ontario is [\\$922,735](#). That is up 22.8% from the same time in 2020 when the average was \$751,655. While affordability has historically been primarily a GTHA phenomenon the past few years have seen rural and remote communities succumb to the affordability issues.

An additional land transfer tax would cost Ontario families almost \$15,000 on an average priced home. A new MLTT will make it more difficult for Ontario to attract young talented workers, hurting the Province's long-term competitiveness. Our communities, residents, and businesses simply cannot afford this tax.

Recently released key insights from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce 2022 Ontario Economic Report included:

- Most sectors (62 percent) are facing labour shortages and expect to continue facing them over the next year.
- The business community's main policy priorities this year are business taxes and electricity costs. Small businesses are more preoccupied with financial support such as commercial rent relief, while larger businesses are more focused on long-term infrastructure, regulatory, and workforce development issues.
- Remote work arrangements are expected to partially continue in 2022. While most organizations are optimistic about technology, capital costs and access to digital skills are pervasive barriers to technology adoption at the organizational level.

There is considerable concern that while Municipalities currently focus on the residential tax class, potentially migrating workers to other provincial jurisdictions and removing disposable income from the economy reducing profitability and capital investment, that once the Municipal Act is open to amendment the MLTT will result in tax policy creep to the commercial and industrial tax classes further burdening investment in economic growth and recovery.

In 2014 research was conducted by Altus Group Economic Consulting for Ontario Real Estate Association demonstrating significant loss of jobs and economic activity in Mississauga, London, Hamilton, Ottawa and Thunder Bay would occur if a municipal land transfer tax is imposed in those cities. A provincial wide municipal tax is levy would be added on top of the existing provincial land transfer tax and would be therefore a double or second tax.

The economic impact of a new tax of this kind in the five Ontario cities studied would total more than \$1 billion and a loss of more than 10,000 jobs. These results are part of a study, Potential Economic Implications of the Municipal Land Transfer Tax in the Selected Ontario Municipalities. The effects in each city are predicted as follows:

- Mississauga: Loss of \$482 million in economic activity; loss of 3,157 jobs; loss of \$163 million in wages and salaries.
- London: Loss of \$270 million in economic activity; loss of 1,771 jobs; loss of \$92 million in wages and salaries. (2014)
- Hamilton: Loss of \$342 million in economic activity; loss of 2,240 jobs; loss of \$116 million in wages and salaries. (2014)
- Ottawa: Loss of \$543 million in economic activity; loss of 3,558 jobs; loss of \$184 million in wages and salaries. (2014)
- MLTT ad in Thunder BayThunder Bay: Loss of \$60 million in economic activity; loss of 392 jobs; loss of \$20 million in wages and salaries. (2014)

Compounding the concerns are related issues to Municipal budgeting and the presentation of financial statements as governed by Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for Municipalities, Public Sector Accounting Standards. A full report is available from the C.D Howe Institute Commentary 460, Two Sets of Books at City Hall? Grading the Financial Reports of Canada's Cities, <https://www.cdhowe.org/public-policy-research/two-sets-books-city-hall-grading-financial-reports-canada%E2%80%99s-cities>.

“In nearly all Canada’s larger cities, obscure financial reports – notably inconsistent presentations of key numbers in budgets and end-of-year financial reports – hamper legislators, ratepayers and voters seeking to hold their municipal governments to account.

The differences in accounting methods in most cities’ budgets as compared to the presentations of their financial results are large and have real-world consequences. By using cash rather than accrual accounting, cities exaggerate the costs of investments in infrastructure, hide the cost of pension obligations, and make it hard to match the costs and benefits of municipal activities to taxpayers and citizens. Moreover, many cities present their budgets late, after significant money has already been committed or spent, do not publish their financial results in a timely way, and bury key numbers deep in their reports.”

In a follow up document the Solving the Municipal Budget Mystery: Fiscal Accountability in Canada's Cities, 2021 <https://www.cdhowe.org/public-policy-research/solving-municipal-budget-mystery-fiscal-accountability-canadas-cities-2021> the authors William Robson and Miles Wu conclude that:



“Canada’s cities are central to the lives of most Canadians and absorb commensurately large shares of Canadians’ incomes. City councillors, taxpayers and voters need clear information about their finances if they are to hold officials and elected representatives to account for the quality 16 Ontario’s Municipal Act prevents municipalities from approving a budget for the year following an election in the same year as the election. As a result, municipal elections in October 2018 prevented Ontario municipalities from presenting their 2019 budgets until January 2019. Many did not present until February, March or even April – not consistent with legislative control of public funds. and cost of municipal services. Cities will be under financial stress in the post-COVID era, elevating the importance of good understanding of, and intelligent debate about, municipal finances.

The budgeting practices of most major Canadian municipalities are not up to the mark. Municipalities should present budgets that are consistent with PSAS and that readers can compare easily with their subsequent financial statements. Municipalities should produce information that is more accessible and timelier. Before Canadians grant their cities more taxing powers or increase the support they receive from senior governments, they should insist on better transparency and accountability for cities’ use of public funds. The recommendations in this Commentary would help raise the financial management and fiscal accountability of Canada’s municipalities to levels more in line with their importance in Canadians’ lives.”

Municipalities should look elsewhere, not to a Municipal Land Transfer Tax on local homeowners that they and businesses cannot afford. Ontario is in the middle of a housing affordability crisis and struggling to secure a footing for sustainable economy recovery and growth, this where all levels of government need to collaborate to make home ownership more affordable, stimulate economic prosperity and not introduce a new tax that will add thousands of dollars to the cost of living.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Not impose new taxes, including municipal land transfer taxes, on Ontario homeowners and business, that will restrict housing supply by limiting sales volumes and make the housing affordability crisis worse.
2. Support a review with the inclusion of stakeholders of the Municipal Act to update the municipal taxation system to better align with modern municipal economies, promote access to housing, and simplify the system.
3. Use all the tools at their disposal to help municipalities build more affordable homes for families and foster an environment for economic stability, sustainability, and growth.
4. Work with Municipalities to amend the property tax regime and modernize the transparency of budget setting and financial reporting.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by the Policy & Advocacy Committee. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

## 8. Accessibility in All Ontario Businesses

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

### Issue

There are still many buildings and businesses in Ontario that are not fully accessible for people differently abled. This makes access to these businesses very difficult for many people in Ontario.

### Background

Depending on when a building was originally built, full accessibility may not be available for people with various disabilities in Ontario.

When the Building Permit process is triggered for a retrofit or renovation of a building, upgrades to full accessibility as outlined in the Ontario Building Code is required. However, no such mandate is required if the building continues to operate in its normal fashion.

Older buildings in Ontario which were not built to today's standards remain inaccessible for many people in Ontario.

In this era of inclusion and diversity, it is time for Ontario to be the lead in accessibility for all people.

The Government of Ontario could mandate that all buildings conform with current Ontario Building Code requirements, but this would place a financial burden on many businesses.

However, the Government could create a Building Accessibility Grant so businesses could be reimbursed for the costs of upgrading buildings to full accessibility standards.

The Government should only mandate accessibility retrofits if it also creates a grant for business.

### Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Mandate building accessibility standards for all buildings in Ontario after it has established a Building Accessibility Grant to offset the cost to building owners and that the Government work with the business community on the creation of the program.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee does not support this resolution because of concerns about its scope. While accessibility across all buildings can and should be the end goal, the committee felt that mandating universal standards immediately would not be feasible from a cost perspective and would render the OCC's advocacy on this resolution ineffective. The committee proposed limiting the scope to either: a) offer a grant to incentivize building upgrades, as a first step towards gradual adoption of standards; b) mandate standards for certain types of upgrades or buildings, such as those built after a certain year. After a discussion with the committee, the resolution author decided not to amend this resolution.

## 9. Capturing The Battery Value-Chain

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

### Issue

The transition to a net-zero economy will be metal-intensive. New technologies will require base metals—for example, copper for electrification and nickel for battery EVs. The economic impacts for Ontario are significant but time is running out to compete in battery-cell manufacturing, the part of the value chain that holds most of the value-creation and macroeconomic opportunities. Ontario is well positioned to support investment in mining innovation that amplifies the provincial Critical Minerals Strategy and takes advantage of the quickly evolving battery value-chain.

### Background

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce report *The Climate Catalyst, Ontario's Leadership in the Green Economy* demonstrates the significant opportunity that exists for Ontario to lead the global movement to decarbonizing every aspect of daily life, commercial and industrial activity, natural resource extraction, consumption, and value-added activity.

Green technologies will need hefty amounts of rarer metals, such as lithium and cobalt for batteries, tellurium for solar panels, and neodymium for the permanent magnets used both in wind power generation and EVs. The required pace of transition means that, for some of these commodities, we will soon need ten times or more than is available today. This resource demand and Ontario's abundance of supply to support decarbonization gives Ontario the potential to generate significant economic opportunity and first mover competitive advantage in the battery value chain if action is taken immediately.

The McKinsey & Company report: *Capturing the battery value-chain opportunity* by Nicolò Campagnol, Alexander Pfeiffer, and Christer Tryggestad estimates that a new battery-manufacturing plant with a total capacity of 30 to 40 gigawatt hours (GWh) per year could directly create as many as 3,200 jobs. A similar number of jobs could be added indirectly through suppliers and construction as well as through the food and basic-services sectors. As a result, battery manufacturing could generate significant growth in GDP, especially if an ecosystem of related industries develops. This comes at a time when the automotive industry's move to EVs has raised fears of lost jobs in car manufacturing and in the production of internal-combustion engines.

Winning companies and regions will be those that act in the next few years. Governments can play an important role in facilitating industry growth in their respective countries, particularly through direct financial incentives but also by encouraging the development of local battery ecosystems.

Cell manufacturing, the most important step in the battery value chain, is estimated to account for up to 40 percent of battery-industry value creation by 2030. Manufacturers are investing billions of dollars in new battery-cell plants. If demand for battery cells grows at about 30 percent per year, the equivalent of about 90 additional gigafactories, as we know them today, will be needed in the next ten years worldwide.

Challenges include securing funding, carrying out a billion-dollar project on budget, recruiting the right talent, and training hundreds of workers. Other potential issues include securing capacity of capable machinery producers as well as qualifying and developing a supply chain.

There are already six or seven at-scale cell manufacturers with ten or more years of track record and significant volumes and plants in several countries. Customers want options for sourcing batteries, but generally no more than three or four, so ten to 15 suppliers should suffice to supply the global market. Since

more than 15 players have already announced their intention to begin cell manufacturing in Europe alone, we expect the industry to consolidate.

Companies face a variety of obstacles in the race to scale, but they can overcome those challenges using the following strategies.

- Become a low-cost producer
- Recruit skilled workers
- Secure raw-materials supply
- Improve product sustainability
- Form partnerships with customers

Batteries are emerging as a critical ingredient in the transition to a more sustainable future because of their role in electrifying transportation and balancing power grids. Battery use is more than an opportunity to eliminate vehicular CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions in a world grappling with climate change; scaling up production of battery-cell manufacturing capacity also offers significant value-creation opportunities for manufacturers, creates new jobs that pay well, and supports economic growth.

Battery ecosystems can be powerful tools for economic development, and governments that wish to capture the value-creation opportunity of batteries should consider moving quickly and forcefully to build them. Embracing the battery ecosystem and supporting Ontario's critical mineral strategy will become a powerful economic development tool for the province.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Facilitate value-chain collaborations through industry forums, and encourage talks between the mining sector, electric vehicle producers and cell manufacturers.
2. Invest in research and educational institutions to develop talent and advance technology.
3. Attract cell manufacturers by establishing proactive public policies, and working with the federal government and Municipalities, to develop a fast-track process for permitting and land leasing.
4. Work with the federal government, lending institutions, venture capital markets and angle investors to make investments, loans, grants, and guarantees to overcome capital limitations.
5. Encourage and facilitate effective cross-border collaborations and trade with other suppliers and partners in the value chain.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 10. Access to Team-Based Primary Care in Underserved Rural Communities

Submitted by: Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Ingersoll District Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

The Ontario landscape for equitable access to primary care and mental health and addictions support continues to present a number of health system gaps and challenges specific to: 1) Lack of family physicians, and 2) Lack of access to team-based care in Rural Communities, resulting in increased and inappropriate Emergency Department (ED) visits and hospital admissions.

### Background

There are several salient challenges faced by the health system that hinder the provision of community services:<sup>9</sup>

#### **Lack of family physicians and lack of access to team-based care**

For those patients without physicians, walk-in clinics are relied on, but in many rural communities they don't exist. Alternatively, the Emergency Department (ED) is relied on for primary care, or by patients who chose to ignore health issues, resulting in untreated conditions that then lead to hospital admission. This results in a high rate of avoidable visits to EDs for problems that are more appropriately managed in the community.

Continuity of care problems also result from not having a family physician and not being rostered with a Nurse Practitioner (unattached patients). HealthCare Connect is available to connect physicians with unrostered patients but often physicians do not use it due to the concern of complex patient issues.

Additionally, from an employer's perspective, employees who don't have access to a primary care provider to assess injuries and general illness have difficulties getting assessed and receiving care potentially resulting in longer periods of absenteeism.

#### **Additional rural challenges**

Rural community populations are rapidly increasing with no additional investment in health care supports, programs and services to support the population. The senior population is often higher in these communities presenting a more prevalent need for chronic disease care, such as hypertension and diabetes mellitus support, for example.

Rural communities also tend to present with higher numbers of high-strength opioid users and alcohol use disorder due to isolation and anxiety.

Access and wait times for mental health and addiction support are also higher due to lack of programs and services available.

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<sup>9</sup> Some of these issues were identified in the Oxford County and Area Ontario Health Team (OHT) Full Application but are seen across the province. <https://www.oxfordandareaohht.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OHT-Full-Application-Oxford-and-Area-FINAL.pdf>.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Investigate the opportunities available to establish equitable team-based primary care access to all rural communities across the province, specifically in areas that are identified as high need:  
<https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/highneed/>
2. Invest to expand team-based Primary Care models such as Family Health Teams (FHTs); Community Health Centres (CHCs), Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics (NPLCs) and expand the Family Health Organizations (FHOs), to enhance access and increase capacity for unattached patients to team-based primary care in rural communities.
3. Roster patients to Nurse Practitioners to avoid duplicate primary care in rural communities with physician shortages.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 11. Addressing Employment Standards Act

Submitted by: Ajax Pickering Board of Trade

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

Currently, when a claim is filed with the Ministry of Labour, the employer does not receive it. Instead, the employer only receives a letter identifying by bullet points the category of each issue (e.g. “wages”, “vacation pay”, etc.). The current policy of the Ministry of Labour to refuse to disclose the claim runs contrary to the efforts for an early settlement and the fundamental rights enriched by our justice system.

### Background

The Ontario Ministry of Labour receives on average approximately 15,000 claims per fiscal year.<sup>10</sup> However, in some years, the number of claims has exceeded 23,000. Of the complaints that are filed, roughly 90% are filed by employees who are no longer employed by the employer in issue.<sup>11</sup>

When the Ministry of Labour receives a claim, it then sends out a letter to the employer notifying them of the claim. The letter solely details the nature of the claim by providing the category of each issue (e.g. “wages” or “vacation pay” or “termination pay”). The actual amounts claimed under each category are not normally provided. Enclosed with the letter is a package recommending settlement discussions and a template form to confirm any settlement reached.

At the same time that the letter is sent out, the claim is then placed in queue to be assigned to an Employment Standards Officer, which can often take several months to occur. The claim will be either assigned to an Employment Standards Officer 1 (who can only mediate a settlement) or will be immediately escalated to an Employment Standards Officer 2 (who can mediate a settlement and can issue orders). During the waiting period, the employer can reach out to the employee (if their current contact information is known), but the employee is not obligated to discuss the matter or to provide the claim. Once the Employment Standards Officer is assigned, if a resolution cannot be reached, then the matter will eventually be investigated and an order or a refusal to issue an order issued.

At no point during this entire process is the employer allowed to be provided with the claim from the Ministry of Labour due to its policy. In fact, the employer can only obtain a copy of the claim from the Ministry of Labour if, after an order is rendered, the employer appeals the decision to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and moves for an order for its production.<sup>12</sup> As a result of the refusal to produce the claim, the employer is often unable to address the issues prior to the Employment Standards Officer being assigned. Further, once the Employment Standards Officer is assigned, the employer may not fully appreciate the issues or the source of any misunderstanding.

While essentially all other claim processes in Ontario (including applications before the Human Rights Tribunal) require the claim to be provided to the respondent, the Ministry of Labour has declined to accept this fundamental principle of justice. As a result of this failure to disclose, settlement discussions are hindered and employers are at a disadvantage in responding to claims. The claims process should be improved by

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<sup>10</sup> Ontario Ministry of Labour <[https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2017-2018-ministrylabour?\\_ga=2.89487003.1632369137.1547212240-492227812.1491401077](https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2017-2018-ministrylabour?_ga=2.89487003.1632369137.1547212240-492227812.1491401077)>, Published: August 16, 2017

<sup>11</sup> Toronto Star <<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2018/10/25/ministry-of-labour-puts-hold-on-proactive-workplace-inspections-internal-memo-says.html>>, Published: October 25, 2018

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Schiller Schule Inc. (Friedrich Schiller Schule) v. Adam, 2013 CanLII 2654 (ON LRB)

requiring that, upon being filed with the Ministry of Labour, a copy of the claim is to be provided to the employer.

**Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Revise the policy of the Ministry of Labour to require that a copy of any claim filed under the Employment Standards Act be provided forthwith to the responding employer.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.



## **12. Addressing the carbon footprint of Ontario's post-secondary institutions**

Submitted by: Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce, Gananoque Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

As Ontario's businesses and industry move toward a carbon-neutral future, the province will need to train the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs with the skills to work and innovate within a zero-carbon environment.

### **Background**

Renewable energy technology – from battery technology, solar power and smart grids to tall mass timber construction and smart buildings – is evolving quickly, affecting the trades in utilities, construction, automotive, truck and heavy equipment servicing, and maintenance occupations.

College vocational education, including the trades, is central to building, managing and maintaining clean energy systems, net-zero structures, affordable, clean, safe and efficient transportation options, including zero-emission vehicles and charging or fueling stations, public transit, and strategic trade corridors, including roads, bridges, rail, and airports.

In an effort to support Ontario's transition to a zero-carbon economy, Ontario's public colleges will be a critical player.

Ontario's post-secondary institutions can promote carbon zero initiatives both by retrofitting existing facilities to reduce their carbon footprint and investing in technology. And, as colleges develop clear paths to carbon-free heating and cooling, they provide unparalleled opportunities for local businesses and organizations to follow suit. Local businesses can also work with college researchers on zero carbon products and services and, with by retrofitting colleges to house zero carbon infrastructure, Ontario's SMEs can innovate in spaces that are carbon-neutral.

Seneca's Centre for Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship (CITE) is a 274,000 square foot building that brings applied research and commercialization, specialized training and student and business-led entrepreneurial activities under one roof. The building is LEED Gold certified and incorporates the latest technology to reduce its carbon footprint which includes 438 solar panels @ 375W per panel at full sunshine on its roof.

Another example is the Joyce Centre for Partnership and Innovation at Mohawk College in Hamilton, is at 96,000 square feet the city's first zero-carbon institutional building which produces onsite, or procures carbon-free, renewable energy in an amount sufficient to offset the annual carbon emissions associated with operations.

Most Ontario colleges were established 50 years ago and many of their 700 buildings are aging, preventing these institutions from housing the technology needed to train the next generation of workers. This aging infrastructure also has a substantial environmental footprint that will need to be addressed as industries work to move to a carbon net-zero status and align with on-going initiatives to cut greenhouse gasses.

By training the next generation of workers in modernized facilities with green technology, Ontario can help establish the foundation required to implement a zero-carbon economy.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Assess the cost and resource requirements to replace training facilities in Ontario's post-secondary institutions with infrastructure that is modernized to train graduates and SMEs to implement a zero-carbon economy.
2. Work with the federal government to advocate for funding to support retrofitting initiatives to promote carbon-zero facilities in Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

### 13. Auto Insurance Reform: Making Premiums Affordable

Submitted by: Brampton Board of Trade

*This is a sunset resolution.*

#### Issue

Auto insurance premiums rise as accidents decline.

#### Background

Auto insurance rates continue to climb while the rate of auto accidents continues to fall. In Ontario, auto insurance is mandatory and is provided by the private sector. The overall goal of insurance companies is to provide a good auto insurance product to the customer – at a competitive price - that allows for adequate indemnification in the event of an accident. Yet the insurance companies need to be profitable.

The cost of claims continues to be the driving factor for increasing rates. The technology now used in most newer vehicles has proven costly to replace and repair. At the same time, the cost of auto insurance fraud in Ontario was estimated to be up to \$1.6 billion annually in 2012, placing great burden on insurers and policy holders.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, according to a review conducted by David Marshall for the Government of Ontario, a third of insurance premium benefits do not even go to the customers as indemnification or for treatment.<sup>14</sup>

A crisis has developed and the need to make a change is urgent. Customers can't afford the higher premiums, while insurance companies can't afford the higher pay outs. It's a vicious cycle and reform is desperately needed.

#### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Simplify the accident benefit and tort systems to ensure that these systems are accessible without legal representation except in the most complicated cases. Claimants should receive the maximum amount of benefits while reducing the cost of administrative fees.
2. Conduct a review of the present auto insurance product and rating criteria and make meaningful changes that will fairly indemnify individuals for their loss and keep the product affordable.
3. Continue initiatives that assist the insurance industry in fighting fraud.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ibr.ca/pe/resources/media-centre/media-releases/they-cheat-you-pay-how-to-report-auto-insurance-fraud>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/autoinsurance/fair-benefits.html>

## 14. Encouraging Municipal Government Collaboration to Address Transit Needs and Gaps

Submitted by: Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Milton Chamber of Commerce

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

The lack of adequate or any transit options in small and rural communities impacts business competitiveness and the mobility of residents. Greater collaboration between adjacent municipalities with and without adequate transit solutions could help address transit gaps by extending or building on existing transit systems.

### Background

Public transit in small towns and rural communities is often either insufficient or non-existent. Limited mobility negatively impacts business productivity by hindering its talent pool and potential for growth. Limited and/or insufficient transit puts communities at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining industry and investment. Access to affordable, public transit would allow local businesses to remain competitive, and residents to maintain independence with access to healthcare providers, employment and community hubs.

For example, Toronto Premium Outlets, located in Halton Hills, is a very popular shopping destination, attracting tourists from around the world. Located directly off of Highway 401, they employ over 900 full-time workers. During peak seasons, Toronto Premium Outlets employs over 2000 workers, the majority of which reside in the neighbouring municipalities of Brampton, Milton and Mississauga. At any given time, as many as 50% of all employees at the mall are part-time workers, many of whom are students. Transit from both Brampton and Milton terminate approximately five kilometers from Toronto Premium Outlets. Consequently, workers must drive to work, be dropped off, take a taxi or a ride hailing service like Uber, which is costly and contributes to congestion on the 401, Steeles Avenue, and the Trafalgar Road.

Since it is not feasible for every municipality, especially more rural and/or remote communities to invest in community-wide public transit nor for the province to directly subsidize every municipality's transit needs, the Government of Ontario is encouraged to put in place the necessary policies, infrastructure and/or funding to make it feasible for neighbouring municipalities to develop and implement innovative solutions that address transit challenges and gaps that exist across municipal boundaries.

Encouraging or building on existing cross-municipal collaboration adjacent municipalities may opt to extend existing transit systems to service a wider geographic region, specifically into regions that lack transit options and service key employment zones. Addressing cross-municipal transit needs has spillover benefits for surrounding municipalities and economies as workers, commuters, and residents of both, can travel more seamlessly between regions and be significantly better connected.

Municipal government collaboration on current transit gaps in regions lacking transit options, would address the last-mile problem facing residents and commuters, and provide a more cost-effective alternative to owning a personal vehicle.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Put in place the necessary policies to encourage and streamline transit project collaborations between municipalities and regions, Example: Work with insurance companies to understand and support extensions of transit service into adjacent municipalities.
2. Put in place the necessary infrastructure and/or funding that make it feasible for municipalities and/or regions to identify transit gaps, and build on or extend existing transit service across municipal boundaries in adjacent municipal boundaries into adjacent municipalities that lack adequate transit options.
3. Urge the federal government to invest in multi-municipalities or regional transportation plans]
4. Expand the Community Transportation Grant Program (announced January 25, 2019) to encourage and specifically support this kind of municipal collaboration.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 15. Ending Exclusionary Zoning to Address Ontario's Housing Affordability Crisis

Submitted by: Toronto Region Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by Ottawa Chamber of Commerce and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

With Ontario's current land use planning policies, nearly all residential growth is either low-rise subdivisions of detached homes or high-rise towers, with very few options for modest forms of density such as triplexes or small apartment buildings. These building types represent a 'missing middle' of residential housing stock. The current policy makes it too expensive and difficult to build this kind of gentle density, thereby restricting supply, driving up the cost of housing and making it more difficult for businesses to attract and retain workers.

### Background

Ontario is growing. Our population is expected to increase to over 20 million people by 2046, a 36% increase from 2020, with the GTA expected to see the fastest rate of growth.<sup>15</sup> Recent reports have also shown that over the past decade, key provincial forecasts have underestimated our rate of population growth and overestimated how much new housing would be built.<sup>16</sup> And according to one estimate, one million new homes are needed in Ontario to meet current and projected demand over the next decade.<sup>17</sup>

In Ontario, municipalities are responsible for zoning sufficient land for different uses, including residential and employment. In all municipalities, most of the residential land is reserved for detached houses – traditionally for one family (although recent provincial changes have required municipalities to permit two units in the main home and one ancillary dwelling for all detached, semi-detached and row houses<sup>18</sup>).

This type of zoning is referred to as “exclusionary zoning” because it is intentionally designed to prevent lower-income people – and, sometimes explicitly, racial minorities – from living in certain neighbourhoods.<sup>19</sup> This was often done by requiring large lot sizes and only permitting single detached homes, blocking more affordable multi-family buildings that are similar in size and design.

This policy has had broad societal implications, including:

- Contributing to housing shortages that impede the ability of cities to both house its existing talent and attract new talent, impacting business competitiveness.
- Creating environmental impacts by requiring more people to “drive until they qualify”.
- Driving up the cost of housing by arbitrarily limiting a more affordable form of supply, resulting in disproportionate impact on BIPOC communities, newcomers and first-time homebuyers who do not have financial support from their families.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections>

<sup>16</sup> <https://institute.smartprosperity.ca/publications/forecast-for-failure>

<sup>17</sup> <https://institute.smartprosperity.ca/publications/growing-number-households>

<sup>18</sup> Ontario Planning Act, s. 16 (3), <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13#BK31>

<sup>19</sup> <https://tcf.org/content/facts/understanding-exclusionary-zoning-impact-concentrated-poverty/>

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Enable as-of-right permissions for at least four units in a building in all residentially zoned areas, and consider designating a higher baseline (e.g. eight units and/or four to five storeys) for properties near transit stations.
2. Set minimum standards for building setbacks, lot sizes, parking requirements, front doors, height, building depth, landscaping, and floor space index, ensuring that municipalities do not use other tools to prevent missing middle housing.
3. Require that development charges and fees for missing-middle buildings up to four units match the charges and fees for single-unit homes.
4. Apply these changes to all medium (30,000+) and large (100,000+) municipalities across Ontario, while allowing that different standards could be set for each size category and giving municipalities the opportunity to customize the regulations while meeting or exceeding the minimum standards.
5. Introduce strata ownership tools (i.e. a 'condo-lite' structure) while continuing to support co-ownership, shared ownership models and community land trusts, in order to allow more individuals and families to share in the opportunity to own a home.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 16. Establishing an Ontario Marine Strategy to Support Maritime Economies

Submitted by: Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

Ontario is home to some of the most significant waterways critical to the sustenance of the Canadian economy, thanks particularly our immediate access to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Canadians and Ontarians alike depend upon the efficient flow of goods and services through our provincial waterways, and it is essential that the provincial government establish a Marine Economy Strategy that will level the playing field for Ontario with other jurisdictions with similar strategies in place. With such a strategy in place, Ontario can effectively unlock further opportunities to bolster our provincial and national supply chain resiliency, while simultaneously expanding our competitive infrastructure

### Background

Whereas legislative matters pertaining to waterways often fall under federal jurisdiction, there exist opportunities for provincial, regional and territorial governments to establish economic and environmental strategies over the utilization and protection of natural assets. This includes the potential to establish a strategy or framework that focuses on maximizing the productive utilization of a given natural asset while coordinating a long-term plan for its preservation and sustenance. Given Ontario's extensive access to critical waterways essential to the functioning of our national economy, it is recommended that the province of Ontario, in conjunction with relevant federal departments work to establish an Ontario Marine Economy Strategy that seeks to coordinate long-term economic prosperity as well as the preservation of our natural assets.

Whereas provincial governments in Quebec, British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces have achieved significant success in promoting and facilitating their marine sector economies, Ontario has the opportunity to review its current utilization of our waterways to increase our competitiveness and coordinate a long-term marine sector strategy. The marine sector is vital to Ontario's economy, and we ought to pursue further job creation, increased supply chain efficiency and resilience, and the ability to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and road congestion. While the province has been focused on highways, rail and air, there are opportunities for all levels of government to enhance the opportunity for marine transportation as well.

The Great Lakes regional economy alone was estimated to be worth US\$5.8 trillion in 2015,<sup>20</sup> however, not enough is being done in Ontario to expand our marine sector capacity. Beginning the process towards the establishment of a new Ontario Marine Economy Strategy will allow the province to convene relevant stakeholders to assess challenges and opportunities. Moreover, through the formal establishment of a provincial strategy, Ontario can then leverage this asset to press the federal government on additional improvements to be identified during the consultation process.

Similar to neighbouring Great Lakes jurisdictions, Ontario needs to prepare for improvements to our existing marine sector to help prevent critical economic back ups and supply shortages, and moreover unlock the economic potential and job creation opportunities associated with a dedicated strategy towards our provincial marine economy.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.tvo.org/article/the-great-lakes-need-a-new-maritime-strategy-and-fast>



## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Establish a Marine Economy Task Force to convene relevant stakeholders towards the design of a comprehensive Ontario Marine Economy Strategy.
2. Create a comprehensive Ontario Marine Economy Strategy that will:
  - a. Provide the Great Lakes with modern and competitive infrastructure;
  - b. Ensure efficient and ecosystem-friendly navigation of the Great Lakes;
  - c. Deliver sustainable development opportunities for maritime communities; and
  - d. Prioritize the inclusion of marine transportation investments as critical infrastructure to supporting Ontario's economy.
  - e. Grow Ontario's domestic shipbuilding industry
  - f. Enhance and grow Ontario's key port industrial zones and multimodal hubs
  - g. Support Great Lakes short sea shipping initiatives

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 17. Improving Support for Employers

Submitted by: Ajax Pickering Board of Trade

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

Currently, the Office of the Employer Advisor (the “OEA”) provides complimentary expert guidance to employers in regard to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and reprisal issues in regard to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. However, in guiding employers as to their obligations, the OEA does not address the employer’s obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. As a result, the advice given by the OEA may unintentionally cause the employer to violate the Human Rights Code.

### Background

The OEA provides “Ontario employers with expert, free and confidential advice, representation, and education on all workers’ compensation issues under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and on unjust reprisal issues under the Occupational Health and Safety Act”.<sup>21</sup> On average, in a given fiscal year, the OEA has roughly 3,000 instances of providing advice.<sup>22</sup> The advice may be provided over a few minutes or several hours. Of the cases handled, 51% were in regard to entitlement issues (e.g. whether there is a leave entitlement) and 15% were in regard to return to work issues (e.g. what obligations are there for when an employee returns from a leave).

In providing this advice, the OEA does not address the employer’s obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. For example, if an employer had a worker who was returning after a leave of absence, the OEA would address the requirements under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. However, the OEA would not advise that the employer also has an ongoing obligation under the Human Rights Code to provide needed accommodation, up to the point of undue hardship. As a result, the employer may unintentionally violate the employee’s rights under the Human Rights Code when handling her return to work.

The absence of advice regarding human rights obligations is particularly alarming when you consider the fact that 70% of applications before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal are in regard to alleged employment related discrimination.<sup>23</sup> Further, the lack of assistance on human rights obligations is compounded by the fact that the Human Rights Legal Support Centre (which is funded by the Government of Ontario) only provides assistance to individual applicants, not employer respondents.<sup>24</sup> Employers should be confident in knowing that the advice the OEA provides is consistent and complete in review of all legal obligations.

### Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Expand the mandate of the Office of the Employer Advisor to include providing expert, free and confidential advice on worker disability and leave related issues under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>21</sup> Ontario Office of the Employer Advisor, <http://www.employeradviser.ca/en/>

<sup>22</sup> Ontario Office of the Employer Advisor, Annual Report 2017 – 2018, <https://www.employeradviser.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OEA-Annual-Report-2017-18-final-English-1.pdf>, at pg. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Social Justice Tribunals Ontario, 2017 – 2018 Annual Report <https://www.tribunalsontario.ca/documents/sjto/2017-18%20Annual%20Report.html>

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Legal Support Centre, <http://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/about-us>

## 18. Investment in Mining Innovation to Support the Critical Minerals Strategy

Submitted by: The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

Mining is a capital-intensive industry. New technologies are currently in development that have the potential to reduce the initial capital burden on mining organizations. Supporting the adoption of innovative new technologies will accelerate their development, eventually reduce their costs, strengthen the industry and increase competitiveness. This will increase mining reserves and support the province in its effort to continue mining critical minerals that are in global demand.

### Background

Mining is a competitive advantage for the province. According to the Ontario Mining Association, there are currently 40 mine sites operating in Ontario along with significant opportunity for exploration and future mine development<sup>25</sup>. Ontario's mineral production, including indirect and induced impacts, provides more than \$12 billion in Canadian GDP and creates 78,800 jobs<sup>26</sup>. The Ontario Mining Association also estimates that there are over 1,400 mining supply and service sector companies in Ontario<sup>27</sup>. Although "the number fluctuates with various commodity price changes, mining in Ontario produces revenues of around \$10 billion per year."<sup>28</sup> The City of Toronto is the mining finance capital of the world, and Ontario's expertise in mineral production, mining supply and services, finance, and innovation are in global demand.

With the provincial government now focused on its critical minerals strategy, it is more important than ever that we continue to invest in mining innovation. The province has developed its first ever-critical minerals strategy to help generate investment, increase the provinces competitiveness in the global market and create jobs and opportunities in the mining sector.<sup>29</sup> New technologies and high growth sectors such as information and communications technology, electronics, energy, aerospace and defense, health and life sciences, and transportation rely on critical minerals. Ontario is well positioned to become a global supplier, producer and manufacturer of choice for certain critical minerals, including but not limited to nickel, copper, cobalt and platinum group elements, however it requires a sustainable pipeline of attractive mining projects.

It is generally understood that the average new mine project will require an investment of \$1.0-2.0 billion depending on the depth of the ore body and the amount of development required. Furthermore, project execution will take several years before reaching first ore and generating any cash inflow to return on the investment. This poses not only a significant challenge for mining organizations with respect to developing an ore body that ultimately generates a net present value, but also for the province of Ontario to support its critical minerals strategy. New technology exists that has the potential to reduce the capital burden of mine development, attract a new generation of workers, reduce emissions and improve the operating efficiency of the mine once in production, however in some cases, this requires significant testing to mitigate risk before becoming widely accepted.

Generally, Ontario mining companies and the government contribute research and innovation funds on a 1:1 ratio. Matching investments are provided regardless of the type of project. With fewer resources available from industry, this skews investments towards cheaper and lower risk research projects, and away from the

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<sup>25</sup> [https://oma.on.ca/en/ontario-mining/facts\\_figures.aspx](https://oma.on.ca/en/ontario-mining/facts_figures.aspx)

<sup>26</sup> <https://oma.on.ca/en/ontario-mining/EconomicContribution.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> [https://oma.on.ca/en/ontario-mining/facts\\_figures.aspx](https://oma.on.ca/en/ontario-mining/facts_figures.aspx)

<sup>28</sup> <https://oma.on.ca/en/ontario-mining/EconomicContribution.aspx>

<sup>29</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60622/ontario-developing-first-ever-critical-minerals-strategy>

innovation and commercialization projects that are necessary to realize productivity gains in the sector. In order to attract funds and partnerships from global mining companies, the Government of Ontario needs to consider adjusting its funding ratios to provide incentives to support larger-scale, longer-term, visionary provincial mining innovation projects given that the ventures have a strong business case and a high return on investment.

For innovation to work, it must be adopted. Mining innovations need to be demonstrated and implemented as workable beyond the theoretical, but also show commercial viability. The lack of commercialization is one of the reasons why so little of the funding for mining research has impacted mine operations. The Research, Demonstration and Implementation (RD+I) approach to focus on practical applications, distinct from academic research, was developed by the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation (CEMI), and is aimed at addressing this very important issue. Mining service and supply firms also make significant contributions to the commercialization process and the provincial government has recently supported their efforts via selective funding. That said, mining organizations themselves are typically left to take on the risk associated with adoption. While new equipment or technology has been developed and tested to some extent, this does not guarantee that it will endure the harsh mining environment and meet production demands over the long term.

Perhaps, the best example of such technology is the development of battery electric mining equipment. Battery electric mining equipment has the potential to reduce the amount of capital required to build a new mine along with its future operating cost. The volume of rock excavation required for the mine ventilation system is reduced as a result of eliminating heat and emissions from traditional diesel equipment. While the cost of diesel fuel is exchanged for the cost of recharging batteries, the net operating cost of the mine is reduced given the size of the ventilation system is smaller, drawing less electricity to supply fresh air and keep the mine at temperature. The challenge with battery electric equipment starts with its initial cost. For example, the average battery electric underground loader is roughly three times the price of traditional diesel equipment given it is still in the early states of its development and far from mass-produced. Furthermore, while a number of mining organizations have chosen to trial one or two vehicles within their mine, they are not necessarily ready to change their entire mobile fleet. The benefit to current operations resides on other factors (health and safety, reduction in carbon footprint, attraction of an environmentally and health and safety conscious workforce) as opposed to the immediate financial benefits.<sup>30</sup> The financial opportunity exists more so in relation to new mine development, taking advantage of the reduction in capital for mine development. However, a significant risk remains for mining organizations when deciding to purchase and entire fleet of battery electric equipment, particularly loaders and haulage trucks that carry a larger volume of material on incline grade. This equipment has yet to prove it can reliably meet production demands over the longer term. A further step forward in adoption is required to work through remaining challenges and for mining organizations to gain confidence in product.

Several other technologies also have the potential to influence both current mining operations as well as new mine development such as continuous mining machines or tunnel-boring machines, which would transition mining from a batch process of drilling, blasting, mucking and hauling material to a continuous process where material is cut, then fed at smaller particle size up to surface. Ore sorting technologies are also under development that will allow for pre concentration of mill feed, reducing the amount of tailings produced and ultimately reducing processing costs. Autonomous mining equipment, or remote mining equipment, also serves to remove the worker from certain dangerous parts of the mining operations making it much safer and more productive given that the time required to move workers above and below surface is eliminated. The increase in safety may also attract a new generation of professionals to the mining industry. Technological advancement in mining will remove traditional barriers to underrepresented populations wanting to join the industry and allow them to benefit from well paying jobs offered by the industry.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://electricautonomy.ca/2021/02/18/bevs-in-mining-non-financial-benefits/>

In face of the current economic environment and competition from jurisdictions with lower wages, operating costs, and less stringent environmental regulations, Ontario has little choice but to innovate. New, expensive, and complex mining equipment technologies are being developed as a result of the depth of Ontario's significant identified mining resources and reserves, which are a challenge to exploit. The new technologies will result in a new paradigm of worker safety and productivity that will ensure that Ontario remains the leader in both mineral supply and mining technology supply and services. However, for innovation to work, it must be adopted. Investment needs to follow the entire process, starting with research, then development and last but not least, implementation.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Increase the relative government-to-industry funding ratio for mining innovation and ensure that it supports the entire project lifecycle.
2. Engage the mining industry through OMA, the supply and service industries and groups such as MineConnect, and other cross-sector industries in discussions that aim to support implementation and commercialization requirements.
3. Work closely with mining organizations to develop and implement new technologies such as battery electric vehicles that have the potential to improve mine project economics, increase mine reserves, and support the province in developing future mines to fulfill its critical minerals strategy.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 19. Investing in Northern Ontario's Highway Infrastructure

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

Northern Ontario suffers from an infrastructure deficit. Continuing investment to complete the four-laning of Highway 69 (Highway 400 North) should be the first step to rectifying a critical infrastructure shortage that has limited Ontario's economic potential, ability to attract and retain workers, and connectivity both within the province and across Canada.

### Background

Highway 69 is the main connective road between Northern and Southern Ontario. It connects Highway 400 North with the City of Greater Sudbury (the largest municipality in Northern Ontario), where it meets Highway 17 West headed toward Sault Ste. Marie and further on to Western Canada. It acts as the funnel for Southern Ontario residents, businesses, and tourists heading north and vice versa. Moreover, it is an integral link in the Trans-Canada Highway, connecting the Greater Toronto Area and Northern Ontario to Western Canada.

Plans to expand Highway 69 were originally announced in 1991. Despite its importance as a trans-Canada highway, Highway 69 and other northern highways still suffer from a lack of timely and adequate investment. From April 2021 to March 2022, the Ontario government is committing \$2.6 billion to repair and expand provincial highways and bridges of which only 0.24% is earmarked for Northern Ontario.<sup>31</sup>

In late December 2021, the four-laning of a 14-km stretch of Highway 69 from Highway 607 to Highway 522 was completed with plans to complete the final roadside remediation on this section by the summer of 2022. Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO) states that the remaining two-laned 68-kilometre section of the highway from Parry Sound to French River is still in the engineering and property acquisition phases and that construction on the remaining section depends on the acquisition of lands and environmental approvals. There is no way to predict the length of time that it will take to complete this section of the highway.

The provincial government should commit to completing the four-laning of Highway 69 to:

- Unlock Ontario's economic potential;
- Reduce highway closures due to accidents (often with fatalities) and inclement weather;
- Help businesses who depend on this highway get their goods to market;
- Improve Ontario's inter- and intra-provincial connectivity;
- Support regional economic development to reverse Northern Ontario's declining population trends.

Unlocking Ontario's Economic Potential:

Investment in highway infrastructure has long been recognized as a viable method of creating good-paying, middle class jobs. Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure would create well-paying jobs that would contribute not just to local communities, but to the province's economy as a whole, during the project and for many decades after.

Most economic growth in the province remains contained in Southern Ontario and has not been realized in the North. Between 2000 and 2020, Northern Ontario has seen 9 years of negative real GDP growth

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-highway-programs>

since 2000, while Southern Ontario only saw 3 years of the same.<sup>32</sup> Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure can help revitalize regional economies, which in turn can help unlock Ontario's economic potential.

Whether due to weather conditions or fatal collisions on the narrow, undivided road, Highway 69 is often closed for extended periods of time, adding hours to commutes and disrupting reliable access to and from Northern Ontario for businesses, residents, and tourists. According to the MTO, there were a total of 38 closures due to accidents on Highway 69 in the Sudbury area from 2019 to 2021 and of these, the highway was fully closed a total of 16 times.<sup>33</sup>

A safer and more reliable Highway 69 would have a positive impact on regional and provincial productivity by improving ease of access and mobility and reducing the time it takes to transport materials or finished goods, especially for businesses reliant on "just in time" delivery to achieve maximum productivity efficiencies. Four-laning Highway 69 would have a positive cascading effect on not just the economies around the Highway, but all of Ontario.

#### Improving Ontario's Inter- and Intra-Provincial Connectivity:

Successful inter- and intra-provincial trade is foremost dependent on the existence of a safe, reliable, and convenient highway network that allows passengers, heavy transports, and tourists to travel across the province and country. The highway was originally designed at a time when the majority of freight traffic was still being transported by railway, and the two-lane highway cannot accommodate the increased heavy transport traffic. Frequent highway closures due to accidents, which often result in fatalities, can have a significant adverse impact on commercial activity, act as an economic and tourist deterrent, and are unsafe for drivers. Completing the four-laning of Highway 69 will help improve traffic flow, safety, and reliability for drivers and improve access for passengers driving on the highway. In its current partial two-lane state, the highway negatively impacts residents, businesses, and the supply chain of the entire province.

#### Reversing Northern Ontario's Declining Population Trends:

A 2020 Come North Conference report showed that all 11 census districts in Northern Ontario, are experiencing labour shortages, population decline, or population aging.<sup>34</sup> Investments in northern highway infrastructure will serve to attract and retain residents and workers to northern and rural regions.

It is difficult to attract and retain people and investment to Northern Ontario when safe and convenient transportation to Southern Ontario and other parts of Canada is inadequate. With the federal government's changes to aviation regulations risking reduced flight service in Northern Ontario, and little to no passenger rail service, building a robust highway connecting Northern and Southern Ontario is not only critical to the region's economy but to the sustainability of Northern Ontario's communities as well. The province cannot afford to neglect such alarming trends in Northern communities, as they are critical to Ontario's economy.

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Expedite investments in Northern Ontario's transportation infrastructure by planning and funding the completion of Highway 69 to four lanes; and
2. When highway upgrades and improvements are studied, consider traffic volumes in relation to the rate of accidents, injury, deaths, economic advantage, as well as the potential for increased traffic volumes and economic benefits of increased volumes.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>32</sup> Email from Northern Policy Institute Staff – 11 January, 2022

<sup>33</sup> Email from Ministry of Transportation Northeast Operations Staff – 06 December, 2021

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/upload/documents/come-north/en-come-north-conference-report-20-12-11.pdf>

## 20. Strengthen Connectivity Between Businesses and Post-Secondary Institutions

Submitted by: Belleville Chamber of Commerce

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

Skills and workforce development remains a top issue for a thriving business climate. Ontario businesses require access to job ready and experienced graduates with the right credentials who meet their needs in order to scale up and grow. The provincial government can support stronger linkages between post-secondary institutions and businesses to ensure the supply of skilled employers meets the demand of businesses.

### Background

Upon hire, small businesses require new graduates to have the right skills and experience in order to hit the ground running and to contribute to the business as quickly as possible. Ensuring students in college and university receive hands-on learning opportunities while still attending school presents a huge advantage to both parties and the economy as a whole.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) perceive barriers to providing these experiential learning opportunities to students, such as, costs of student compensation and training and other administrative and operational requirements.

As a result, these barriers limit the number of opportunities for experiential learning to be gained, thereby limiting the potential for businesses to have access to the experienced talent they otherwise could.

On the one hand, businesses benefit from new post-secondary graduates being adaptable and prepared for the unknown jobs of the future, and armed with a skillset that includes critical thinking, problem solving, communication and teamwork. These skills help workers thrive in changing environments and are seen as critical to success in any business.

A greater number of small businesses, in particular, stand to benefit from new thinking and ideas based on emerging research gained through deeper ties with post-secondary institutions. These initiatives also provide small businesses with access to high quality employees and strengthen their ability to recruit graduates equipped with the skills they are looking for.

On the other hand, a post-secondary education that offers both rigorous academic programs and hands-on experiential learning[1] has been proven to help develop the adaptable skills employers need. Eighty-six per cent of current students and recent graduates in Canada have said experiential learning led to an easier transition from post-secondary to a successful career.[2]

While public and publicly assisted universities and colleges have developed vital services and programs to engage employers and students in experiential learning, providing an adequate supply of these opportunities to meet student demand is a continuing challenge.

That is why early and strong collaboration between public post-secondary institutions and business will help ensure students graduate with the skills necessary for today's employers and the jobs of tomorrow.

Increasing the supply of experiential learning opportunities is also an opportunity for small businesses. Small businesses make up 98 per cent of total businesses and two-thirds of private sector employment in Ontario.[3] Their involvement is particularly critical, as the SME category includes a growing number of start-ups arising from innovation and entrepreneurial activities across the province.



There is an opportunity for government to facilitate more linkages between small businesses and postsecondary institutions to create more hands-on learning opportunities for students.

This can be achieved by building upon existing programs that incentivize small businesses to hire students and recent graduates, as well as exploring new programs that encourage employers to work with universities and colleges to offer additional experiential learning initiatives.

There is also an opportunity for the government to prioritize the marketing of existing programs to employers to help raise awareness of these opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. In collaboration with small businesses and public post-secondary institutions, explore new programs to incentivize greater employer participation in experiential learning initiatives, including, but not limited to, co-op education, paid work placements, internships, industry-recognized in-class projects, mentorship programs and incubators, accelerators and innovation hubs.
2. Expand the Co-operative Education Tax Credit.
3. Introduce a tax credit available to employers who hire graduates of co-operative education or equivalent programs that allows employers to claim a percentage of wages and salaries for the first year of full-time employment.
4. Direct business-facing Ministries to prioritize communicating new and existing opportunities to support experiential learning opportunities and the associated benefits.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 21. Support for Mental Health Services

Submitted by: Richmond Hill Board of Trade

### Issue

Mental Health represents a major health issue that impacts businesses and residents of Ontario. Without ongoing support, businesses will see increased challenges maintaining staffing levels. This will directly impact the economy and productivity in all geographic and demographic areas of the province.

### Background

According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the cost of mental illness of the Canadian economy is estimated at over \$50 billion annually, with \$20 billion of that stemming directly from workplace losses. On average, mental health issues cost businesses almost \$1,500 per employee, per year.<sup>35</sup>

Even though many large organizations have in place an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and supplementary lifestyle programs, many small and medium-size companies may not be able to afford such services for their employees either self-funded or through third-party insurers. This puts a large portion of the population without access to treatment for mental illness and puts businesses at risk of staffing shortages due to a lack of available urgent treatment. When this unattended sector of the population seeks help, the wait times for treatment are long, and while they wait for treatment, they can sometimes be dealt with unsympathetically.

Over the past two years, the pandemic has highlighted the struggles individuals are experiencing to access adequate mental health care services.

Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) says that a child or youth suffering from mental illness has to wait as long as two and a half years to receive mental health treatment, and due to the pandemic, the waitlists for services have doubled in the past two years.

One of our members, who provides services for the seriously mentally ill, expressed these same sentiments. The member shared the stories of their clients who have spiraled because of the lack of immediately available service.

The issue remains that if we do not fix the health issue of our society, it will continue to affect our economy. Businesses will continue to have massive losses. An unhealthy society equals an unhealthy economy.

According to CMHO statistics:

1. Currently, more than 6.7 million people are living with a mental health condition in Canada.<sup>36</sup>
2. More than 28% of people aged 20-29 experience a mental illness in any given year.<sup>36</sup>
3. Approximately 8% of adults will experience major depression at some time in their lives.<sup>37</sup>
4. About 1% of Canadians will experience bipolar disorder (or "manic depression").<sup>37</sup>
5. Schizophrenia affects 1% of the Canadian population.
6. Anxiety disorders affect 5% of the household population, causing mild to severe impairment.
7. Suicide accounts for 24% of all deaths among 15-24-year-olds and 16% among 25-44-year-olds.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://occ.ca/mentalhealth>

<sup>36</sup> [Mental Health Commission of Canada. \(2013\). Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada. http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/node/5020](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/node/5020)

<sup>37</sup> [Canadian Mental Health Association. \(2014\). Fast Facts about Mental Illness. http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mentalillness/#.Uw0Eo3lupg0](http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mentalillness/#.Uw0Eo3lupg0)

8. The mortality rate due to suicide among men is four times the rate among women.

The lack of adequate service and help for our youths and adults who may be the future leaders of our society can lead to devastating effects on our communities.

Even though companies have implemented their own Mental Health programs for employees over the last decade and many organizations are trying to help with this cause, there is still a massive gap for accessibility to adequate service. This gap has led to significant losses for businesses. In 2011 it was \$6 billion in losses. In little over a decade later, it is \$50 billion in losses. Some of the statistics provided by CMHO include:

1. Mental health issues account for more than \$6 billion in lost productivity (from absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover) in 2011.
2. Those with lower incomes generally report poorer physical and mental health than those in the higher income quintiles.
3. According to Statistics Canada, Canadians in the lowest income bracket are 3-4 times more likely than those in the highest income bracket to say that their mental health is fair to poor.
4. Research indicates that only 10-20% of persons with the most serious mental illnesses are even in the workforce.
5. 21.4% of the working population in Canada currently experience mental health conditions, which can affect their productivity.
6. Mental health conditions account for approximately 30% of short- and long-term disability claims and are rated one of the top three drivers of such claims by more than 80% of Canadian employers.
7. If unaddressed, the impact of mental health conditions on lost productivity will cost Canadian businesses \$198 billion over the next 30 years.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) data shows clear vulnerabilities relating to employment:

- While mental illness accounts for about 10% of the burden of disease in Ontario, it receives just 7% of health care dollars. Relative to this burden, mental health care in Ontario is underfunded by about \$1.5 billion.<sup>3839</sup>
- The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year. This includes health care costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life.<sup>4041</sup>
- Individuals with a mental illness are much less likely to be employed.<sup>26</sup> Unemployment rates are as high as 70% to 90% for people with the most severe mental illnesses.<sup>42</sup>
- In any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems. This includes:

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<sup>38</sup> Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2015). *Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study, 2013*. Data retrieved from <http://www.healthdata.org/data-visualization/gbd-compare>

<sup>39</sup> Brien et al. (2015). *Taking Stock: A report on the quality of mental health and addictions services in Ontario*. An HQO/ICES Report. Toronto: Health Quality Ontario and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences.

<sup>40</sup> Smetanin et al. (2011). The life and economic impact of major mental illnesses in Canada: 2011-2041. Prepared for the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Toronto: RiskAnalytica.

<sup>41</sup> Lim et al. (2008). A new population-based measure of the burden of mental illness in Canada. *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, 28: 92-8.

<sup>42</sup> Marwaha and Johnson (2004). Schizophrenia and employment: A review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 39: 337-49.

- approximately 355,000 disability cases due to mental and/or behavioural disorders<sup>43</sup>
- approximately 175,000 full-time workers absent from work due to mental illness.<sup>44</sup>
- The cost of a disability leave for a mental illness is about double the cost of a leave due to a physical illness.<sup>43</sup>

CMHO listed the following Communities with the longest wait times for services - York (919 days), Durham (827 days), Northumberland (792 days), Peel (737 days), Hamilton (710 days) and Toronto (684 days)

Listed above are just some of the communities but there are many more in the rural areas with much longer wait times.

For the newly formed Ministry of Mental Health to achieve the promise of a healthier and resilient future for our communities, and to help mitigate the urgent staffing shortages that result from mental health issues, they must act now.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Work with the federal government to commit the dedicated resources necessary to improve the services provided to mentally ill individuals, ensuring that more service providers are available to tend to this area of health care; and
2. Require the Ministry of Mental Health to act immediately upon their promises regarding improvement on wait time for services.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>43</sup> Dewa, Chau, and Dermer (2010). Examining the comparative incidence and costs of physical and mental health-related disabilities in an employed population. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 52: 758-62. Number of disability cases calculated using Statistics Canada employment data, retrieved from <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/labor21a-eng.htm>.

<sup>44</sup> Institute of Health Economics (2007). *Mental health economics statistics in your pocket*. Edmonton: IHE. Number of absent workers calculated using Statistics Canada work absence rates, retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-211-x/71-211-x2011000-eng.pdf>.

## 22. Support for Ontario's Steel Industry and its Supply Chain Clusters

Submitted by: The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

*This is a sunset resolution.*

### Issue

The Ontario steel industry includes steel producers as well as manufacturing industries within its value chain and geographical clusters and has long been a cornerstone of the provincial economy. Recently, a combination of protectionist economic policies, instability in the global market economy, and foreign competition from industries benefiting from unfair economic advantages has led to a sharp decline in their ability to compete globally. As we collectively pursue net zero emissions nationally, it will be imperative for the provincial government to ensure the successful energy transition for our most carbon intensive industries as their operational costs are projected to increase. The Ontario government needs to focus public policy and investment efforts towards supporting this important industry, clusters and the innovation it creates.

### Background

Steel is a versatile material whose local production is essential to supporting local industries, consumer products, building and maintenance of our transportation and physical infrastructure. Ontario is home to more than 70% of Canada's steel production capacity. Our steel industry directly employs 16,000 and indirectly employs about 53,000 Ontarians.<sup>45</sup> Ontario's steel industry thereby has a multiplier of approximately 3.3:1; that is, there are 3.3 jobs outside of the steel industry for every direct job within the industry. Beyond contributing to overall employment, Ontario steel makers contribute to supply chains within the broader manufacturing sector in the province. In particular, steel makers play a crucial role in Ontario's 400-km automotive corridor, with direct impacts on the province's auto assemblers, and over 1,200 auto parts suppliers.<sup>46</sup> Challenges faced by this industry have a notable ripple effect across the province on related SME companies, suppliers, and manufacturers.

The rise of the steel industry was integral part of Canada's development as a world-class economy in the 20th century. From Algoma in Sault Ste Marie to Dofasco and Stelco in Hamilton, Ontario firms especially distinguished themselves as centers of excellence and advancement in new varieties of steel. Steel producers by principle agree to compete against imports on a fair commercial basis but are in global competition against foreign government subsidies, state-owned enterprises, and other forms of support that run counter to the trade rules. Moreover, Canada finds itself in a unique position where our domestic firms are subject to increasingly stringent carbon emissions reductions targets that pose significant existential threats to many of our existing manufacturing industries unless governments step in to support energy transition and to level the playing field between domestic and foreign produced products.<sup>47</sup> Market conditions are even further jeopardized by ongoing violations of WTO practices, the ineffectiveness of trade remedy laws and lack of full reciprocation within trade treaties.

While the majority of media coverage has focused on the decline of the industry, tariffs, foreign competition and oversupply in the existing market, experts remain optimistic that fundamental forces, which if harnessed, will continue to support the prosperity and global demand for Ontario steel. While challenges related to international markets remain a federal issue, the province can still play a critical role in:

1. Supporting investments for organizations in new technologies under various funding envelopes;

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<sup>45</sup> Ontario Newsroom <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2018/04/ontario-supporting-4700-jobs-in-hamiltons-steelindustry.html>

<sup>46</sup> Ontario Newsroom <https://news.ontario.ca/medg/en/2018/04/ontario-supporting-4700-jobs-in-hamiltons-steelindustry.html>

<sup>47</sup> Global Affairs Canada [https://international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/controls-controles/steel\\_alumacier\\_alum.aspx?lang=eng](https://international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/controls-controles/steel_alumacier_alum.aspx?lang=eng)

2. Working with the federal government to negotiate more equitable trade regimes and adjudications processes, as well as studying the potential remedies a border carbon adjustment regime could enable;
3. Incentivizing the development of a skilled workforce equipped to participate in the transition to advanced manufacturing;
4. Easing goods movement infrastructure bottlenecks, especially near trading hubs;
5. Incentivizing the development and participation of steel industry clusters and value chains.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Taking inspiration from the European Steel Technology Platform, work with the federal government to develop a coordinated steel manufacturing strategy that especially prioritizes investment in trade enabling infrastructure near major clusters.
2. Explore the legislated and voluntary expansion of procurement tools to include fair and preferential treatment for Canadian steel products where the exported alternative doesn't meet or exceed Canadian and provincial environmental, health and safety regulations and does not allow similar, fair and equal access to their markets for the same product.
3. Given their role as suppliers of high-performance material in the manufacturing supply chain and in flowing down R&D improvements,<sup>48</sup> prioritize allocation of the newly announced Ontario Carbon Trust funds to help energy-intensive businesses like steel industry to invest in low-carbon processes, technology and innovation and other capital investments.<sup>49</sup>
4. Work with the Government of Canada to study a border carbon adjustment regime that would protect our domestic industry from international firms not subject to the same climate change targets.
5. Strongly encourage that local suppliers and domestic steel content be used in all provincially and federally funded projects if the materials can be supplied from domestic sources.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>48</sup> Birnbaum, Cohen, Harris and Warrian (2009) Ontario Manufacturing, Supply Chains and Knowledge Networks: A Report to the Toronto Regional Research Alliance (TRRA), Toronto: TRRA October 2009

<sup>49</sup> Government of Ontario <https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2018-11/EnvironmentPlan.pdf>

### **23. Supporting Ontario's achievement of 2030 emissions reduction target, and setting us on a path to net-zero in 2050**

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

#### **Issue**

Ontario requires a diversified and integrated energy solution to decarbonize the energy sector to meet net zero targets in a cost-effective manner for businesses. Focusing on electrification as the singular approach to decarbonizing Ontario's economy limits flexibility and choice in how we may achieve net zero goals and will leave Ontarians vulnerable to escalating energy costs.

#### **Background**

To characterize the decarbonization challenge that lies ahead, we need to examine where our existing energy demands reside to understand how these needs may transition in the future. In 2020, Ontario consumed 2881 PJ of energy,<sup>50</sup> the majority of which (44%) was delivered as refined petroleum products to the transportation sector which can be easily stored and transported over the road through a series of vehicles and containers. The natural gas system represents the next largest source of energy delivered to the province (31%) where the demand for this energy is created from heating buildings and industrial activity. The natural gas system in Ontario includes 281 BCF<sup>51</sup> of energy storage (about 30% of annual natural gas demand) which allows it to reliably meet Ontario's daily and seasonally fluctuating energy needs.

In contrast, electricity provided only 16% of Ontario's energy demands in 2020 and is equipped with less than 1% of electricity storage capacity. Ontario's electrical grid is also facing an aging fleet of nuclear reactors, whose eminent refurbishments are already presenting a challenge on how the province plans to meet the current levels of electrical demand, let alone any future demand that might be realized from the decarbonization of Ontario's transportation, buildings and industrial sectors. Ontario needs a coordinated and integrated approach to decarbonize our energy systems; one that leverages its existing energy infrastructure to achieve our 2050 net-zero goals while keeping energy reliability and affordability a priority for all generations. To entirely rely on Ontario's electrical grid to decarbonize our energy and economy is impractical, unnecessary and is likely to prevent the most cost-optimal solutions from being deployed. The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) has indicated that the elimination of gas fired electrical generating capacity by 2030 would result in system instability and be cost prohibitive. A more practical solution to decarbonizing the remaining emissions in Ontario's electrical grid may be to deploy carbon capture facilities at existing gas-fired power plants to continue to provide this essential peaking service.

A suite of technology and fuel agnostic options should be pursued to cost effectively manage the decarbonization of heating buildings in Ontario. Geothermal and district heating and cooling systems are highly efficient, but in most circumstances cannot be affordably or practically retrofit into existing buildings for which they were not originally designed, and typically have higher capital equipment costs than conventional systems. Most Ontarians (84%)<sup>52</sup> have chosen to heat their buildings with natural gas.

Policies that mandate a switch from gas heating to electricity would require not only considerable capital investment by building owners, but would demand sizable investments for more electricity supply, transmission, and distribution, capacity that would undoubtedly lead to higher electricity prices for rate payers. Alternatively, programs that encourage customers to install a hybrid heating solution would be

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<sup>50</sup> Canada's Energy Future 2020, End-Use Demand, Reference Case, Ontario

<sup>51</sup> [Natural Gas Storage - Enbridge Inc](#)

<sup>52</sup> Net Zero 2050. Ontario Energy Association. June 2021.

beneficial. A hybrid heating solution replaces a conventional air-conditioner with a higher efficiency air source heat pump, and pairs it with a gas furnace and smart controls. This solution allows customers to fuel switch between natural gas and electric heating, reducing emissions while also providing affordable heat during the coldest weather as well as limiting the need to provide new electrical generating capacity to service peak heating needs

Historically, gas networks delivered gas produced from coal, which was a mixture of methane, hydrogen, carbon monoxide and other gases. Between the 1960's and 1970's, gas networks began converting their systems and their customer's equipment to accept cleaner burning natural gas. Blending hydrogen into existing natural gas distribution networks, as well as future conversion of the gas distribution system to deliver 100% hydrogen is being considered in many jurisdictions as an economical means of reaching their decarbonization goals.<sup>53</sup> Since hydrogen can be produced from natural gas or electricity, it offers several unique solutions to decarbonizing Ontario's economy. While carbon dioxide is produced when hydrogen is produced from natural gas, it is a high purity source of carbon dioxide that can be easily captured and either utilized or permanently sequestered in geological formations. This is a practical way to begin building a cost effective and low-carbon supply of hydrogen in Ontario. This hydrogen supply is now available to support hydrogen demand for end-uses such as heating or other industrial purposes. The introduction of hydrogen electrolyzers at various points on the electrical grid and at electricity generating facilities is also an opportunity to better manage excess electricity and generate low-carbon supplies of hydrogen that could displace natural gas.

The electrification of light-duty vehicles is an efficient and economical means of decarbonizing this segment of the transportation sector, with a growing number of vehicle options and charging locations introduced to Ontario. Currently, the heavy-duty transportation segment has fewer market ready solutions; however, the delivery of renewable natural gas (RNG) to compressed natural gas (CNG) stations, and vehicles are an immediate pathway to fully decarbonize the heavy-duty transportation sector. CNG vehicles can be fueled 100% with RNG with zero performance concerns. RNG also has a cost advantage over diesel fuel. As of Oct 1, 2021, RNG was being offered to Fortis natural gas customers in British Columbia at a price of \$11.83 per GJ.<sup>54</sup> Compare that to current cost of diesel in Ontario of \$1.43 per liter of diesel<sup>55</sup> (\$39.6 per GJ)<sup>56</sup> - a distinct economic and environmental advantage can be seen. In the longer term, hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles are another option for zero-emission vehicles.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Keep energy affordable for Ontarians by:
  - a. Ensuring the pace of energy transition is balanced to recognize the capacity of Ontario and businesses to pay for the increased costs of decarbonization, particularly coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - b. Recognizing that decarbonizing the gas system is an affordable, market-ready option that does not require families and businesses to replace their heating systems and avoids the need to build new electricity generation infrastructure to serve the increased load
2. Help Ontarians conserve energy by leveraging and building on the success of current energy conservation programs to help businesses and residents reduce their energy demands.

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<sup>53</sup> [European Hydrogen Backbone - Gas for Climate 2050](#)

<sup>54</sup> [How much does Renewable Natural Gas cost \(fortisbc.com\)](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Motor fuel prices | Ontario.ca](#)

<sup>56</sup> 1 GJ of natural gas is the equivalent of 27.7 liters of diesel.



3. Adopt an integrated, diversified pathway to decarbonize our energy systems that includes;
  - a. Formalizing inclusion of the gas system perspective in future energy system and distribution system planning, as this ensures the existing infrastructure is leveraged and helps to enable the reliable delivery of least cost low carbon energy solutions to rate payers.
  - b. Policies that enable the blending of RNG and hydrogen into the existing natural gas system.
  - c. Programs that encourage the adoption of natural gas and electrical hybrid heating and cooling systems at the time of equipment replacement, as this provides consumers the opportunity to take immediate action to decrease their GHG footprint, and the ability to fuel switch according to their economic means.
  - d. A focus on Carbon Capture, including:
    - Revising the Oil, Gas, and Salt Resources act so as not to prohibit the exploration and development of carbon dioxide storage in underground geological formations. For some industrial facilities, electrification of processes may not be practical and retrofitting equipment to capture CO<sub>2</sub> may be the lowest cost means of decarbonizations.
    - Policies that support the deployment of carbon capture equipment at existing hydrogen production facilities in Ontario, as this represents an economic means of building a low-carbon supply of hydrogen in Ontario. A study should be undertaken to understand the operational and economic impacts that may arise from deploying carbon capture systems at gas-fired power plants in Ontario.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## **24. Supporting the Further Professionalization of Ontario Child Care and Early Childhood Education**

Submitted by: Hamilton Chamber of Commerce & Guelph Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Throughout 2021 the federal government made significant strides towards the pursuit of universally accessible and affordable child care for all Canadians through the establishment of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan. At the time of writing, Ontario remains the only province yet to sign on to the national strategy, and as such, Ontarians continue to pay among the highest child care and early learning costs in the country. Meanwhile, effective January 1, 2022, families in other provinces are already reaping the benefits of the nationally supported Early Learning and Child Care Plan.

The experiences of the pandemic have laid bare the importance of accessible and affordable child care options for Canadian families, and moreover, highlighted how these services contribute positively to economic opportunity and workforce participation. Ontario ought to act now and sign onto the federal strategy to ensure equality of access to affordable and accessible child care, and moreover, study how Canada's largest province can maximize potential benefits of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan for Ontarian families.

### **Background**

The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic was particularly punctuated with a renewed public perception and appreciation for services often taken for granted, including child care and early learning. When the majority of child care and early learning centres were closed or limited in terms of service capabilities to focus on supporting our province's essential workers, many families were thrust not only into working remotely in many instances, but also taking on the role of full-time care provider and educator for their children. The result was a near universal acknowledgement and reflection that our community's child care and early learning educators serve crucial roles not only to the development of children, but also serve a broader facilitative role in terms of maximizing workforce participation and economic opportunity for many.

However, despite the acknowledgement of its facilitative benefits to the broader economy and opportunity for Ontarian families, child care and early learning remains a significant financial burden for many just trying to make ends meet. The federal government has further acknowledged these community-wide benefits derived from high participation rates in child care and early learning settings by establishing the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan. The government's goal is ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable, and flexible early learning and child care no matter where they live. Specifically, the federal government has established a goal of bringing fees for regulated child care down to \$10 per day on average within the next five years and to pursue a 50 per cent reduction in average fees for regulated early learning and childcare.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout 2021, the federal government successfully struck deals with provinces and territories to join the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan and as of January 1, 2022, families across Canada are already reaping the financial and social benefits of the new subsidized program. In Ontario, however, Canada's most populous province, the provincial government has yet to sign on to this program leaving thousands of

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<sup>57</sup> Budget 2021: A Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2021/04/budget-2021-a-canada-wide-early-learning-and-child-care-plan.html>

Ontarian families on the hook for early learning and child care costs that Canadians in other provinces are no longer paying out of pocket for.

While the long-term benefits of this program are yet to be borne out, it is not difficult to project that these significant investments in our children's development will result in more engaged, compassionate, and responsive youth equipped with the essential skills to succeed through the rest of their educational journeys. Moreover, the long-term financial benefits for families and the economic opportunities unlocked by ensuring affordable and accessible child care will be transformative in terms of maximizing workforce participation and overall provincial economic output.

While the Ontario provincial government ought to sign on to the federal strategy immediately, this will only be the beginning of a larger conversation about early learning and child care priorities for the province. As the Ontario government continues to claim the \$10.2 billion annual federal funding remittance proposal is not enough for support our provinces existing early learning and child care services,<sup>58</sup> this claim remains disputed, and inaction only continues to further set back Ontario families dealing with ever-increasing early learning and child care costs. Ontario needs to sign on to the federal program in order to bring relief to families immediately and to springboard a provincial conversation about where our priorities are and how we can achieve them in concert with the federal strategy.

Where the Ontario government has identified concerns about the program, it ought to engage in robust sector consultation to explore creative solutions to ensuring greater province-wide access to affordable and high-quality early learning and child care services. Our local service providers and agencies have a wealth of front line experience that should be tapped into as the province explores what the future of early learning and child care looks like. There exists a litany of considerations to improve the sector and further support its professionalization that ought to be explored and potentially ushered in alongside the federal plan. These considerations include matters pertaining to career pathways, attracting and retaining staff, wage scaling and compensation, and to supporting equity, diversity and inclusion within the sector.<sup>59</sup> In concert with early learning and child care service providers, the province of Ontario has the opportunity to consult and collaborate with the sector to understand challenges and opportunities to ensure the long-term prosperity and accessibility of Ontario's early learning and child care sector.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Sign on to the federal government's Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan immediately to allow Ontarian families to be eligible for subsidies providing affordable access to high quality childcare and early learning services.
2. Establish an Ontario Childcare and Early Learning Task Force to explore various aspects of further professionalization of the sector and to study the long-term requirements of supporting affordable and universally accessible childcare services.

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<sup>58</sup> Ontario's \$10/Day Daycare Delay Based on Wrong Numbers; Ottawa. <https://ipolitics.ca/2021/11/10/ontarios-10-day-daycare-delay-based-on-wrong-numbers-ottawa/>.

<sup>59</sup> The \$30B Child Care Challenge: Building a New Program from the Ground Up. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/child-care-into-2022-challenges-obstacles-1.6287720>.

Items to be studied include, but are not limited to:

- Employee Attraction and Retention;
  - Compensation;
  - Career Pathways and Additional Credentialling;
  - Recognizing International Accreditations;
  - Funding Formulas and Operational Structure;
  - Assessing Impacts on Regulated vs. Non-Regulated Child care;
  - Assessing Impacts on Not-for-Profit and For-Profit Child care.
  - Exploring licensed home child care as a flexible and viable model and opportunity for scalability.
  - Reviewing existing research on the lifelong impact of early learning and child care on children's ages 0-3.8.
3. Following adoption of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan, conduct community consultation with regional childcare and early learning service providers to understand evolving needs as the anticipated increasing demand for childcare outpaces provincial supply.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 25. The Expansion of Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure and Market in Ontario

Submitted by: The Oakville Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

Automotive technology and improvements in electric vehicles continue to evolve at a rapid pace, however consumer demand remains low. Provincial government measures that address key areas of support such as the expansion of EV charging infrastructure as well as increased purchase incentives would spur both consumer confidence as well as demand.

### Background

In October 2020, the federal and provincial governments jointly announced their support to transform Ford Motor Company of Canada's Oakville Assembly Complex (OAC) from an internal combustion engine (ICE) plant to a battery electric vehicle (BEV) plant. This project, valued at \$1.8 billion, will help secure the future of Ford's Oakville Assembly Complex and thousands of well-paying direct and indirect jobs to be derived from this transition into electrification. This transformation of OAC into a BEV assembly plant is in line with the Government of Canada's commitment to sustainable growth and greening the economy, and will help support the auto supply chain, mainly located in Ontario. Electrification will allow us to position the innovative Canadian automotive industry as a global leader in BEV manufacturing.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the federal government's "Greening Government Strategy" outlines its goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from the atmosphere. The proposed Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, introduced in Parliament on November 19, 2020, will formalize Canada's target to achieve net-zero emissions by the year 2050, and establish a series of interim emissions reduction targets at 5-year milestones toward that goal.

The transportation sector contributes 25% of Canada's emissions, of which 12% is from light duty vehicles.<sup>61</sup>

The Government of Canada has also set a mandatory target for all new light-duty cars and passenger trucks to be zero-emission by 2035, accelerating Canada's previous goal of 100% sales by 2040. Additionally, they have set an interim target of 50% by 2030. These are ambitious targets. (Today, we are sitting at approx. 5% of sales are ZEVs.)

Key impediments to higher consumer uptake of ZEVs including cost and lack of sufficient public infrastructure. By prioritizing EV charging Infrastructure as well as purchase incentives the government will support its goal to reduce GHGs, and will support the province's auto sector in this rapid shift to electrification.

To remain globally competitive the provincial government must remain competitive with its global counterparts. For example, the Biden Administration introduced a \$2-trillion "American Jobs Plan" to rebuild the economy and revitalize infrastructure. A key pillar of the plan is a \$174-billion investment to "win the EV market." This includes supporting automakers as they transition to electrification, offering consumer incentives to buy EVs, building 500,000 new EV chargers by 2030, and using the power of federal procurement to electrify the federal fleet.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/10/08/new-commitment-battery-electric-vehicle-manufacturing-ontario>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/climate-plan/reduce-emissions.html>

<sup>62</sup> <https://ipolitics.ca/2021/05/12/canada-must-act-fast-to-benefit-from-americas-shift-to-electric-cars/>

Ontario has a history of excellence as a top auto-producing jurisdiction in North America. For generations, the auto sector has supported the livelihoods of Ontario workers and has remained an essential part of Ontario's economy. In 2019, the sector contributed \$13.9 billion in GDP to the provincial economy and employed 100,000 people in auto assembly and parts manufacturing. Despite this, Ontario has seen investment dollars go to competing jurisdictions. There is intense global competition for auto investments, and a major driver of this shift is that southern U.S. states and Mexico offered lower costs and less red tape.<sup>63</sup>

According to a recent analysis by Electric Autonomy, Canada needs to invest \$4.7 billion in charging infrastructure if we are to keep pace with the U.S. This is far more than the \$376 million the federal government has promised to spend on charging stations.<sup>64</sup>

Research demonstrates that consumers continue being cautious of making the switch to electric vehicles due to price, a shortage of charging infrastructure, concerns about EVs' range, and a lack of awareness of electric vehicles and their benefits.

According to a recent Leger poll, the top reasons Canadians cite for not buying an EV are: their limited driving range (55 per cent); their higher purchase price (54 per cent); a shortage of public charging stations (47 per cent); and the time it takes to charge an EV (45 per cent).

However, there is widespread support for government subsidization of EV purchases. The poll found that the most popular policies and programs to support EV adoption are: tax (GST/HST) deductions (51 per cent); free public charging stations (45 per cent); government incentives (45 per cent); preferential insurance rates (43 per cent); and free annual registrations for EV owners (39 per cent).<sup>65</sup>

Canada's vast geography, and 1.1 million km of public roads, present another challenge that needs to be met by any measures. With only 1,000 publicly accessible fast charger stations available to Canadians right now, most in densely populated areas, we have a long way to go before consumers are assured there is no inconvenience associated with going electric.<sup>66</sup>

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Prioritize funding and make incentives available for public and business charging infrastructure.
2. Encourage increased adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs) by consumers and businesses by offering EV incentives for the purchase of EV vehicles in Ontario.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>63</sup> <https://files.ontario.ca/medjct-driving-prosperity-ontario-automotive-plan-phase-2-en-2021-11-23.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> <https://ipolitics.ca/2021/05/12/canada-must-act-fast-to-benefit-from-americas-shift-to-electric-cars/>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.cvma.ca/press-release/new-survey-underscores-need-ambitious-government-efforts-convince-canadians-purchase-electric-vehicles/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://ipolitics.ca/2021/05/12/canada-must-act-fast-to-benefit-from-americas-shift-to-electric-cars/>

## 26. Tiny Home Construction Strategy

Submitted by: Peterborough & the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

Housing in Ontario has become difficult to attain for many people due to both price and availability. Creating a strategy to encourage tiny homes will help increase housing stock and address issues relating to housing insecurity.

### Background

Housing is becoming increasingly out of reach for many Ontarians, both in terms of home ownership and rental. The average house price in Ontario has increased by more than 47 per cent over the last two years, with the price of the average home nearing \$1 million at the end of 2021.

This is no longer a big city affordability issue. Small cities and rural communities across Ontario are not far behind big city real estate prices.

Access to rental homes has challenges as well. Residential vacancy rates have remained low in many communities for a number of years with the price of rentals increasing as demand for all types of housing outpaces supply.

Ontario is going to need 1 million new homes over the next 10 years, according to the report *Baby Needs A New Home: Projecting Ontario's Growing Number of Families and Their Housing Needs*. The report is from the Smart Prosperity Institute, funded by the Ontario Homebuilders' Association. According to the report, we're already 65,000 homes short of what is needed.

For some, the lack of access to housing within their price range has driven them to other provinces that offer a lower cost of living. According to Statistics Canada, our country hasn't seen this level of interprovincial migration in more than 30 years, with Ontario taking the biggest hit. In the second quarter of 2021, nearly 12,000 more people left Ontario for other provinces than moved here. Many of the people leaving are younger, first-time home buyers — the very people our labour market is desperately in need of.

Others have been left with no home at all. This has been especially evident in the downtown cores of many Ontario communities as years of housing insecurity issues have become much more visible.

With many businesses across sectors struggling to attract sufficient talent to meet their economic potential, housing access has become a significant business competitiveness issue.

A large portion of our need for housing can be met through traditional housing, though the pace of the creation of traditional housing stock needs to increase to meet demand.

One growing niche solution is tiny homes. These homes are typically less than 32 m<sup>2</sup> (400 ft<sup>2</sup>) and are required by the Ontario Building Code to be more than 17.5 m<sup>2</sup> (188 ft<sup>2</sup>). Tiny homes are popular both for people looking to downsize and people who have otherwise been priced out of the housing market. The Province has created allowances within the Ontario Building Code to accommodate these type of residences; however, that has not been incorporated into many municipal zoning bylaws. The rules in municipalities across the province vary widely. This is a particular issue when it comes to minimum size and parking requirements, all of which make it a costly and a highly customized endeavour to create tiny homes either as independent or secondary dwellings.

Encouraging and incentivising municipalities to modernize zoning bylaws in a standardized way that makes it easier to build tiny homes would add to our affordable building stock. This will help make our communities more competitive in attracting and retaining talent and address local housing insecurity issues.

Additionally, there is a growing need for temporary shelter. Non-profit and charitable organizations have been trying to find stopgap housing for the housing insecure. Homelessness and housing insecurity are complicated issues that require a multifaceted approach. Shelter beds are the go-to for many municipalities, but that solution doesn't work for everyone due to shelter capacity, hours of operation, privacy conditions, sobriety requirements, and interpersonal conflicts. There is an opportunity to amend the Ontario Building Code to use a type of minimalist tiny home as a stopgap shelter for those with no other options. While not an ideal housing situation, temporarily residing in a minimalist tiny home could provide people who would otherwise be sleeping rough with the safety, security, and dignity of a roof over their head, four walls, and a lockable door.

Tiny homes offer opportunities to address some of the housing issues our province is dealing with by improving access to affordable housing options and shelter for our most vulnerable. A provincial tiny home construction strategy is needed to further explore and develop this niche while ensuring basic living standards are met.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create a strategy for the construction of tiny homes as a tool for increasing housing stock
2. Encourage and incentivize municipalities with the use of existing government programs to incorporate a standard set of guidelines, in alignment with the Ontario Building Code, for tiny home construction.
3. Amend the Ontario Building Code to allow for minimalist tiny homes as a stopgap shelter for people who might otherwise be living rough

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.



## 27. Act to increase the stock of affordable housing in Ontario

Submitted by: Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

The lack of affordable housing in Ontario has reached crisis levels, and the cost of housing continues to grow far in excess of inflation. The 2022 Ontario Economic Report identified this cost as a major pressure point for the economy and businesses. Disproportionate income spent on housing siphons consumer dollars out of the rest of the economy, while the growing number of Ontarians on core housing need place an increasing burden on the government and on the charitable and non-profit sector charged with assisting them. Rising house prices translate into upward pressure on wages and encourage speculative action in the housing market.

### Background

Average house prices increased 22.8% in Ontario in 2021, during a year which saw a 4.4% increase in the price of goods and a 2.2% increase in the price of services.<sup>67,68</sup> This is considerably higher than the already-sizable national average increase of 17.7%.<sup>69</sup>

A Scotiabank report of 2021 showed that Ontario had the greatest insufficiency of housing stock out of all Canadian provinces, and would have to build 650,000 new units in order to meet the Canadian average. Even reaching that level would likely be insufficient, as the national housing stock per capita is the lowest in the G7, and the country as a whole would need an additional 1.8 million units to reach parity.<sup>70</sup>

The latest report from the Auditor General of Ontario on social and affordable housing, in 2017, found that the province's social housing wait list, at 481,000 people, was the largest relative to overall population in Canada. This waitlist has grown by 36% in the last 13 years for which data were available.<sup>71</sup> In the two decades before the report, only 20,000 new affordable units were built in Ontario, making the stock of affordable housing to population 2% (compared to 8% in Denmark and 11% in the UK).<sup>72</sup>

The problem of affordable housing in Ontario is inexplicably linked to the lack of housing stock. Available housing has already fallen far behind the needs of the population. While CMHC recorded 86,586 housing starts in the province in 2021, the population grew by 80,564 people, and that growth, it should be noted, was 120,447 less than in 2019/2020 (before border restrictions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically slowed immigration).<sup>73,74</sup>

As long as Ontario does not have sufficient housing stock to meet the needs of the population, initiatives such as the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit will not succeed in increasing housing affordability in the long-

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<sup>67</sup> Ontario Real Estate Association, "Ontario MLS® home sales set new all-time high in 2021," December 2021. Retrieved from [https://creastats.crea.ca/board/orea\\_on\\_2022-01-26](https://creastats.crea.ca/board/orea_on_2022-01-26).

<sup>68</sup> Bank of Canada, "Keeping Our Eyes on Inflation," 2021-12-09. <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/2021/12/keeping-our-eyes-on-inflation/> on 2022-01-26.

<sup>69</sup> Ontario Real Estate Association (Ibid.).

<sup>70</sup> Scotiabank, "Which Province Has the Largest Structural Housing Deficit?" January 22, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.scotiabank.com/ca/en/about/economics/economics-publications/post-other-publications.housing.housing-note.housing-note--january-12-2022-.html> on 2022-01-26.

<sup>71</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, "Social and Affordable Housing: 2017 Value-for-Money Audit," 2017. Retrieved from [https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en17/v1\\_314en17.pdf](https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en17/v1_314en17.pdf) on 2022-01-26.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ontario Home Builders Association/Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Housing Starts," retrieved from <https://www.ohba.ca/housing-starts-ontario/> on 2022-01-26.

<sup>74</sup> Statistics Canada, "Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2021," retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-215-x/2021001/sec1-eng.htm> on 2022-01-26.

term. Government funds used to pay rent will bid up rental prices so long as supply remains dramatically less than demand; assistance thus offered will be temporary.

Current action items for the Government of Ontario, such as reducing red tape, investing in infrastructure, or freeing up provincial land, are unlikely to result in the construction of more affordable housing because they are not targeted, and developers have no financial reason not to use these initiatives to construct more executive homes or luxury condominiums.

A solution to the affordable housing crisis requires not just publicly-funded housing but the involvement of the private-sector. The government must seek to untangle the economic factors which have effectively incentivized the construction of expensive housing, and make it more economically rewarding for developers to construct affordable housing and units for rent.

This approach should be mirrored at the municipal level, and the Government of Ontario can require municipal governments to require and approve more development of affordable housing, multi-unit construction, and purpose-built rental dwellings. The Government of Ontario can also help municipalities overcome the resistance of current homeowners to the development of affordable units and high-density land use by mandating it at the provincial level, thus effectively removing the decision-making power from municipalities (and neutering resistance at the municipal level).

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create financial incentives that make the construction of affordable units more economically rewarding for developers
2. Require municipalities to intensify development and approve more multi-unit and affordable rental buildings as part of their official plans

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## 28. Principals to Assist the Unskilled Workforce

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

### Issue

For those who are chronically unemployed or underemployed, some of the current provincial government programs supporting that market can appear too rigid in areas of: reporting metrics, targeted skill sets, and focused on immediate wins. We are suggesting that programs be introduced or adapted in partnership with business, broadly oriented (not tied to narrow industry or role definitions) and have long term incentives for formerly displaced employees to stick with it.

### Background

The Chamber Network recognizes that the Ontario government has made great strides in the area of skills development and applauds the November 22, 2021 announcement from the Premier in respect of their intention to expand the Second Career Program.

Unfortunately, there are still many left behind. According to the October 2021 Labour Force Study prepared by Statistics Canada, there were at that time over 380,000 jobseekers that were unemployed for a period of 27 weeks or more. Often the unskilled unemployed have limited resources and this acts as a further barrier to accessing government programs that are essentially co-funded (i.e. courses where tuition and living expenses are not fully funded by government support during the term). In these cases, upskilling may need to occur in more gradual stages to be effective.

The OECD in their abstract [Active labour market policies and COVID-19:](#)

[\(Re-\)connecting people with jobs](#) noted “When (Active Labour Market Policy) ALMP design is set in several regulations, amending the design to meet the changing need of the labour market can be a cumbersome process.” For this reason, the engagement of employers in the process and the ability to flexibly address the broad needs of employers is key to creating opportunities for job seekers.

### Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Embed the following three core principles in developing programs geared to transitioning an unskilled workforce to semi-skilled workforce:
  - a. **Employer driven** – The funding should be allocated in partnership with local employers that help to drive and deliver skills training that is directly tied to in-demand jobs in the area with a view to have government facilitating the program and employers driving the curriculum.
  - b. **Broad based** – While extra energy should be provided to support those with explicit barriers to gaining employment, there should be programs that are open to all people that are displaced from a full time job or working part time and looking to upskill.
  - c. **Long-term results focused incentives** – To incentivise the transition from long-term unemployment to gainfully employed. There should be incentives for employees that maintain long term employment coming out of the program (e.g. a tax credit at the 2 and 5 year mark sufficient to drive an incentive to remain part of the work force after an extended period of absence and with safeguards to avoid abuse). The incentive should not be tied to a specific employer, but rather a period of continued employment (allowing for reasonable industry driven work patterns).

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

## **29. Biomass Generation Key to Economic, Environmental and Social Benefits**

Submitted by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. Co sponsored by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste Marie Chamber of Commerce, Timmins Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Biomass heat and power generation is a key element in the economy of Ontario, diverting waste fibre from unacceptable and detrimental usage such as landfilling. Biomass heat and power generation contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gases, creating investment & employment in communities and First Nations, and assisting in the sustainability of the forest industry in the province. To grow these economic, environmental and social benefits, the Government of Ontario must take action to implement policies and programs that support biomass generation.

### **Background**

The Ontario Forestry Industry is a significant element of the economy of the province. There are 47,800 Ontarians directly employed in forestry, and over \$242.6 million in timber charges were paid to provincial coffers by Ontario's forestry companies in 2020. In 2019, forest manufacturing revenues were over \$17.6 billion. The industry has the potential to grow as currently only 46% of the total allowable cut is being harvested, totalling 130,837 hectares.

One key growth scenario is the utilization of waste fibre in the generation of electricity to support the Ontario electrical grid as well as the distribution of the industrial steam by-product as a means of reducing greenhouse gases produced by heating residential, industrial and institutional buildings.

According to Ontario's Minister of Energy, the Hon. Todd Smith, in a letter to the IESO dated November 10, 2021:

“The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) has forecasted an emerging capacity need following the closure of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station that grows through the latter part of the decade. Fulfilling this forecasted capacity need will require IESO to procure both existing and new resources. As demand continues to grow in response to electrification, ensuring we have a framework in place to secure capacity is critical.”

The IESO has also identified the need and opportunity for distributed generation facilities to meet the overall needs of the region and the province.

Ontario already supports a number of biomass electricity generating facilities through power purchase agreements (PPA) which are shortly due to expire in the next 2 to 3 years. These facilities will be eligible to participate in negotiations with the IESO to renew their respective PPAs including:

- Atikokan Generating Station (OPG)
- Calstock (Atlantic Power)
- GreenFirst (formerly Tembec) sawmill in Chapleau
- Hornpayne Power Inc.
- Resolute Forest Products Thunder Bay

The integrated aspect of biomass generators ensures the sustainability of their operation, and in many cases, the operation of sawmills and harvest operations associated with them across a geographic area hundreds of kilometres wide.

For example, Thunder Bay's Resolute Forest Product's biomass facilities draw on fibre from sawmills and lumber producers in Ignace, Atikokan, Thunder Bay, Fort Frances and Barwick in addition to the many bush contractors, who rely on grinding or chipping waste material in order to access timber stands that otherwise would be un-harvestable without a market for lower grade fibre. Similar relationships exist for the other biomass generators noted previously.

Ontario's Fall Economic Update indicated the commitment of the government to fund the above-market cost of renewing existing biomass energy generator's Power Purchase Agreements. However, the Minister of Energy letter of November 10, 2021 to the IESO clarified that new contracts would be for terms up to five years only, and that the agreement for the first generator would be set at a significantly reduced capacity.

While all of the generators supply electricity to the Ontario electrical grid, a few also provide electricity for their own operations which improves their viability. However, the generation of electricity is not the only benefit created by their operations. Biomass generators are a part of an integrated energy and environmental system. The primary source of the fibre is waste wood from forestry operations. Historically this waste wood was either incinerated or deposited in a variety of landfill sites which contributed to the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere with no value to society. Without existing facilities, Ontario could be landfilling over 1.3 million metric tonnes (equivalent to over 40,000 truckloads of waste annually). Using this biomass to generate renewable electricity and heat diverts significant waste from landfills and will also assist in moving natural gas consumers over to a district heating supply utilizing waste steam from the generator.

The existing and future biomass generators have a broad economic footprint in their area. Employment is enhanced in harvesting, transportation and generator operations. This is extremely important to First Nation communities as well as the host community of the generator. They also support the operations of the municipalities where they are located.

There is also a growing interest in Ontario's sustainably managed forests as an invaluable source of feedstock to support the emerging low carbon bio-economy (fuels, plastics, chemicals). These new technologies require a robust and integrated primary forest products sector to be successful and this includes a stable and reliable source of heat and power. There is tremendous opportunity to attract significant investment into Ontario over the next couple of years and the presence of biomass cogeneration facilities will play a critical role in attracting this investment as they are a source of heat, power and necessary industrial infrastructure.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges that the Ontario Government invest in the future of a sustainable forest and biomass generation industry by:

1. Renewing the existing Biomass Power Purchase Agreements for a minimum of 10 years to enhance business certainty
2. Ensuring that the extended PPAs sustain the same volume of fibre as the current contracts to protect the jobs and the economy of neighbouring facilities and communities as well as the diversion of waste fibre from landfill facilities.
3. Expanding the output of existing biomass generators to meet the electrical demands of the regions where they are located.
4. Creating enabling policy to support the development of cogeneration and district energy systems, including a framework for heat contracts, prioritizing government energy procurement and investment incentives for municipalities, generation facilities and building owner, creating conditions for new investment, job creation and revenue streams supporting provincial low carbon objectives.

5. Developing a policy which encourages the development of additional biomass generation facilities as an option to the lengthy process for the creation of additional transmission and distribution facilities into communities currently served by radial lines. This would meet the concept of distributed generation as identified by the Independent Electrical System Operator (IESO).

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

### **30. Create and Implement a Provincial Strategy to Address Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions**

Submitted by: The Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant and the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, the Orillia District Chamber of Commerce, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce.

#### **Issue**

Many communities across Ontario are dealing with unprecedented vagrancy and nuisance behaviours as a result of a number of factors including the opioid crisis, shortage in social services supports, and a lack of housing that is affordable to many struggling with addictions. Businesses in many urban areas are struggling to manage loitering and trespassing issues, and police forces and municipalities are frustrated with repeated violations of the *Trespass to Property Act* with minimal tools at keeping people and negative activities from impacting their daily operations.

#### **Background**

Communities across Ontario are struggling to manage transient groups of individuals that lack access to permanent housing or are unable to be housed in available units. Encampments can be found across the province. The December 2021 homelessness report by the Ontario Auditor General is based on four key municipalities - City of Toronto, City of Ottawa, City of Greater Sudbury, and the District of Cochrane. These municipalities were selected because they had the most people experiencing homelessness in absolute and relative terms, and/or they had a high number of COVID-19 cases in their shelters.<sup>75</sup> However, other municipalities including the City of Hamilton, City of North Bay, City of Kingston, City of Thunder Bay, City of Sault Ste. Marie and Kitchener Waterloo region are also impacted by homelessness encampments. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of a one-bedroom apartment in the City of Toronto rose by \$200 per month from 2018 to 2021.<sup>76</sup>

Unsheltered populations have complex and varied needs including mental health challenges, physical disabilities, and addictions that make supporting them within business areas like downtowns a challenge. The prevalence of addictions stemming partially from prescription opioids has increased the numbers of hard-to-house and employ individuals who are unable to work or follow rules needed for traditional community supportive housing units. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, rates of emergency medical services (EMS) for suspected opioid overdose increased by 57% and rates of fatal opioid overdose increased by 60% in Ontario. Rural and northern communities, people experiencing poverty or homelessness, people experiencing incarceration, and Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) communities have seen the largest relative increases.<sup>77</sup> Public Health Sudbury District reported an increase of almost 40% in suspected opioid related incidents from January to the end of November 2021.<sup>78</sup> Social Services funding to and within municipalities has not kept up with the increased demands for mental health and addictions supports due to pressures on the existing revenue tools of municipalities. Further to this, the Auditor General states that “Ontario does not have an overarching and co-ordinated provincial strategy to

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<sup>75</sup> [https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en21/AR\\_Homelessness\\_en21.pdf](https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en21/AR_Homelessness_en21.pdf)

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/social-housing-providers/affordable-housing-operators/current-city-of-toronto-average-market-rents-and-utility-allowances/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/sciencebrief/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-opioid-related-harm-in-ontario/>

<sup>78</sup> [https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/opioid-related-incidents-in-sudbury-jump-by-almost-40-in-less-than-a-year-4951051?fbclid=IwAR3y1tJs\\_Qk3MFJg2Hq3KGYhIjci7HEKLuWSaCAOMOCKG6Av-waMQ9FMh0](https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/opioid-related-incidents-in-sudbury-jump-by-almost-40-in-less-than-a-year-4951051?fbclid=IwAR3y1tJs_Qk3MFJg2Hq3KGYhIjci7HEKLuWSaCAOMOCKG6Av-waMQ9FMh0)

prevent and reduce homelessness.”<sup>79</sup> She recommends “that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing take a lead role, in collaborating with other ministries that fund or directly provide services and supports to people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness, in developing a provincial strategy with specific actions, targets, and timelines to collectively aim to address the issues that contribute to homelessness”.<sup>80</sup> In addition, it would be beneficial to incorporate best practice ideas from the City of Medicine Hat, Alberta a municipality that successfully addressed chronic homelessness over a 10-year period through their *Plan to End Homelessness*.<sup>81</sup>

At the onset of the pandemic, police forces in Toronto, Ottawa, and York Region all reported increased business break-ins as a result of the pandemic.<sup>82</sup> The enforcement and implementation of the Trespass to Property Act is not effective. In Ontario, the number of actual incidents of Trespass at Night violations increased from 789 in 2019 to 1030 in 2020.<sup>83</sup>

Anecdotally, Ontario-based chambers of commerce and municipalities have received numerous calls from businesses regarding vagrancy, trespassing and loitering among other bylaw infractions. The Trespass to Property Act and their enforcement mechanisms needs to be reviewed and revamped in order to better support municipalities managing transient populations.

Communities are facing increased policing costs due to the policing demands in managing the struggling population, while simultaneously facing new demands on their services.<sup>84</sup> Funding allocations should be reviewed and budgeted to reflect the growing funding priorities stemming from the pandemic.

Increasing funding for social services that address mental health, homelessness and addictions is important as this has a direct positive impact on business health. Improving the visible social issues will ultimately allow municipalities to attract and retain vibrant economies across the province.

## Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create and fund a provincial strategy to ensure social services outreach teams are available as partners to police throughout Ontario to support marginalized individuals
2. Invest in more in-patient beds and support staff for addictions and mental health services throughout Ontario to support marginalized individuals.
3. Ensure that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and the Ministry of Health coordinate efforts in developing a provincial strategy to address homelessness, mental health and addictions with a view to incorporate best practices from successful municipalities
4. Review the *Trespass to Property Act* and their enforcement mechanisms to enable municipalities to better manage transient populations

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>79</sup> [https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en21/AR\\_Homelessness\\_en21.pdf](https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en21/AR_Homelessness_en21.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> <https://mhchs.ca/homelessness-initiatives/plan-to-end-homelessness/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://mhchs.ca/homelessness-initiatives/plan-to-end-homelessness/>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/crime-data-during-covid-19-shows-spike-in-business-break-ins-stunt-driving-1.5539331>

<sup>83</sup> <https://bit.ly/3nqkLqi>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/a-better-way-this-is-what-alternatives-to-defunded-policing-could-look-like-1.5001517>



### 31. Creating a backstop for the implementation of mandated workplace vaccination policies

Submitted by: the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

#### Issue

The financial impact the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on Ontario businesses and our economy has yet to be fully tallied, or even realized. While mandated vaccination policies have been put in place for some sectors to offset potential interruptions, talk of similar policies being put in place at workplaces in general continues to generate heated political and social debate surrounding personal freedoms and government interference, not to mention threat of legal challenges. However, the need to keep businesses operating and providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees should be paramount, even when not facing a national health crisis, and provisions should be included in the Employment Standards Act to ensure businesses that choose to mandate a vaccination policy are protected from discriminatory lawsuits.

#### Background

The Omicron variant of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the latest blow to Ontario's economy, potentially costing billions as businesses deal with even more lost revenue and a rising debt load as they continue to operate between waves of government-imposed health restrictions and persistent staffing shortages instigated by illness.<sup>85</sup>

The use of mRNA vaccines, whose foundation can be traced back to the early 1960s, to lessen the severity of this virus and its impact have become key tools at keeping our economy moving, especially since those who are fully vaccinated in Ontario with symptoms can now isolate for only five days compared to 10 for those who are not fully vaccinated.<sup>86</sup> The development of vaccines in general - smallpox, polio, MMR, Tdap, HPV - have provided protection to society, which in turn has helped businesses and economies continue to operate.<sup>87</sup>

However, ensuring this valuable mRNA technology can be utilized to its full potential during the most recent pandemic – one of five the world has experienced since 1900 – has sparked much political and social debate and protests surrounding use of the vaccinations, resulting in a seemingly widening divide in our society as government leaders attempt to find ways to navigate us out of this health crisis.<sup>88</sup>

Calls for the implementation of mandated vaccination policies have clearly added fuel to this heated debate, resulting in numerous protests as well potential legal challenges.<sup>89</sup> Three labour arbitration decisions filed in Ontario on behalf of the unionized employees of Ontario Power Generation, Paragon Protection Ltd. and Electrical Safety Authority resulted in only the latter action not being upheld when the judge ruled the Authority could not demonstrate having such a policy was reasonable since many of its employees worked from home.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Toronto Star, Jan. 11, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3H2ZBpY>

<sup>86</sup> John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Oct. 6, 2021. <https://bit.ly/32CAJGA>

<sup>87</sup> Insider, Nov. 28, 2020. <https://bit.ly/3u9bdUv>

<sup>88</sup> CBC, Nov. 3, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3H6urhu>

<sup>89</sup> Waterloo Region Record, Jan. 23, 2022. <https://bit.ly/33ZAPsl>

<sup>90</sup> Bennett Jones LLP, Nov. 22, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3r1TVqx>

Meanwhile, even mandated vaccination policies enacted for non-unionized employees in the healthcare, long-term care and education sectors have not come without challenges,<sup>91</sup> including protests outside Ontario hospitals<sup>92</sup> and harassment of healthcare workers.<sup>93</sup>

The acrimony surrounding the implementation of mandated, and proof of vaccination policies continues to fester - even though the Ontario Human Rights Code has deemed them generally permissible providing they meet an extensive list of criteria - as the current COVID-19 pandemic continues.<sup>94</sup>

It's this acrimony and clear lack of direction when it comes to the implementation of a mandated vaccination policy which has made it difficult for businesses to take any further steps without fear of legal and social repercussions.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, implementing elements within the articles of the Employment Standards Act to provide businesses with legal protection from discriminatory lawsuits should they choose to introduce such a policy to protect their employees and business down the road from any potential future health concerns or crises should be considered.<sup>96</sup>

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Have the Ministry of Labour include elements within the articles of the Employment Standards Act that can provide protection against discriminatory legal actions against businesses that implement a vaccination policy for the workplace.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

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<sup>91</sup> Samfiru Tumarkin LLP. <https://bit.ly/348bufD>

<sup>92</sup> CBC, Sept 13, 2021 <https://bit.ly/3r2qfcW>

<sup>93</sup> Canadian Press, Sept. 3, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3KMs0Tn>

<sup>94</sup> WeirFoulds.com LLP, Sept. 23, 2021. <https://bit.ly/32FWuFw>

<sup>95</sup> Canadian Press, Jan. 2, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3IHIWsj>

<sup>96</sup> World Bank Blogs, Nov. 15, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3r6TZp0>

## **32. Increase business R&D with competitive applied research funding**

Submitted by: Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by Belleville Chamber of Commerce, Port Hope & District Chamber of Commerce, and Peterborough and the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

Ontario's access to federal applied research funding lags behind other jurisdictions and, as a result, small-medium enterprises (SMEs) lack Ontario-based access to research and development hubs that can promote economic growth through local innovation.

### **Background**

Ontario's public post-secondary institutions routinely partner with industry to support research and development programs. Colleges are able to boost economic growth by strengthening innovation, especially by SMEs, in areas such as digital innovation, advanced manufacturing, agri-food and resources, health care technology, and green infrastructure.

Ontario's 24 public colleges are required through legislation to respond to local workforce needs and tend to work closely with local employers, including Ontario's 300,000 SMEs, to support innovation. As most smaller businesses in Canada lack the resources to do this kind of research on their own, a growing number have therefore entered into research partnerships with colleges.

The main barriers to innovation through R&D that Ontario's SMEs tend to cite include lack of in-house expertise, lack of capacity, lack of technology and equipment, and lack of R&D funding/capital. SMEs across Ontario would often prefer to engage with researchers local to their community.

Ontario's colleges have and continue to offer a solution to these SMEs by providing local expertise that is typically community and industry relevant and accessible. Colleges bring with them strong academic and industry connections, as well as the facilities, equipment and administrative expertise that's needed to help a SME solve their problem through innovation and applied research.

Research projects lead to innovations that generate economic growth in the businesses' communities and deliver excellent returns on government investments. Fueling local, community level and college-industry partnered applied research in Ontario is central to the province's economic recovery.

College applied research return on investment (ROI) is very high, predictable, and quickly achieved for Ontario businesses, employees, and communities around the province, as well as Ontario taxpayers, principally because:

- Employers co-invest only in innovative ideas that have an excellent chance of a high ROI; i.e., they are expected to quickly contribute to the bottom line – through higher sales or reduced costs.
- Colleges raise Ontario's ROI further by providing specialized training and credentials to anchor the resulting jobs in Ontario.

Yet, Ontario's applied R&D capabilities fall behind other jurisdictions. The province of Quebec provides \$20 million in base funding annually to ensure that its Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEPs) have the capacity through 59 industry and technology specific applied research centres to support innovation and expansion by existing small businesses in their local communities across Quebec.

Through this program, CEGEPs are recognized for helping Quebec businesses compete better and create jobs in industries as diverse as metallurgy and mineral processing, artificial intelligence, robotics and machine

vision, aerospace and innovative vehicles, bioproducts and biotechnologies, geosynthetics and polymers, electrochemistry, pharmaceuticals, geomatics and digital imaging and interactive media.

In addition to its direct impact on local business expansion, Quebec's base annual funding enabled CEGEPs to win \$33 million through 500 federal research awards in 2018-19. In comparison, Ontario colleges won 190 awards, totaling less than \$19 million.

Without the ability to compete on a national state and without funding that is aligned with other jurisdictions, Ontario's innovation agenda and SMEs will fall behind those emerging in provinces like Quebec. In order to maximize Ontario's local economic development through partnerships focused on innovating for industry, Ontario needs to increase funding for applied research so that colleges and the industries they support can complete on a level playing field.

### **Recommendation**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Increase base funding for applied research to match or exceed annual investment in Québec.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

### **33. Support for the Trucking Industry**

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

#### **Issue**

The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have brought to light the operational difficulties in the trucking industry throughout Canada. The trucking industry is facing two major challenges:

- Driver shortage: Throughout Canada trucking companies are struggling to find drivers. This is more pronounced for smaller fleet companies.
- High cost for training and insurance: Current licensing rules mean that truck drivers who have international driving experience must completely re-train when they arrive in Canada. The additional costs for training drivers hurt smaller business more than the larger fleets. Insurance premiums for smaller trucking companies are significantly higher than the larger fleets. The issues related to retaining truck drivers, the rising costs of insurance premiums, and equipment shortage for smaller owner-operator businesses make it important to review and amend regulations and develop a strategy to implement support, both federally and provincially.

#### **Background**

More than 55,000 truck drivers' jobs will need to be filled in Canada by March of 2023 according to the latest report and statistics gathered by Trucking HR Canada. Ontario was the first province to introduce mandatory entry-level training programs, which requires 103.5 hours of core training, and another 8.5 hours of training for an air brake endorsement, before testing for a Class A/Z licence.

The turnover rates are lower for larger fleets while the smaller fleets struggle to retain drivers. The challenges of increased insurance costs, shortage of equipment and rising price in makes it challenging for smaller trucking companies to remain competitive.

When international drivers arrive in Canada, their driving experience is not considered, and they must retrain which can cost between \$7,000 and \$12,000 dollars. Smaller businesses are paying over \$15,000 a year in insurance costs and are unable to secure new drivers because of insurance policies that favour the larger trucking companies. Smaller fleets are disadvantaged because they do not have resources and cannot offer wages at par with larger fleets, thereby leading to driver retention challenges.

#### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement and adjust licensing requirements for internationally trained truck drivers so that specific training and safety tests allow new truck drivers to fast-track their careers and consider their previous experience, thereby reducing the time and cost to obtain a license.
2. Increase immigration and bring internationally trained truck drivers that would amplify the pool of workers available.
3. Implement financial support to smaller fleet companies (owner-operator) so that they can offset high insurance cost, offer competitive wages, cover training, and hire more workers

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.

### **34. Supporting international student job seekers to connect to local labour markets**

Submitted by: 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, Prince Edward County Chamber, Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce and Toronto Region Board of Trade

#### **Issue**

Ontario's labour market shortages are compounded by barriers in communities with international students and recent graduates seeking employment supports and services.

#### **Background**

Ontario faces a significant skills shortage in many key sectors. Increased immigration is essential to building a strong workforce. This includes attracting international students who pursue careers in Ontario. "Study, Work and Stay in Canada", this is the brand that makes Canada one of the top destinations of choice for international students, and provides an important preview of life in Canada.<sup>97</sup>

There were more than 96,000 international students enrolled at Ontario's colleges last year and many will continue to live and work in this province after they graduate.

International students are essential to employers and are highly valued as prospective immigrants for numerous reasons. International students have Canadian educational qualifications, are proficient in at least one official language, and can help address both current and future labour market needs, particularly for highly skilled work and where there are ongoing shortages such as healthcare.<sup>98</sup> Prior to the pandemic, almost 40 percent of Canadian small and medium-sized businesses were struggling to hire new employees and as our population continues to age and retire in the post-COVID-19 world, the shortage will keep growing.<sup>99</sup>

Ontario's public post-secondary institutions and public-private college partnerships offer more than just an education to international students seeking to study in Canada. These institutions provide wrap-around services that help link international students into the local community and cultural organizations. This includes career planning, assistance with resumes, interview preparations and access to community job boards.

To maximize the positive experience of international students in Ontario and their engagement with local communities, more can be done to help international students at Ontario's public post-secondary institutions find employment. This is a particular challenge as international students are ineligible for many of the services provided through provincial and federal employment programs.

International students are not eligible for the services provided through employment placement agencies – either federal or provincial. Ontario's public post-secondary institutions remain concerned that there are few services or supports for international students to look for work within local communities.

Enabling international students to access services provided by employment agencies would help them to find jobs. With many communities facing skilled and unskilled labour shortage and with international students seeking employment within the allowed threshold, enabling these students and international graduates to

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<sup>97</sup> Immigration and Refugees Canada. "Stay in Canada after you graduate." <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/study-work-stay.html>

<sup>98</sup> Global Affairs Canada. "Building on Success: International Education Strategy (2019-2024)." 2019. <https://www.international.gc.ca/education/strategy-2019-2024-strategie.aspx>

<sup>99</sup> Business Development Bank of Canada. "Labour Shortage: Here to Stay." Report by Michael Cocolakis-Wormstall. 2018. [https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis\\_research/labour-shortage.pdf](https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis_research/labour-shortage.pdf)

access employment services will help local communities retain workers and support international students and recent graduates succeed in Ontario.

To help Ontario prosper, we need to provide opportunities for our international students to succeed by ensuring that Employment Ontario services and programs, such as assistance with job preparation and outreach (assistance with resumes, interviews, using job boards, etc.), as well as access to more targeted supports like on-the-job training opportunities backed by training subsidies for employers, are available to all graduates, including international students.

Specifically, the provincial government needs to create more opportunities for graduates of international programs and the services provided at Employment Ontario offices should be available to all graduates, including graduates of international programs.

### **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create more opportunities for international students and recent graduates of public post-secondary institutions to access employment in local labour markets; including by,
2. Provide Employment Ontario services and programs, such as assistance with job preparation and outreach (assistance with resumes, interviews, using job boards, etc.), as well as access to more targeted supports like on-the-job training opportunities backed by training subsidies for employers, to all graduates, including international students.

**OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position:** The committee supports this resolution.