



2020 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 **September 29, 2020**. 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:

- Provincial in scope or impact;
- An important matter of principle that requires the OCC to be on the public record;
- Deemed important enough to be on the legislative agenda of the government or be of considerable concern to a majority of members; and
- 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

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.

2020 OCC AGM Proposed Policy Resolutions

Sunsetting Resolutions

1. Addressing the Challenges of Ontario’s Largest Economic Sector: Small Business	5
2. Creating Northern Ontario Economic Hubs, Technology Clusters, and the Innovation Ecosystem.....	8
3. Empower all Municipalities to Build and Maintain Essential Infrastructure.....	12
4. Improving Indigenous Education in Ontario	14
5. In the Spirit of Business.....	17
6. Making the Ontario Energy Board Hearing Process More Accessible	19
7. Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act.....	22
8. Protect Public Sector Services by Monitoring the Public Sector’s Total Compensation Premium.....	24
9. Regional Transportation Fare Integration.....	26
10. Remove Canadian Residency Requirement for Ontario Corporations	28
11. Support for Metrolinx Big Move and ‘Next Wave’ Priority Projects	30

New Resolutions

12. Accounting for Economic Outcomes in Regional Collaboration Projects.....	32
13. Achieving Property Tax Fairness Across Ontario	34
14. Addressing Housing Shortage by Updating the Approvals Process	36
15. Addressing the Low-Income Housing Crisis	38
16. An Economic Connection.....	39
17. Better Representation and Better Ethics in Government	41
18. Bettering Ontario Workplaces.....	44
19. Give Municipalities Approval/Rejection Rights for Retail Cannabis Stores.....	45
20. Healthcare Crisis: Demands Exceed Supply.....	46
21. Improve Early Childhood Educational Outcomes Through Expanded Education Opportunities, Targeted Programming, and Innovation in the Classroom.....	48
22. Improving Skilled Trades in the Secondary Schools.....	51
23. Investing in Ontario's International Undergraduate Student Entrepreneurs	52
24. Maintaining Investment and Innovation in Ontario’s Public Education System	54
25. Maintaining Rural Emergency Services	56

26. Make the Ring of Fire a Provincial Priority 57

27. Making Data More User Friendly 60

28. Making Ontario a Leader in Smart Government 61

29. More systems needed in place to encourage women to pursue a career in skilled trades 64

30. Ontario’s planning for Urban Mobility – Smart cities and digital transformation 67

31. Provincial Transportation Network Connectedness Enhancement 69

32. Re-Calibrating Primary and Secondary Education to Close the Skills Deficit 72

33. Reducing Traffic Congestion on Ontario Highways Due to Vehicular Accidents 75

34. Regional Approach to Provincial Procurement Reform..... 78

35. Resolving Ontario’s Housing Crisis to Support Economic Growth 80

36. Restore the Business Energy Audit Program 83

37. Sit Less, Move More: Reduce the Health Impacts of Prolonged Sitting in the Workplace..... 84

38. Support Ontario’s Forestry Industry by Establishing an Ontario Commercial Loan
Guarantee Program 87

39. Support Ontario’s Growing Cannabis Industry 89

Sunsetting Resolutions

1. Addressing the Challenges of Ontario's Largest Economic Sector: Small Business

This is a sunset resolution.

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

The cumulative regulatory burden, constant legislative changes and reporting requirements present a disproportionate impact on small businesses and are an obstacle to prosperity, growth and competitiveness.

Background

Businesses throughout the province have repeatedly highlighted the cost of regulatory compliance as a barrier to investment and growth. Business owners have said they find it incredibly difficult to navigate the regulatory framework – especially when that framework is frequently changing due to new and/or updated legislation. When new and/or updated legislation unwittingly introduces hidden costs, the problem is only exacerbated. The Government of Ontario needs to take steps to reduce red tape for small businesses and make it easier for them to understand and comply with regulations.

Recent years have seen significant changes implemented or proposed to WSIB, labour relation, the minimum wage, and pension plans. Businesses saw many changes as a result of Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*, 2017, and the subsequent introduction of Bill 47, the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act*, 2018, which repealed or rewrote many of Bill 148's changes. Businesses continue to see many changes due to environmental regulations and the federal carbon tax. While regulatory change is not necessarily “bad” – in fact, updating and modernizing regulations should be a priority for all governments – it can have a lasting, negative impact on businesses, if they are implemented haphazardly, or if the government does not make compliance easy. The cost of such changes disproportionately burdens small businesses that often do not have dedicated human resource departments or dedicated personnel to manage the complexities of the requirements.

According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Ontario had 429,852 small businesses in December 2018; this represents 97.7 percent of all businesses in the province.¹ The Ontario government has shown its commitment to broad, structural red tape reduction. The Cutting Red Tape webpage was introduced for businesses to submit red tape issues they face.

¹ https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h_03114.html

Furthermore, the appointment of an Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction has demonstrated the government's commitment to tackling this issue.

The Ontario government recognizes that reducing unnecessary red tape will save businesses time and money and that such reduction is an integral part of growing Ontario's economy. The *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*, contains several proposed amendments that will support small businesses. We applaud the government's efforts to reduce red tape thus far, however there is still much work to be done.

The Government of Ontario can ease the regulatory burden by establishing a regulatory concierge service for small businesses in Ontario. Such a concierge service would be a single-access point for information, support and expertise on regulatory compliance in Ontario. The concierge service would offer one-on-one support to small businesses so that they can successfully navigate regulatory frameworks and achieve compliance with much greater ease and so they could devote their limited resources to growing their businesses and the economy.

Such a concierge service is nothing new. The federal government already runs a program called *Concierge*, which is "a single access point to funding, expertise, facilities, and global opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking to grow through innovation." *Concierge* does not offer funding itself; it provides customized, one-on-one guidance to innovators so that they can find funding and take advantage of other government programs. *Concierge* leverages the expertise of a team of "innovation advisors" so that business owners can spend their time and energy more effectively.

Other jurisdictions have understood the benefit of one-stop support for businesses:

- Greater Sudbury's Regional Business Centre
- Hamilton's One-Stop for Business
- The British Columbia Business Registry
- One Stop Business Registration Portals in Wisconsin and Virginia

While certain single-window initiatives in Ontario exist, such as Service Ontario's ONE-Key, these are 'self-serve' initiatives rather than concierge services, and they do not address the regulatory burden that weighs on Ontario's small businesses.

Creating a team of industry experts to guide business owners through regulations in Ontario will make Ontario attractive for investment and allow existing businesses to spend their resources more efficiently.

Recommendations

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

1. streamline government services by creating a concierge service to provide single-window, one-on-one, customized access for small businesses to guide them through regulatory compliance processes and help them achieve compliance obligations.
2. develop interconnectivity between municipal, provincial, and federal concierge services to enable knowledge-sharing and to ensure that each is able to provide the best guidance and expertise to its clients.
3. continue to work with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and with small businesses in order to reduce red tape.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

2. Creating Northern Ontario Economic Hubs, Technology Clusters, and the Innovation Ecosystem

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's economic performance is not shared equally in all regions in the province due to differences in their economic makeup or base. External macro factors play an important role not only in Ontario's economic performance but also in each region to varying degrees. Regional growth performances during 2015 were led by the Toronto and Hamilton-Niagara regions, with the Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie and London regions close behind. At the other end of the growth spectrum were the northern regions and to a lesser extent Windsor-Sarnia and Stratford-Bruce.

Background

Much of the research on the contemporary-knowledge economy starts from the assumption that economic inputs have shifted away from traditional resources and physical attributes towards new knowledge and innovations. As an economy steeped in the natural resource industries, Northern Ontario's strengths can be said to lie in incremental innovation - generating new value from its demonstrably strong markets.

The term innovation is quite hazy, and lacks universal definition. "In common use" writes Dr. Richard Hawkins, "innovation is used interchangeably with invention [and] often used synonymously with technology," which he argues is a misapplication. He writes, "[t]o this day, virtually all of the strategies, programs and measures undertaken by the Federal and Provincial governments in Canada[. . .] remain oriented to promoting industrial R&D and/or supporting the growth of start-up companies, mainly in the technology goods sectors" (Hawkins).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines innovation as "the introduction of a new or significantly improved product, process or method [that] holds the key to boosting productivity" (OECD Ministerial Report).

Building the Innovation and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem is a key element to the success of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. The Plan contains policies that focus and guide action on building a regional economy that is resilient, sustainable, building on the strengths and human potential of today's northerners by providing them with more education, training and career opportunities, attracting people and investments. The Growth Plan aims to strengthen the economy of the North by:

- Diversifying the region's traditional resource-based industries
- Stimulating new investment and entrepreneurship
- Nurturing new and emerging sectors with high growth potential.

Communities with a high level of entrepreneurial activity tend to be better off economically. As a Nation, Entrepreneurship is a powerful force driving innovation, productivity, job creation and economic growth. Entrepreneurs have made fundamental impacts throughout the history of Canada, and today more and more Canadians from all walks of life are becoming entrepreneurs. In Canada entrepreneurs and the Small and Medium size businesses they generate account for 54% of our gross domestic product, employ 74% of our workforce and create 54% of our new jobs nationally.

The creation of the Entrepreneurial and Innovation Ecosystem requires:

- A risk taking culture
- Talented, diverse and imaginative work force and students
- A community that gives back
- Abundant capital
- Collaboration with industry
- Government support

Canada's level of entrepreneurship is on a par with Australia, with about 13 per cent of the working-age population involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity, according to Peter Josty, executive director of the Centre for Innovation Studies, Alberta. Among the positive attitudes cited for Canadian culture:

- Highly supportive of individual success achieved through personal effort.
- Emphasizes self-sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative.
- Encourages creativity and innovation.

But the culture of innovation is different in Canada. "In most countries consumer services is the big sector, but in Canada, the highest rate is in the business to business services and that's a whole different ballgame," Josty said in an interview with CBC News Network's 'The Exchange with Amanda Lang.

Canada also lags in entrepreneurship — in which process engineers and others improve business efficiency within a larger company, he said. "The number of people in large businesses doing this is half the rate in the U.S. and Australia and we think this correlates with poor innovation and productivity in Canada," Josty said.

The peak age range for Canadian entrepreneurship is 45 to 64, but there remains a lot of activity among Canadians under age 45. More highly educated Canadians are more likely to start businesses, but there are entrepreneurs with every level of education. Creating the environment of risk taking is critical in building entrepreneurs of the future and stemming the outward migration of youth from the North.

Shifting investments into attracting youth and immigrants to the region and developing a high-skilled and technical labour force will set the region apart from competitors who dominate industries made up of low-skilled workers. This means building a strong education system with government and industry partners and less restrictive and more specialized apprenticeship programs. These strategies are broad, but necessary, given the challenges facing the region. 'Creating jobs' by

pumping money into a few companies is a short-sighted goal that usually only last as long as the funding does. However creating the Ecosystem in which innovation can thrive and entrepreneurship commercialize the outcome from innovation is critical to the future of Northern economies.

As the economies of the North are somewhat isolated from centres of concentrated economic activity with limited access there is the natural existence of collaborative efforts amongst firms. Where there has been a need to build stronger collaboration is between firms conducting and or needing R&D with academic institutions, assuming they have R&D capacity. Building this capacity is critical to the development of ecosystems and economic clusters

In many communities of Northern Ontario the elements of this ecosystem exists but require a stronger emphasis in the education system and teaching of entrepreneurship. Due geographical location there is strong sense of community that sees the business leaders sharing their financial success within the community but also a willingness to share their wisdom and experience to new and existing entrepreneurs.

Access to capital is relatively sophisticated in the urban communities of the North with extensive bank, credit union and capital lease companies. There also is a strong network of resources such as the Community Futures organizations, NOHFC, Fed Nor and community based micro lending programs. Most significant in providing innovation capital is the Northern Ontario Angels Network which has provided over \$50 million in private monies to a variety of investment opportunities realizing significant economic impact.

For Northern Ontario's businesses to be able to expand their markets beyond local boundaries, they first need to be given the opportunity to build capacity in their local market – that is, to build civic capital, which begins with access to a skilled workforce. The Private Sector Youth Internship provides this opportunity to business owners who have the potential and willingness to grow – not abandoning their local roots, but naturalizing their market in new climates, while blooming where they are planted.

In terms of the digital economy, for small and isolated communities who have little opportunity for industry within the physical locality, having access to high quality internet speeds could make or break a fledgling digital entrepreneur. The digital foot print expands into educating a skilled workforce in remote areas as well as delivering efficient modes of health care. By arming communities with opportunities that are unfettered by eternal download speeds and sprawling geography which place knowledge and opportunity out of reach, high speed broadband services can function as a springboard of opportunity for small, northern communities to expand their horizons, and markets.

At the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's annual Ontario Economic the theme of Building Prosperity by Strengthening the Innovation Ecosystem brought together leaders from the private sector, elected and non-elected members of the Provincial government, academia and chambers of commerce from across the province. While a Northern perspective was lacking the elements of the many conversations, discussion and presentations were applicable to creating a Northern Innovation Hub. Government as an enabler of the Innovation and Entrepreneurial ecosystem can enhance the Northern economy through addressing the following:

Recommendations

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

1. Locate a physical office(s) in Northern Ontario for the Ontario Centre of Excellence to maximize its investment in regional innovation through University and College research based funding and capital grants to develop knowledge clusters that support inherent economic drivers.
2. Align programs and services with company evolution from start-up to maturity and ensure funding and resources are available at each step of the process.
3. Streamline the process between the federal and provincial governments to better co-ordinate and focus innovation-related programs.
4. Simplify program support and expedite the funding process to ensure that government programs and services allow innovation to occur at the speed of the market.
5. Support investments for organizations to invest in new technologies under various funding envelopes to encourage innovation in existing economic engines of the Northern clusters and value chains.
6. Incentivize the development of a skilled workforce equipped to participate in the transition towards advance manufacturing.

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

3. Empower all Municipalities to Build and Maintain Essential Infrastructure

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario municipalities are faced with a growing infrastructure deficit. Although the Province provides relief through a number of programs, the administrative burden to apply and subsequently report is cumbersome and the funding is inadequate in relation to the demand of a municipality's ability to pay.

Background

Nearly 50% of Ontario's core infrastructure, such as bridges, roads, water systems and public transit systems, is owned by municipal governments.² They are essential support systems for our quality of life and research shows that modern, safe and efficient infrastructure increases productivity and competitiveness.

Most of Ontario's infrastructure was built in the 1950s and 1960s with modest investments and repairs in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2007 the average age of all public infrastructure in Ontario was 15.4 years,³ and the municipal infrastructure deficit was an estimated \$60 billion.⁴

Roads, buildings and sewers built more than 50 years ago will not be capable of withstanding the increasing frequency of weather events caused by climate change. For example, water damage is now the number one cause of home insurance losses because aging sewers are incapable of handling the new, higher levels of participation.⁵

Municipalities have been unable to maintain adequate infrastructure for many reasons including downloading of responsibilities onto lower tier governments in tandem with reduced transfer payments from the Province, increasing costs and a limited number of revenue tools. Needs vary depending on the size of a municipality as well. Yet, investment in infrastructure would help grow local economies. Research shows that every \$1 billion invested in infrastructure creates 16,700 jobs and boosts GDP by \$1.14 billion.⁶

The Government of Ontario provides communities with access to predictable, formula based funding through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF), Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), and the Gas Tax for Transit, as well as application-based funding

² Ontario Road Builders' Association. 2016. "Municipal Infrastructure Deficits." <https://orba.org/municipal-infrastructure-deficits/>.

³ Mychèle Gagnon, Valérie Gaudreault and Donald Overton. 2007. *Age of Public Infrastructure: A Provincial Perspective*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2008067-eng.htm>.

⁴ Rural Ontario Municipal Association. 2017. "Municipal Infrastructure." <https://roma.on.ca/ROMA-Content/Backgrounders/2017/MunicipalInfrastructure.aspx>.

⁵ Insurance Board of Canada. 2012. *Telling the Weather Story*. http://assets.ibc.ca/Documents/Studies/McBean_Report.pdf.

⁶ John Brodhead, Jesse Darling and Sean Mullin. 2014. *Crisis and Opportunity: Time for a National Infrastructure Plan for Canada*. Canada 2020. http://canada2020.ca/crisis-opportunity-time-national-infrastructure-plan-canada/#note_0.

through Connecting Links. In 2020 these programs will direct less than \$1 billion towards closing the \$60 billion infrastructure gap. For some municipalities, this assortment of programs is inequitable and inadequate. The administrative burden is high, meaning that additional funds must be spent on operational costs; allocation formulas change; and because communities must compete via resource-intensive application processes, there is little correlation between need and the provision of funding.

Recommendations

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

1. Consult municipalities on opportunities to reduce the administrative burden associated with infrastructure programs and improve the predictability of long-term funding.
2. Link funding to asset management plans to encourage strategic planning and economic development.

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

4. Improving Indigenous Education in Ontario

This is a sunseting resolution.

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

Issue

Workforce shortages are among the most significant challenges for Ontario businesses, and it is widely recognized that Canada's Indigenous people – the fastest-growing population in the country – must be a key component of Ontario's strategy. While educational attainment for Indigenous people has been on the rise, more must be done to ensure that all Ontarians have the education and training needed to succeed in a modern economy.

Background

This diverse population has typically had lower educational levels than the general population in Canada. Results indicate that, while on the positive side there are a greater number of highly educated Indigenous peoples, there is also a continuing gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Data also indicate that the proportion with less than high school education declined, which corresponds with a rise of those with a post-secondary education; the reverse was true in 1996. Despite these gains, however, the large and increasing absolute numbers of those without a high school education is alarming.⁷

More must be done to close attainment gaps in Indigenous education: almost half of the Indigenous population of working age has some form of post-secondary qualification⁸, as compared to the two-thirds of the non-Indigenous population of the same age.⁹ Additionally, 10 percent of the working-age Indigenous population has a university degree, as compared to the non-Indigenous population's 26 percent.¹⁰

Bridging this gap would have a considerable economic impact: if the education and labour market outcomes of Indigenous Canadians were to reach the level of the general population by 2026, government spending would drop by \$14.2 billion, while increasing Indigenous income by \$36.5 billion.¹¹

As the provincial government is responsible for education of the Indigenous population living off reserve, Ontario's efforts to address these responsibilities falls within the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. It allows for enhanced investment in and collaboration

⁷ Gordon, C. E., White, J. P. (2014). Indigenous Educational Attainment in Canada. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 5(3). Retrieved from: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol5/iss3/6> DOI: 10.18584/iipj.2014.5.3.6

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Statistics Canada, "Educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada", National Household Survey 2011

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Drummond, D., Sharpe, A., Murray, A., & Mask, N. (2017). *The Contribution of Aboriginal People to Future Labour Force Growth in Canada* (pp. 1–36). Ottawa, ON.

between the various components of the provincial education system serving Indigenous students. It also places much-needed emphasis on the unique learning styles and cultural perspectives of Aboriginal students in provincial curricula, assessment practices, and professional teacher development.

Another key element is the presence of nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario, which represent vital stakeholders. These organizations deliver accredited post-secondary programs in partnership with colleges and universities through unique, culturally-sensitive delivery models that blend face-to-face learning with online courses and independent study.

Despite their key role, they remain outside the Ontario post-secondary system. Unlike provincially accredited colleges, they do not receive government capital or operational funding, instead receiving only funding for program delivery. The 2015 Ontario budget temporarily sought to address this issue, with a three-year funding envelope and a commitment to develop a policy that permanently brings the Indigenous Institutes into the post-secondary system. Following through on this commitment is crucial, as it will bolster Indigenous Institutes' long-term sustainability.

In November 2017, the provincial government passed the Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017 that provided a funding mechanism for provincially funded Indigenous Institutes and incorporated them into the post-secondary system.¹² While this is encouraging, it is time for the government to act on these intentions and begin providing funding.

Further support must also be provided through better access to data. While national census data provides some perspective, there remains a significant lack of information about whether Indigenous post-secondary education and training needs are being met in Ontario.

Among other areas, there is insufficient data on issues such as enrolment, graduation rates, and program effectiveness – information which is required to establish baselines and measure progress on the academic achievement of Indigenous learners.¹³

As Shawn Atleo, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations states, “this work is simply too important to walk away and abandon our students to the next round of discussions, to tell them they will have to wait. We owe it to ourselves, our children and our nations to make our best efforts to achieve our lifelong goal of First Nations control of First Nations education.”¹⁴

¹² Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017. (2018, November 19). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17i34a>

¹³ Council of Ministers of Education Canada, “Key Policies in Aboriginal Education: an Evidence-Based Approach”, 2013 http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/295/Key-Policy-Issues-in-Aboriginal-Education_EN.pdf

¹⁴ Atleo, S. (2014, April 12). First Nations Education Act 'must act as a bridge'. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/shawn-atleo-first-nations-education-act-must-act-as-bridge-1.2607454>

Recommendations

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

1. Strengthen implementation of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework by allocating the financial resources necessary to ensure consistent funding of Framework priorities.
2. Fully implement Indigenous learner reporting mechanisms at both the system and institutional levels to allow for collection of the type of reliable data needed to set baselines and measure progress on academic achievement.
3. Act on commitments for working with Indigenous Institutes to develop a policy to sustainably deliver operational funding and incorporate them into the provincial post-secondary system.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

5. In the Spirit of Business

This is a sunset resolution.

Submitted by: Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce, Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Aligning the craft distilling industry with the policy regimes of the craft brewery and winery industry will help maintain this industry as a positive growth sector for the Ontario economy.

Background

Craft distilling is a growth industry. Distillers are creating jobs and boosting economies in large and small centres alike.

In the past few years, there has been some movement to parity with other craft alcohol industries. These improvements include allowing craft distillers to distribute their products to bars and restaurants and are appreciated by the industry.

But there is more to be done. In its 2019 report “Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario”, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) identifies a number of positive economic results from the industry that would only be enhanced by parity with the other sectors of beverage alcohol, including:

- The spirits industry and craft distillers in Ontario generate over \$2.4 billion in annual sales
- The spirits industry supports 6,000 jobs across the province and contributes \$1.5 billion to Ontario's Gross Provincial Product every year.
- Ontario is currently home to 39 spirit distillers. There has been an increase in the number of small and artisan distillers that specialize in niche products across Canada.
- The spirits industry works closely with local farmers and contributes to the economic growth of rural areas across Ontario.

The report also connects the beverage alcohol industry to a number of adjacent industries, including farming, tourism, and hospitality. The power of beverage alcohol to be a force for economic development – particularly rural economic development – should therefore be reflected in policymaking.

However, the most significant challenge to be addressed is around taxation. The tax is currently 61.5% at craft distillery tasting rooms, which is 10 times what Ontario wineries pay. And the time is now to consider change as the tax regime for beverage alcohol is part of the comprehensive Government of Ontario review that is underway.

The call for change is not only coming from chambers of commerce and boards of trade, but alongside the Ontario Craft Distillers Association. Modelling by the Ontario Craft Distillers Association (based on experience in Nova Scotia, BC, and Alberta) shows that any cut in taxes is more than recouped within approximately two years because of taxes associated with job growth in the industry.

Nova Scotia continues to be a leader in the spirit industry as the government reduced the government mark-up by 60-80% in 2014, with another 10% mark down if distillers use provincially-grown agricultural products. The government also cut the license fee from \$2,000 to \$500 and increased production threshold, and introduced a graduated mark-up based on annual production. This has allowed craft distillers to thrive. Furthermore, in British Columbia, since the introduction of a graduated tax system in 2013, the industry has grown from 7 to 60 distilleries and the volume of craft spirits produced in British Columbia grew by almost 400 percent.¹⁵

In order to achieve parity across alcohol categories, where spirits can be sold and how consumers access the product also deserves consideration. As such, spirits should also be allowed at grocery, convenience, corner stores etc; dedicated shelf space/displays for craft distillers at the LCBO, so that the small players can compete next to the international brands; and permitted at farmers markets.¹⁶

Recommendations

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

1. Apply a graduated rate to the current spirits basic tax, with a zero percent mark-up on the first 50,000 litres sold.
2. Offer further pricing incentives to craft distilleries for spirits made primarily with Ontario ingredients, graduated by production method and volume.
3. Improve access for craft distillers and consumers by:
 - a. Allowing spirit sales at grocery, convenience, and corner stores, etc.
 - b. Having dedicated shelf space/displays for craft distillers at the LCBO, so that the smaller players can compete next to the international brands
 - c. Permitting the sale of spirits at farmers markets

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

¹⁵ “Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario,” Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2019, pg 15.

¹⁶ “Refreshing the Sale of Beverage Alcohol in Ontario,” Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2019, pg 5.

6. Making the Ontario Energy Board Hearing Process More Accessible

This is a sunset resolution.

Submitted by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sponsored by Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The current Ontario Energy Board (OEB) framework relating to cost eligibility and cost awards (the framework) makes stakeholder participation prohibitively expensive. As an example, the OEB does not:

- advise parties who are eligible to receive cost awards at the outset of hearings (e.g. proceedings or consultations/policy initiatives)
- guarantee costs associated with participation will be reimbursed; and
- advise parties of the percentage of costs that will be reimbursed.

These costs and the framework are significant barriers to full participation by stakeholders with limited resources. In addition, the Board has pre-determined that certain groups are not eligible for any costs even if they are accepted as an intervenor (i.e: organizations representing municipalities or groups of municipalities).

Background

The Ontario Energy Board regulates electricity and natural gas in Ontario, in part by decisions made during hearings on a variety of energy issues including pricing of energy, regulation of generation and distribution of electricity, and for various energy projects that affect the interests of the business community across the Province.

As currently implemented, the framework relating to cost eligibility and cost awards is prohibitively complex which results in uncertainty and increased expense for stakeholders with limited resources. The OEB has set up processes and guidelines which parties, in hearings before the Board (i.e. participants that want to actively contribute to the decision-making process), must prove that they should be: granted Intervenor Status; deemed eligible to receive cost awards; and awarded an amount of costs. Although the OEB sets the guidelines as noted above, such guidelines are further scrutinized by the OEB and are reviewed using a significant amount of discretion.

The OEB prescribes an avenue for reimbursing some of the costs to participants through separate application processes that are also subject to almost full discretion of the OEB. Organizations or individual participants with limited resources are *advised* to hire legal professionals such as lawyers or paralegals or analysts at their own expense and then apply for reimbursement of the costs that would be calculated according to the OEB's own guidelines. There is no guarantee of what would be accepted as an eligible cost and at what percentage such expense will be reimbursed (if at all). This process is a significant barrier to full participation, especially by groups in small and rural areas with limited cash resources. This can be viewed as discriminatory toward these stakeholders. The

Chambers of Commerce across the Province are concerned that public policy is being decided based on who can afford to be at the table for the discussion in the OEB hearings.

An example that illustrates the high cost of participation is the recent OEB hearing about alternative mechanisms for natural gas expansion. A group of stakeholders from Northwestern Ontario registered as intervenors and spent more than \$70,000 to actively participate in the hearing by submitting evidence, arguments or interrogatories (written questions) and by cross-examining witnesses. The decision by the OEB on the issue most important to the group was to uphold the status quo. The application for the reimbursement of costs associated with the hearing took nearly a year to receive a decision to reimburse 98% of the costs and for those costs to be paid out. There was no guarantee that all the costs incurred by the group would be reimbursed by the OEB's cost award decision.

The vast majority of the OEB hearings are held at their headquarters in Toronto which increases the costs associated with formal interventions by those in rural and remote areas. While the OEB provides telecommunication services (e.g video conferencing) such services, while useful, are not as effective in ensuring a parties positions are integrated into decisions. In addition, many of the applications are extremely technical in nature. As such, organizations that are not in the 'business' of intervening require external expertise to assist them in preparing the material for submitting to the OEB and in examining the materials submitted by the applicant and other intervenors. The more complex the application, the higher the costs that will be assumed. When funding is restricted, or approved at a late stage, the participation will be less diligent in order to reduce costs.

Some of the solutions to mitigate the barriers to participation in the OEB hearings can be found in the National Energy Board (NEB) intervenor process. The intervenors in the NEB process are advised up front of the costs that will be eligible and how much of the cost will be recovered, based on the funds available for that particular issue. The participants can then decide if they will proceed with the application to be a participant in the hearings, and if so, the depth of their participation. The NEB also provides upfront funding to assist with the costs of the participants whereas the OEB process requires that the participants pay for all costs and then apply for partial reimbursement.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario (via the Ontario Energy Board) to:

1. Create a more transparent and predictable process for cost eligibility and cost awards for participation in OEB hearings.
2. Provide sufficient additional funding for participants, ensuring full participation for cost eligible participants in OEB hearings by:
 - a. Providing for an OEB process that takes into consideration the eligible participant's actual capacity to pay for full participation in the OEB hearings and upholds the principle of fairness for all stakeholders; and,

- b. Providing for OEB to release advanced funding for costs so all eligible participants can benefit from an up-front amount that covers the costs of initializing and participating in the OEB hearings and for experts (if required). A hold-back can be put in place subject to final submission of expenses etc.
3. Amend the cost eligibility and cost awards processes by:
- a. Advising parties whether they are eligible to receive cost awards at the outset of the hearings and what specific costs they are eligible for;
 - b. Guaranteeing costs associated with participation will be reimbursed; and
 - c. Advising parties of the percentage of costs that will be reimbursed.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

7. Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act

This is a sunset resolution.

Submitted by: Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Quinte West Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's provincial government regulations within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) enable tenants to take unfair advantage of the system. Other provincial residential or landlord tenant acts are more equitable, thereby making it more attractive for investment in that province.

Background

It is our view that Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) should be changed to make it more equitable for landlords and property managers. The existing Act does not hold tenants accountable to their rental responsibilities; instead it places unnecessary financial burdens and excessive delays on landlords and property managers, and on our municipal court system. The processes in Ontario's RTA we would like to recommend changes to are in the areas of: 1) Reducing Statutory Delays; and 2) Dispute Resolution Officers at Residential Tenant board offices.

Although non-payment occurs in only 3% of cases for Ontario residential rental units the percentage is drastically higher in rental units priced under \$1,000. The current provincial government acknowledges that there is a massive shortage of affordable housing options in Ontario. A major deterrent for Real Estate investors to create affordable rental units is the inequity of the RTA. Making the Act more equitable will go a long way in attracting investment in our province in this sector and will eliminate the need for the government to get into the bricks and mortar business of providing affordable housing options.

Harry Fine, a former adjudicator at Ontario's Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), who now works as a paralegal, said "once problem tenants get their hands on the keys, it's easy for them to exploit the system and drag out the eviction process. The legislation has to change. Many landlords criticize the board, but the problem is Ontario's rental regulations. The biggest problem with it is the amount of time it takes to get an eviction and how easy it is to create delays."¹⁷

Reducing Statutory Delays

Currently in Ontario if a tenant has not paid their rent, it is the landlord's responsibility to pay a \$170 filing fee and schedule a hearing after waiting 14 days before being able to file with the board. In British Columbia, if the rent is not paid, the onus is on the tenant to pay a \$50 filing fee to dispute an eviction. It is our opinion that British Columbia's Act places the responsibility in the right place: by making the tenant accountable for the expenses incurred to schedule a hearing when it is THEIR rent that has not been paid. Ontario's current process places unnecessary financial burdens on landlords and wastes valuable administrative time and associated costs: a tenant often does not attend a hearing nor are they likely to have a receipt proving their rent was paid when it wasn't.

¹⁷ CBC News September 24, 2016 Ontario Landlord Tenant Board needs new rules to evict problem tenants faster, John Rieti <http://www.cbc.ca/beta/news/canada/toronto/ontario-landlord-rules-1.3777339>

Currently a landlord needs to wait 14 days to file with the board, 30 days to get a hearing date, 3 days after the hearing to get the order, 11 days before filing with the sheriff and 3 days before the sheriff evicts the tenant. This amounts to 61 days to evict a tenant and the landlord losing 1 to 2 months of rent assuming the tenant paid a last month's rent deposit.

According to a January 9, 2020 press release, “Ombudsman Dubé announced a systemic investigation into serious delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), the administrative tribunal that resolves residential tenancy disputes. The investigation will focus on whether the government is taking adequate steps to address delayed hearings and decisions.”¹⁸

Dispute Resolution Officers at Residential Tenant Board offices

In Ontario the Dispute Resolution Officers are at the Courthouse the day of a scheduled hearing to assist with settling an issue before it is heard by a judge. However, in British Columbia, evidence can be presented by both the tenant and landlord to a Dispute Resolution Officer, and a binding ruling can be made by the Officer. This presentation can be done at a government office or by telephone conference call. This BC process avoids scheduling a hearing and using up unnecessary, valuable court time and tax dollars.

Recommendations

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

1. Amend the RTA to reduce statutory delays by the following ways:
 - a. Amend section 59. (1)(b) of the RTA to allow the landlord to give the tenant a notice of termination (i.e. issue and L1) within 5 days effective on the fifth day of termination, rather than the 14th day.
 - b. Provide the Landlord Tenant Board with the one-time financial resources necessary to reduce the average hearing wait time from one month to one week and the necessary performance structure be put in place to ensure its success.
 - c. Amend the RTA to return to the previous practice of requiring the non-paying tenants to file applications.
 - d. Immediately stop the practice of preventing landlords from filing with the sheriff for 11 days after an order is issued and amend provincial laws (the Courts of Justice Act and the RTA) to explicitly allow private bailiffs to enforce Landlord Tenant Board orders and to require orders that have been previously stayed to be placed in priority sequence.
2. Shorten the dispute process by more effectively using the role of a Dispute Resolution Officer at the Residential Tenant Board office. This will avoid unnecessary court hearings. An order of possession can be obtained from a Dispute Resolution Officer at the Residential Tenant Board office thereby avoiding going to hearing to obtain such.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

¹⁸ “Ontario Ombudsman to Investigate Delays at Landlord and Tenant Board,” Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario, <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/resources/news/press-releases/2020/ontario-ombudsman-to-investigate-delays-at-landlord-and-tenant-board>.

8. Protect Public Sector Services by Monitoring the Public Sector's Total Compensation Premium

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by: Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's public services are under threat as the province struggles to contain deficit spending while also carrying a growing debt burden. One of the major contributors to spending is the total compensation premium paid to public sector workers relative to those in the private sector. Intelligent and targeted policies aimed at understanding the fiscal and economic impact of this premium will bring fairness to employment across Ontario, increase competitiveness, and enable long-term sustainability of essential public services.

Background

Recent research has demonstrated a significant wage gap between Ontario's public and private sectors. The Ontario public sector wage premium (the degree in which public employees earn more than private sector employees) is estimated to be 10.3 percent, after controlling for such factors as gender, age, type of job and industry.¹⁹ The rate is 7.3 percent after factoring in unionization. Non-wage benefits are also elevated: 82.7 percent of public sector workers were covered by a registered pension compared to 24.6 percent of private sector workers; nearly all were covered by a defined benefit pension (compared to only 39.8 for private sector works); they retired on average 2 years earlier and were substantially less likely to lose their job.

When 'total compensation' (i.e. wages plus non-wage benefits such as pension, health benefits and vacation time) of government workers, is out of line with the private sector, it places an excessive burden on the provincial budget and on the lower paid private sector workers who effectively subsidize their counterparts in the public sector.

Effective legislation on public pay accountability is possible. Ontario's Pay Equity Act 1990 successfully reduced sex-based wage discrimination. And legislation on public expenses successfully controls the business-related expenses of public sector employees (Public Sector Expenses Review Act 2009, etc.).

The first step is reliable data that include non-pay benefits. This would enable 'total compensation' metric benchmarking. At the moment, such data is not being collected in Canada. Canada should follow the example of the U.S., which collects data on 'total compensation' in the private sector as well as at the municipal, state and federal levels. The Ontario government should press the Federal Government to mandate this data collection by Statistics Canada.

¹⁹ Palacios, et al. 2019. Comparing Government and Private Sector Compensation in Ontario. Fraser Institute.

Data should also control for factors such as occupations that don't significantly compete with the private sector, (e.g. teachers) and gender and other anti-discriminatory wage-parity measures.

Thereafter the goal should be to bring 'total compensation' in the public sector in line with that in the private sector.

Recommendation

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

1. Collect data for 'total compensation' metric benchmarking

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

9. Regional Transportation Fare Integration

This is a sunset resolution.

Submitted by: Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Toronto Region Board of Trade and Vaughan Chamber of Commerce; Co-sponsored by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

Connectivity in modes of transit is essential to the success of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Regional Transit Plan. A crucial element of this connectivity is a one-card fare integration system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Although progress has been made in the process of fare integration, there is still more that must be done. To ensure a seamless transportation network, and to build further momentum across the wider region for fare integration, GO Transit needs to be integrated with the Toronto Transit Commission, Durham Region Transit, and other municipal transportation services. This issue must be addressed as soon as possible, to keep up with the needs of the growing population and visitors to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Background

We applaud the federal, provincial and municipal governments for making their largest-ever investments to help fund transit infrastructure within the GTHA. The present transportation system is widely viewed as inadequate and traffic congestion is now a cross-regional issue that affects all municipalities and residents in the GTHA and beyond. The ability of businesses to move people and goods, of commuters to get to work and home, of visitors to travel in and through the GTHA, and the vitality of the regional economy are dependent upon an efficient regional transportation network. This is important to both the region and the province: GO Transit and the municipal transit agencies that connect to it serve two-thirds of Ontario's population (approximately 10 million people).

Network connectivity needs to be the backbone of the regional transportation plan; transfers between municipal transit systems should be easy and efficient. Connectivity must not stop at any particular municipal boundary; rather it should be continuous throughout the GTHA and be based on an integrated fare system which incorporates "smart" card technology.

GO Transit and the nine municipal transportation agencies in the GTHA have already made progress on fare integration. Currently, GO Transit has signed co-fare agreements (allowing for discounting of fares when transferring from one transit agency to another) with eight municipal agencies. The PRESTO fare card allows users of more than one transit agency to get an immediate discount when they transfer between GO and one of the participating agencies. In addition, all the 905 transit operators (except Milton) have agreed to accept each other's transfers without additional fares.

While the TTC currently offers a co-fare, that discounted rate for PRESTO users will expire on March 31, 2020. This will once again increase costs for commuters and create incentives for people to drive and increase the wider region's traffic problems.

To illustrate the cost implications to commuters: a person commuting from their home, to the Ajax GO Station and on to York University would have to pay Durham Region Transit (DRT) a cash fare of \$3.75, GO Transit \$9.65, and then pay the TTC \$3.25, for a total of \$16.65 /per trip, an increase of 73% over what they would pay were the cost integrated into a single GO Transit fare.

Alternatively, they could use a PRESTO card to pay DRT a co-fare of \$0.80, GO Transit \$8.12 and then tap their PRESTO card again at the TTC to pay \$1.60, for a total of \$10.52/per trip, an increase of 30% over what they would pay for a fare integrated into the GO Transit fare.

The implementation of a regional fare integration system is integral to the creation of a sustainable, attractive and efficient transportation network. The benefits of the move to a smart card system will support the development of further infrastructure and will make the regional transportation network more customer-friendly, leading to greater use of the network and ultimately assisting in the alleviation of regional congestion and gridlock.

Recommendations

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

1. Through Metrolinx, implement a fully integrated fare system at the earliest possible opportunity for the GTHA regional transportation system including GO Transit and all municipal agencies, which will make for a more customer-friendly, seamless, and affordable transit network, and help alleviate wider-region traffic congestion and gridlock.
2. Facilitate the equitable distribution of fare dollars collected by an integrated fare system among the participating regional transit operators and Metrolinx.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

10. Remove Canadian Residency Requirement for Ontario Corporations

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by: Quinte West Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce and Belleville Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The need for Ontario corporations to require 25% of their directors to be Canadian residents is creating an unnecessary barrier to set up here and companies look to other provinces that do not have this requirement.

Background

All Ontario companies must have at least one director and this person must be a resident Canadian as defined in the Business Corporations Act (Ontario). The Business Corporations Act (Ontario) provides for a residency requirement for directors. 25% of the directors of an Ontario company must be “resident Canadians” as defined by the Act. This means that if an Ontario company has one to four directors, at least one of them must be a resident Canadian.

Business Corporations Act - PART IX DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS - Residency

(3) At least 25 per cent of the directors of a corporation other than a non-resident corporation shall be resident Canadians, but where a corporation has less than four directors, at least one director shall be a resident Canadian. 2006, c. 34, Sched. B, s. 19 (2).

Corporate Directors Residency Requirements in Canada

Jurisdiction	Director Residency Requirement
Federal (Canada)	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
3 Canadian Territories	No Canadian Directors Required
British Columbia	No Canadian Directors Required
Quebec	No Canadian Directors Required
New Brunswick	No Canadian Directors Required
Nova Scotia	No Canadian Directors Required
Prince Edward Island	No Canadian Directors Required
Newfoundland	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Alberta	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Ontario	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
Manitoba	25% resident Canadian Directors Required

Saskatchewan	25% resident Canadian Directors Required
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It is only directors, which are specified, officers and shareholders do not need to be Canadian residents. Note also that Canadian residents are specified, not Canadian citizens.

“British Columbia, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are the only Provinces in Canada that waive the corporate directors' residency requirements. This is especially important for foreign individuals and businesses wishing to register businesses in Canada, as they will not have to appoint resident Canadian directors if they incorporate in any of these Provinces.” www.newbusinessnow.com

“Not all provinces and territories have the same rules. As an example, in British Columbia the Business Corporations Act (British Columbia) does not provide for a residency requirement. Therefore, a non-Canadian or a Canadian citizen not living in Canada may be the sole director of a BC company. This is good news for those Canadians who wish to conduct business in Canada but also wish to live outside of Canada. As well, foreign individuals are able to set up BC companies and act as the sole director of those companies since there is no requirement for them to live in Canada.” <http://www.canadianbusinessresources.ca>

Removing the requirement for 25% Canadian residency would align with the Ontario governments mandate to reduce red tape in the province and be cost neutral to the government.

Recommendation

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

1. Remove the requirement for 25% Canadian Residency from the Ontario Corporations Business Act.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

11. Support for Metrolinx Big Move and ‘Next Wave’ Priority Projects

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by: Richmond Hill Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

Over the past 20 years, there has been tremendous population and business growth throughout the Greater Toronto – Hamilton Area (GTHA), particularly in the 905. In fact, York Region is now one of Canada’s fastest-growing large urban municipalities with nearly 1.2 million people and approximately 25,000 new residents moving there every year. Notwithstanding the many positives that result from urban intensification, increased traffic congestion typically accompanies population growth if infrastructure investments do not keep pace, as they have failed to do in the GTHA and beyond. The average round-trip commuting time in the GTHA is now 84 minutes and many residents grapple with far longer travel times to work as a red-hot housing market necessitates more first-time home-buyers to look beyond local markets. In fact, traffic congestion is estimated to cost the economy in the range of \$7.5 Billion to \$11 Billion per year, according to a study by the C.D. Howe Institute.

This level of traffic congestion, and lack of alternative transportation infrastructure, impacts not simply those directly commuting to and from the GTHA. Lack of public transit options leads to less choice for commuters and ultimately increased vehicular traffic, which results in costs to business supply chains such as movement of goods delays.

Failure of our transportation infrastructure to keep pace in the face of unprecedented growth also affects tourists and visitors to the wider-region and contributes to air pollution and carbon emissions. Recent investments by all levels of government in public transit, including the extension of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension to Vaughan and construction of VIVA-YRT bus rapidways are welcome additions to the transportation network in York Region. It is clear that to maximize these investments in public transit infrastructure, support must be given for the Metrolinx Big Move transportation plan and ‘Next Wave’ priority projects including the Yonge North Subway Extension and the Relief Line in the context of the regional transit network.

Background

Transportation and transit infrastructure is critical to the success of our region, our province and our country. For that reason we must focus on the big picture. Municipal boundaries act as transit boundaries that prevent effective movement of passengers. Transit policies and routes should be planned based upon population growth and need, not on municipal boundaries. The busiest subway in Canada, the Yonge North-South line, has not been expanded since the 1970’s. This despite the fact that York Region is one of the fastest growing areas in Canada contributing to some of the longest commute times in North America. To entice people out of their vehicles and alleviate traffic congestion, the Yonge North Subway Extension has become the top priority of the Regional

Municipality of York and each of the nine municipal governments in York Region. In fact, transportation is the top local issue for the vast majority of York Region residents.

The Yonge subway extension and Relief line will complement investments made in our existing transit network and help connect the GTHA by integrating with neighboring transit options. They will also maximize the recent investments in GO Transit, VIVA-YRT, Eglinton Crosstown LRT, UP Express connectivity to Pearson Airport, and the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension. They will ensure for greater connectivity with surrounding communities.

Already included in the Metrolinx Big Move and identified as 'Next Wave' Priority Projects, developments of this magnitude will lead to new business and job creation, intensification, and the attraction of more affordable housing as well as significant environmental benefits. In fact, by eliminating the need for 2,500 bus trips that currently service a stretch of Yonge Street each weekday, the Yonge North Subway Extension has significant potential to reduce carbon emissions and eliminate up to 28 tonnes of GHG each workday. Notably, the Yonge North Subway Extension has already received \$55 million from the Province for preliminary engineering and design, a notable investment that should be maximized.

In June 2019, the Ontario government unveiled a new transit plan for the Greater Toronto Area which included a number of new subway projects including the Yonge North Subway Extension. However, this project still requires significant funding from all levels of government to become reality.

As populations continue to grow and densities rise throughout the GTHA and beyond, there is an urgent need to create connected infrastructure for future generations that ensures for the greatest range of mobility options. Projects of this size and scope require the financial support of all levels of government, over an extended duration of time. The longer we wait, the more expensive projects of this magnitude become.

Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the Regional Municipality of York and the City of Toronto to:

1. Together, commit the dedicated revenue and begin the construction required as soon as is feasible for Metrolinx Big Move and 'Next Wave' Priority Projects, including the Yonge North Subway Extension, given the benefits to the GTHA and wider-region for current and future generations.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

New Resolutions

12. Accounting for Economic Outcomes in Regional Collaboration Projects

Submitted by: Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Jobs created during collaborative regional economic development projects are only attributed to the municipality in which they are geographically located.

Background

“Ontario’s economy is undergoing a period of rapid change. Twenty-first century globalization, urbanization, and technological transformation are challenging the status quo and redefining what it means to be competitive. Given these and other pressures, Ontario’s overall prosperity will increasingly depend on the strength of its regions.” - This is how the 2019 report from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce titled “The Great Mosaic – Reviving Ontario’s Regional Economies” starts.

It’s a fitting to start to a discussion around how to then calculate economic impact. Municipalities impacted by “A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe” are bound by provincial legislation to have official plans, land needs assessments, and zoning by-laws in place that detail how each municipality is going to achieve the pre-determined milestones of jobs and residents per hectare. Those results are then reported to the province.

And while these plans and processes are necessary, they don’t account for the fact that more and more economic development is collaborative and crosses geographic lines. One example can be found in the City of Peterborough. The City has contributed significant dollars to infrastructure at the regional airport that lies just outside its geographical boundary. The combined investment by the City, County and local township has resulted in the number of jobs increasing from 50 to over 300 over the past decade. The question becomes how is the outcome of those investments (jobs, new economic opportunities, etc..) accounted for in growth targets? Right now, the outcome falls to the municipality in which the tangible asset exists – therefore, we are back to geographical boundaries even though it is a regional collaboration.

This disconnect between investment and reporting rules is a barrier to regional economic development because the value of the investment is diminished when the result is not recognized. To resolve this issue and encourage more regional collaboration that will benefit all of Ontario we ask that government amend the reporting rules and allow all municipalities to account for the jobs they have helped create through regional projects.

The Growth Plan document identifies a need for complete communities with the following paragraph in section 2.1

“To support the achievement of complete communities, this Plan establishes minimum intensification and density targets that recognize the diversity of communities across the GGH. Some larger urban centres, such as Toronto, have already met some of the minimum targets established in this Plan, while other communities are growing and intensifying at a different pace that reflects their local context.”

This allowance will encourage more collaboration across geographical lines by municipalities and help regions invest in projects that will benefit their area and the province as a whole. It will also more accurately reflect the local context of the urban rural mix in the outer ring municipalities. These outer ring municipalities also address issues such as transit and conservation issues across geographical lines, yet recognition of the impact of regional economic development on multiple municipalities does not happen.

Continuing in 2.1 is the following

“...consider opportunities to better co-ordinate our collective efforts across municipalities to support their contribution to economic growth and improve access to transit.” If this call is to be realized to its maximum potential then there has to be allowance to recognize the impact of jobs created and economic impact when municipalities work together.

Recommendation

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

1. Develop a mechanism that allows for multiple municipalities who have invested in a regionally significant project to account for jobs created when reporting to government.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

13. Achieving Property Tax Fairness Across Ontario

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce and Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Co-sponsored by the Mississauga Board of Trade, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Milton Chamber of Commerce, and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Commercial and industrial payers contribute significantly to Ontario's property tax base, which is the primary source of revenue for municipal government. However, real concerns about the benefits received by businesses versus residential taxpayers, and the rationale for the notable disparity in tax treatment between residential and non-residential ratepayers, continue to persist. Put plainly, the proportion of property value and the resulting tax contributions made by these two distinct groups of property owners relative to the overall tax revenue collected by municipalities for the services they consume are vastly different and inequitable. This trend affects commercial and industrial enterprises of all sizes and across all sectors and is pervasive in communities across the province.

Background

Ontario's Property Tax system has not been fully reviewed since the new Ontario Fair Assessment System (OFAS) was first introduced by the former Harris government approximately 25 years ago.

Since that time, significant changes have occurred across Ontario's economic landscape influencing global and local competitiveness and fundamentally altering traditional economic paradigms. This trend has been further compounded by increasing demands placed on municipalities as they are confronted with new and evolving challenges, such as: social housing, the opioid crisis, climate change, rapidly evolving technology, and the growing infrastructure deficit. This list goes on.

While municipalities are alive to such concerns, as pressure on the property tax increases, the municipality community is faced with the daunting task of attempting to balance their fiscal realities against growing and competing demands for local and regional services. This situation is compounded by the limited revenue tools available to municipalities to meet their financial obligations and an antiquated system of property tax mitigation programs and relief mechanisms to achieve locally sensitive tax policy priorities that have not been comprehensively revisited or reformed since the mid-1990's.

It is also important to note that property tax bills in Ontario include a substantial portion of the total levy that is directed to the Province to fund our education system. In many cases, this share of the property tax bill (known as the provincial education tax) exceeds the amount collected for municipal purposes. The disparity in terms of tax rate treatment between non-residential and residential property owners for municipal purposes is even more extreme when the education tax rate is considered, further exacerbating the disproportionate property tax burden shouldered by commercial and industrial property owners and their tenants.

When property tax is unfavourably biased against the business community, the province's economic competitiveness, its ability to attract and retain talent and investment, create jobs, and to position Ontario for growth and prosperity are undermined.

In acknowledging the shortcomings of Ontario's current property tax system, the Province made a promise in its 2019 Spring Budget to develop an action plan *to Respect Ontario Property Taxpayers* underpinned by a comprehensive review to explore opportunities to:

- Enhance the accuracy and stability of property assessments;
- Support a competitive business environment;
- Provide relief to residents; and
- Strengthen the governance and accountability of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to ensure better representation for Ontario property taxpayers.

To support a meaningful and informed review process, the government committed to seeking input on these issues through consultation with residents, businesses, municipalities and other stakeholders.

Thus far, no plan has been revealed to fulfil this promise. However, recognizing that 2020 is the year in which MPAC will undertake a comprehensive province-wide reassessment (revaluation) of all property to provide the basis for property taxation in 2021 through 2024, the timing of a thorough and thoughtful review of Ontario's property tax system, with a focus on modernization to ensure competitiveness, is crucial to inform transparent, stable and equitable property tax treatment into the future.

Recommendations

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

1. Honour its 2019 Budget Commitment to ensure a modern and competitive property tax system and to develop an action plan to respect Ontario's property taxpayers based on meaningful and thoughtful consultation and collaboration with affected stakeholders including: residents, business, industry, municipalities, and subject matter experts.
2. Consider providing new revenue and/or property tax mitigation tools and flexibility to municipalities in order to manage property tax burdens in a fair and equitable manner, address new economic paradigms, and to target relief to business property owners/tenants in response to local tax policy priorities and objectives.
3. Address the significant disparity between residential and non-residential tax rates for education tax purposes.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

14. Addressing Housing Shortage by Updating the Approvals Process

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

Issue

The current approvals process for housing developments is inefficient and directly contributes to the housing shortage in the province.

Background

Successive governments have underinvested in Ontario's infrastructure, with the expected total investment over the next five years at 2.65% of provincial GDP – less than half the target investment (5.4%) for long-term growth.²⁰

The trend of underinvestment in infrastructure has been a consistent trend going back to the 1960s and 1970s, at the same time as Ontario's population had been growing by 1.5 per annum since 1970²¹.

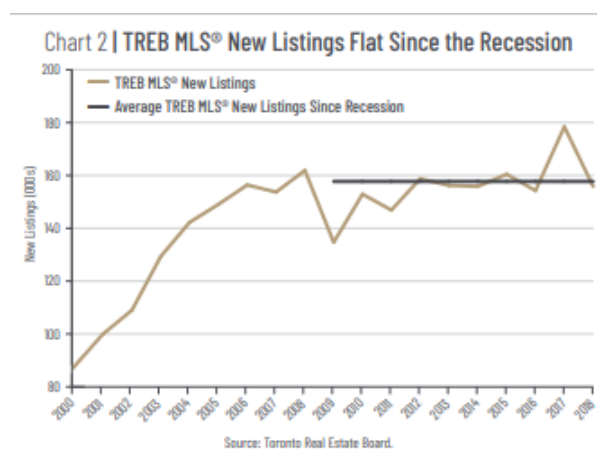
Compounding the current housing issues is the fact that Provincial housing developments have stagnated, as demonstrated in chart 2.²²

This underinvestment has been exacerbated by a slow approvals system, with over 100,000 proposed housing units across Ontario are waiting for development.²³

Some of the most prominent reasons for this flawed approvals process are:

- Outdated processes: Including in areas such as zoning and building and planning permits.
- Poor communication and transparency, specifically pertaining to the relationship between municipalities and the Provincial government.
- No repercussions for municipalities missing targets for updating out of date zoning, resulting in a lack of accountability and no internal direction to solve the issue.

The government has taken steps to resolve these concerns through Bill 108; *The More Homes, More Choices Act 2019*, which includes provisions to develop more housing and mandates a reduction in decision making time. While these steps may address some of the issues, they do not provide the fundamental alterations required to fix the process.



²⁰ <https://rccao.com/research/files/RCCAO-CANCEA-Infra-Bulletin-May-22-2019.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/>

²² http://communications3.torontomls.net/auth2/mediafiles/Market-Year-in-Review/pdf/2019-YearInReview_interactive_2Col.pdf

²³ <https://www.amo.on.ca/AMO-PDFs/Reports/2019/Fixing-Housing-Affordability-Crisis-2019-08-14-RPT.aspx>

Recommendations

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

1. Have the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing conduct a full review of the current process to ascertain which areas can either be removed or streamlined. Specifically identify areas of the process (such as e-permitting) which can be moved to an electronic platform.
2. Develop a shared common data platform that will help the Province to establish a comprehensive e-permitting system where agencies and municipalities can link together. This can be used to streamline the application and approvals process to ensure there is no miscommunication between the Provincial and Municipal governments, while simultaneously allowing all parties to track applications.
3. Promote greater transparency in the process, possibly by legislative means or by commissioning a body in place of the OMB/LPAT. At minimum, there should be the aforementioned web-based system which gives both developers and buyers sufficient information to understand the process.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

15. Addressing the Low-Income Housing Crisis

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The chronic shortage of low-income/community housing is placing an excessive strain on municipal resources and the capacity of councils and staff to address additional issues across their portfolio of responsibilities mandated by the provincial government.

Background

Ontario is the only province in Canada where community housing is a municipal responsibility. Community housing is generally defined as properties owned and operated by non-profit housing corporations, housing cooperatives and municipal governments/District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs). Municipalities across Ontario have continually stated this significant responsibility was never intended to be carried by the property tax base.

The crisis in community housing extends across Ontario to include northern, rural and large urban municipalities where there exists an aging, underfunded and inadequate supply of buildings. A sustainable funding model is required for operations and capital repairs beyond the requirement for new units to meet escalating demand.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has identified five major housing and homeless prevention priorities across Ontario. They include:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing;
- Creating a financially sustainable model for community housing;
- Expanding affordable housing options;
- Ending homelessness;
- Supporting people with their health care needs for successful tenancies.

An AMO report from August of 2019 proposes 63 recommendations to assist the municipal sector on meeting their housing challenges and are generally reflective of the five aforementioned broadly defined priorities.

The Ontario Community Housing Renewal Strategy from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing notes that when residents have adequate housing, they gain improved health, education and employment outcomes. When housing is affordable and in areas near transit, schools, and workplaces, people have the opportunity to manage their lives.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government:

1. Collaborate with the municipal sector and developers to increase the supply of community housing with an appropriate mix of affordable and market buildings; and
2. Increase the efficiency of the provincial community housing system for long-term sustainability.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

16. An Economic Connection

Submitted by the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce, The Brockville & District Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The provincial government has pledged to assist in helping to connect all Ontarians online. Underserved areas, particularly in rural communities that harbour large agri-business, the broadband gap is significant. The provincial shortfall hinders young entrepreneurs, home-based business and primarily, the food producers throughout the entire province.

Background

The impacts of the escalating broadband shortage are multi-layered. High speed has been confirmed as a “basic telecom service” by the CRTC. Now, the fast-track must begin, ensuring all Ontarians have access to it. Without it, entrepreneurs who live outside of major centers through choice and circumstance will suffer and our economy will not meet its potential. Allan Thompson, the chairman of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, said “broadband services should be treated the same as the provision of clean water, electricity, health care, education and postal services”.

Moreover, the agri-food industry is ever more reliant on technology, featuring every facet of its operation including livestock data, commodity pricing, crop research and monitoring devices. It is as hi-tech as any thriving, front-line industry.

As an example, Doug Knox, vice-president of the Guelph-based Agri-tech accelerator Bio enterprise, points to the growth of "precision" agriculture. He says, “farmers can now use sensors to extract information about everything from soil content to the growth stage of their crops, which helps to make data-driven decisions about fertilizing and planting”.

Knox works in precision agriculture and says “access to data can have a big impact on farmers' crop yields. The problem comes in having to download all that data, which could take hours with a bad connection, Knox said. The time lag is so severe that Knox said many farmers simply choose not to implement these technologies, which can affect their farm's output”.

Still, any monetary investment by the government and private sector can be balanced by economic benefits. Many communities need this digital foundation to grow and prosper. Today's technology is essential for communications, employment, education, healthcare, doing business and ensuring critical safety networks. Despite the widespread availability of information, some public services in rural, remote and First Nations communities are unable to provide adequate access due to limited or no broadband availability. Increasing broadband investment will help ensure Ontarians have access to the digital resources no matter where they live.

To close the remote/rural and urban digital divide and in order to meet this objective, existing infrastructure across Canada needs to be upgraded and new infrastructure needs to be built. This will require a great deal of time and money and a collective effort from all levels of government and the

industry. The CRTC has established a \$750 million Fund to help provide all Canadians with access to broadband Internet and mobile wireless services: The Broadband Fund.

Recommendations

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

1. Support the CRTC determination that broadband is a Basic Telecom Service.
2. Ensure funding for broadband is accessible to both large and small telecom companies. Many smaller providers have the expertise and existing facilities to leverage so that maximum return on investment is achieved.
3. Maximize the potential of the federal Broadband Fund by applying for investment that target the most underserved areas first.
4. Make the CRTC the sole regulator of access to the support structures of provincially regulated utilities.

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

17. Better Representation and Better Ethics in Government

Submitted by: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Transparency, openness, and ethical behaviour is what is expected of government and politicians at all levels: municipal, provincial and federal. Thanks to the instant gratification of social media, the trending posts seem to be regarding negative political or governmental actions. Never more than today do we see the exposure of inappropriateness of our political and bureaucratic leadership.

Businesses are in need of confidence in their surroundings; investments of any kind need to weigh in what the expected future holds. We know, that more than at any time in history, sudden and unusual shifts in government can be detrimental to business growth and the migration of skilled workers.

Punitive measures are archaic, and in many cases miniscule compared to that of private sector penalties and seem to possess a very unfair relationship to the level of government. Conflict of Interests cases at the municipal level vs federal clearly demonstrate, we don't have this right. A municipal council found in conflict can and have been removed from office and prohibited from running in the next municipal election, yet at the federal level, the maximum penalty for conflict of interest is a \$500 fine. The problem lies with the fact that provincial and federal politicians set the limits of the penalties, and provincial politicians set the limits of penalties for municipal politicians. This may clearly point out that politicians are incapable of adequately and fairly setting their own penalties for infractions related to serving in public office.

There is also evidence that the tenure in office subscribes itself to a greater likelihood of unethical behavior. We are unsure whether this is as a result of the learning over time to skirt the system, or attempt to, or whether it simply becomes comfortable, occupants feel more entitled, or that the system simply gets tiring to elected officials and they look for ways around the rules. But it is fairly clear that as elected officials' tenure grows, it can lead to behaviour that the electorate and business cannot count on.

The difficulty is that it is very hard to change these things. Many politicians would say, 'you're pushing a rope up a hill' and politicians are always reluctant to change the boundaries for fear that innocently they could be subject to violations and punitive measures that are difficult to swallow. That, however, shouldn't stop us to bring more accountability to politicians, to ensure their boundaries are limited and measured to hopefully bring more consistency in leadership, and a commitment to a more confident expectation of the future.

Background

All parties are filled with examples of inappropriate actions by elected officials, and unfortunately many who have held the respect of many voters only to lead to grave disappointment. Democracy gives the ordinary people the right to choose, the right to refuse and the right to decide collectively on a majority rules basis. This was a hard-fought right of the people. The very colour of the House of Commons, green, is symbolic of the early days when the people met in fields, to conspire against

the monarchy and demand a say. It wasn't perfect, but the system changed and men who held property were given a say, and eventually we are here, where there is seemingly a better representation of who can decide and who has a vote. But we still find that the ethics of our representatives can too often be called into question.

We have all faced dealing with long-term experienced politicians and newly elected politicians. The experienced politician will often times tell you how the legislation reads and how the government feels on a particular issue. However, the newly elected politician will dive in to find out how the legislation reads and if they agree with you, will also work to find a way to make a change either a regulatory change without having to draw out a long process through Parliament or put forward new legislation. It is commonplace for experienced long-tenured elected officials to seem like they do not listen, yet their popularity, statesmanship and power seem to keep them in office.

We are also faced with very young people who look to an elected position as being a career choice. There is nothing wrong with an individual wanting to publicly serve, but there may be an issue with those who are planning on a full career as an elected official. The desire/need to stay in office leads to finding any way to stay elected and that alone can create opportunities where inappropriate action and unreasonable tactics are used to achieve that 'personal' goal.

The intent is to serve the public's interest, not a personal interest. Politicians are elected out of the 'people', to serve the 'people' and to watch over with an inordinate amount of integrity the money of the 'people'. Too often, the fiduciary responsibility of elected officials is not as much a priority as it is demanded to be. It is their primary responsibility to be good stewards of the public purse and to impose legislation that ensures this, and to watch over those charged with the execution of services and spending because that is our only source of reliance that our money is being used wisely and appropriately.

Often times it is the most popular person in the room who gets the nod, or the most familiar name on the ballot, or even ballot positioning based on the spelling of the last name. While we do get lucky and have some incredible people elected, we as often or maybe even more so have people elected who do not have a clear understanding or awareness of the parts of the job that the electorate expects of them. Education is not only the way to truly expose them to the job, but it may be a mechanism to ensure that regardless of notoriety from a name perspective that there is also substance to the candidate. Provincial and federal politicians do have 'candidate' schools and if elected an orientation program, but these are led by the parties and are focused much on the "do's and don'ts" as an elected party member.

We believe true, independent education for the roles and responsibilities of elected officials is essential. We have heard some elected officials say once in office, "Had I only known what this was all about". This is often common at the municipal level where the requirement to "work" is self-imposed. And as a more general point, the municipal level is where there is the least acumen for newly elected officials.

We also believe that whether an individual wants to run as a candidate provincially or municipally, they can also afford to pay a small amount to educate themselves on what it really is to be an elected

official and who they are responsible to, how they must act and what their perimeters are as an elected official.

Summary

We believe there is little we can do or recommend that would toughen the penalties and fines that may lead to better and more ethical service. So, instead we believe that collectively we should lobby for something that may lead to enticing a better quality of candidate, one who is looking at the job as truly public service and will likely have a positive impact on future elected bodies, in quality but also in ethical standards.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

1. Implement term limits for our elected leaders at both the municipal and provincial levels of government.
2. Require those seeking to serve in elected office at the municipal and provincial levels participate in a mandatory nonpartisan ethics-related course at a post-secondary institution prior to becoming a candidate, at their own cost.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee does not support this resolution because it is not sufficiently a business issue or priority for the chamber network.

18. Bettering Ontario Workplaces

Submitted by: Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Mississauga Board of Trade, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Issue

In Ontario, new employers have a lengthy list of policies, programs, and training that they must develop and implement. These obligations are important to ensure the health and safety of all workers in Ontario. However, these obligations can seem insurmountable for a start-up, small business, or not-for-profit. The result of this hurdle is that many businesses either ignore their obligations or attempt to avoid these obligations by only hiring contractors.

Background

For provincially regulated employers in Ontario, there are various sources of legislative employer obligations. This includes the *Employment Standards Act* (the “ESA”), the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (the “OHSa”), and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (“AODA”).

Under the OHSa, employers have an obligation to have a health and safety policy, a workplace harassment policy, a workplace violence policy, a health and safety program, a workplace harassment program, and a workplace violence program. In addition, under the OHSa, employers have an obligation to provide employees with Worker OHSa Awareness Training, Supervisor OHSa Awareness Training, workplace harassment training, and workplace violence training. In addition, the health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee have to receive specific training. These training programs are in addition to industry or workplace specific training obligations.

Under AODA, employers have to develop various policies (including a workplace accommodation policy) and provide training on AODA, its standards, and the Human Rights Code.

The above are only a few of the examples of the policies, programs, and training that Ontario employers must develop and implement.

A few of the legislatively required policies, programs, and training are provided complimentary by the province (e.g. there is a complimentary Worker OHSa Awareness Training). Many however are not. As a result many new employers either ignore their obligations or attempt to avoid these obligations by only hiring contractors.

Recommendation

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

1. Provide supports for employers to obtain the HR policies, programs, and training that are statutorily required.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

19. Give Municipalities Approval/Rejection Rights for Retail Cannabis Stores

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

When the Government of Ontario opened up the retail cannabis market it allowed municipalities to “opt in” or “opt out” of permitting retail stores in their respective municipalities. Many municipalities chose to “opt out” because they felt they did not have the authority to approve or reject a proposed retail outlet location or the total number permitted within the municipality.

Background

With the legalization of cannabis at the federal level, provincial governments have been struggling with the retail sale of cannabis to the public. Many provinces have very successfully set up a strong retail market with many locations for consumers.

Other provinces like Ontario have had a more difficult time in part because of the regulations established by the Government and administered through the Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario.

The regulations concerning an application for a retail cannabis store require a 15-day consultation period where municipalities and other stakeholders may submit comments on the application. A municipality however does not have the authority to approve or reject an application forcing many municipalities to “opt out” of retail stores fearing they have no control over their location or total number of stores permitted in a municipality.

Recommendation

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

1. Amend the retail cannabis store regulations to provide for an approval/rejection process for municipalities that “opt in” for all store locations and to restrict the number of stores within a municipality in proportion to the population.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee does not support this resolution due to concerns about the negative impacts it could have on the cannabis industry and on existing and future retail locations.

20. Healthcare Crisis: Demands Exceed Supply

Submitted by: Brampton Board of Trade

Issue

Ontario's healthcare system is not meeting population demographics.

Background

Hospital overcrowding has become the new normal in too many of Ontario's growing cities. This is not because of inefficiencies, rather Ontario's hospitals are the most efficient in the country.²⁴ According to the Ontario Hospital Association, clinical innovation has led to Ontario's hospitalization rate being the lowest in Canada, and when patients end up in a ward, their average stay is cheaper and shorter than in any other province.

The issue is that the supply of 30,000 hospital beds on Ontario has not increased since 1999, even though Ontario's population has grown 27%, from 11.5 million to 14.6 million.²⁵ In addition, the segment of Ontario's population that is 65 years or older has increased by 1 million. As a result, hospitals in high growth cities operate at over 100% capacity on a near daily basis.

Another significant factor is that 1 in 6 hospital beds are occupied by patients who require an 'alternative level of care' (ALC), which on average is less expensive than hospital beds and come in such forms as long-term care, assisted living, and rehab.²⁶ The majority of ALC patients are waiting for a long-term care beds, which in 2019 had a wait list of 161 days. While the current provincial government has invested in more long-term care beds, it takes 3 years to get those beds in operation. Just 21 new long-term care beds opened in Ontario in 2019, while the waitlist grew by more than 2,000. Under the previous provincial government, only 611 new long-term care beds opened from 2011 to 2018.

Matching patient needs to the appropriate healthcare resources will reduce the strain put on hospitals and will contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth.

Recommendations

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

1. Ensure provincial funding commitment for new hospital beds to match cities' projected population growth.
2. Speed up the process to get new long-term care beds into operation - and make sure the beds are created where they are needed.

²⁴ Ontario Hospital Association. 2019. Ontario Hospitals - Leaders in Efficiency.

<https://www.oha.com/Documents/Ontario%20Hospitals%20-%20Leaders%20in%20Efficiency.pdf>

²⁵ Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. 2019. Hallway Health Care: A System Under Strain.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/premiers_council/docs/premiers_council_report.pdf

²⁶ Matt Gurney. 2019. TVO: How to end hallway medicine, Part 3: Doug Ford's plan is a start, but it's not the solution. <https://www.tvo.org/article/how-to-end-hallway-medicine-part-3-doug-fords-plan-is-a-start-but-its-not-the-solution>

3. Ensure provincial funding commitment for variety of 'alternative level of care' options that meet diversity of needs, including at-home, community, and mental health support.
4. Research healthcare technology in comparable jurisdictions where remote patient monitoring and crisis management is used effectively to curtail hospital stays.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

21. Improve Early Childhood Educational Outcomes Through Expanded Education Opportunities, Targeted Programming, and Innovation in the Classroom

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's long-term economic success relies on the quality of its workforce.

There is a strong connection between early childhood development, educational outcomes and future success. Ontario's unreasonably high child developmental vulnerability rate will have a negative impact on our future labour supply, including skilled workforce shortages and ultimately a loss of economic potential. This is especially true for areas of Ontario that are faced with low growth rates, low immigration rates, and an aging workforce. It is imperative for the future of our province that every child is given the best opportunity to succeed.

Background

Education is a pathway to a successful and sustainable labour market career. "Over the next few years 70% of new and replacement jobs will demand post-secondary credentials, compared to 6% that will be available to individuals with less than high school education."²⁷

Research shows that children's development at age 5 is a strong predictor of adult health, education and social outcomes. Many later problems like school failure, anti-social behaviour, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, type-2 diabetes, can be traced back to early childhood.²⁸

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool that gathers information about children's development in their early years (birth to age 5). The most recent provincial EDI collection (2017/18) shows that the developmental vulnerability rate amongst young children in Ontario is near 30 percent, as measured by one or more of the five developmental scales. This does not include children who have an identified special need. Research states that "[s]uch levels of vulnerability at school entry are at least five times higher than the rates of biological vulnerability that are detectable in the postnatal period".²⁹ Especially concerning is the fact that the Ontario vulnerability rate is worsening rather than improving, having risen 2 percentage-points in the past ten years.

Drivers of vulnerability include socioeconomic adversity, physical issues like low birthweight, the lack of knowledge of an official language, increases in screen time and sedentary behaviour, limited opportunities to take on developmentally appropriate responsibility or self-care, inadequate sleep, inadequate nutrition, etc.³⁰

²⁷ Lightman, E., Herd, D., Um, S. G., & Mitchell, A. (2009). Post-secondary education and social assistance in Ontario. *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue canadienne de service social*, 97-113.

²⁸ Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://edi.offordcentre.com/about/what-is-the-edi/>

²⁹ Kendall P.R.W. (2003) A Review of Infant Mortality in British Columbia: Opportunities for Prevention. Victoria, BC: Government of British Columbia, Office of the Provincial Health Officer in Kershaw, P., Warburton, B., Anderson, L., Hertzman, C., Irwin, L., & Forer, B. (2010). The Economic Costs of Early Vulnerability in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. 2010;101(Suppl. 3): S8-S12.

³⁰ Buote, D. (2015). Increasing Vulnerability in the Early Years: A Closer Look at Five North Shore Neighbourhoods. Retrieved from: <http://nscr.bc.ca/pdf/Increasing%20Early%20Years%20Vulnerability.pdf>.

Children who are deemed vulnerable or at risk of being vulnerable on the EDI are less likely to achieve the provincial standards in the Grade 3 EQAO reading, writing and mathematics assessment than those with higher EDI scores.³¹ Their education trajectories are likely to be lower and these children will face more challenges as they grow. Many will remain behind their peers throughout life, be disruptive in school, fail to graduate and unable to fully contribute and participate in society³² and may rely on the social system (such as Ontario Works) for financial support.

Overall, grade 3 EQAO data shows a decline in writing skills over the previous three years (from 73% in 2015/16 to 69% in 2018/19). Assessments in math were similar to writing. In Grade 3, 58% met the provincial math standard, a four percentage-point decrease from the average of the previous three years. If these trends continue unchecked, we should expect the number of students not meeting provincial standards in grade 6 to rise. We should also expect the number of children who are unprepared for high-school or post-secondary to rise over time.

There is a significant economic cost to vulnerability. A high vulnerability rate will dramatically deplete our future stock of human capital and will have a negative influence on the quality of our future labour market.³³ Canadian economic analyses reveal that this depletion will cause Canada to forgo 20% in GDP growth over the next 60 years. The economic value of this loss is equivalent to investing \$2.2 trillion to \$3.4 trillion today at a rate of 3.5% interest, even after paying for the social investment required to reduce vulnerability.³⁴

Although governments face fiscal constraints, policy-makers should prioritize initiatives with high economic and social returns, such as early childhood education.³⁵ There is a 7:1 return on investment for early childhood programming compared to a 1:1 payback for adult education.³⁶

There is evidence that the duration of early childhood education “is an important factor in boosting math scores, which in turn leads to higher future wages”.³⁷ With this in mind, the province should focus on expanding licensed early childhood education services in an affordable way which helps everyone equally regardless of their socio-economic situation.

For vulnerable children already in the school system, more targeted programming and an increase in teacher/student interaction time can help close the gap between them and their peers. Research shows that “appropriate supports and interventions during the primary school years will allow many children who were not on track in kindergarten to address early challenges and proceed on a positive academic trajectory”.³⁸ For children who are significantly behind their peers, a combination of grade retention and targeted programming should be investigated as an option. Researchers/data analysts at the Ministry of Education should conduct a review of the educational outcomes of Ontario

³¹ Calman, R. C., & Crawford, P.J. (2013). Starting Early: Teaching, Learning and Assessment (pp. 1–37). Education Quality and Accountability Office.

³² Calman, et al.

³³ Kershaw et al.

³⁴ Kershaw et al.

³⁵ Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2017.

³⁶ Pascal C.E. (2009). With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

³⁷ Alexander et al.

³⁸ Calman, et al.

children who were retained to determine if grade retention has a positive long-lasting effect on struggling students.

Furthermore, many teachers indicate that only 49% of their time is spent in direct interaction with students, with “time” being the most important barrier to providing personalized learning.³⁹ An innovative approach is to use automation technology to reduce time spent on preparation, administration, evaluation, and feedback, saving approximately 13 hours per week.⁴⁰ Teachers could redirect that time toward activities that lead to higher student outcomes such as instruction, engagement and coaching. Further investments in permanent teaching assistants may also help decrease the burden of preparation and administration work that teachers commonly face.

Recommendations

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

3. Expand affordable early childhood education (i.e. licensed childcare) to include 3-year olds identified as developmentally vulnerable to reduce the number of these children in Ontario
4. Place a focus on catching up vulnerable (and at-risk of being vulnerable) children to their peers through targeted programming and early interventions
5. Identify communities/regions that have consistently higher child vulnerability rates than the Ontario average and increase their funding for targeted programming
6. Investigate the effectiveness of grade retention combined with targeted programming for children significantly behind their peers
7. Utilize automation technology in the classroom to reduce teacher preparation and administration time so they can spend more time directly interacting with students.

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

³⁹ Bryant, J., Heitz, C., Sanghvi, S. & Wagle, D. (2020). How artificial intelligence will impact K-12 teachers. New York: McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/how-artificial-intelligence-will-impact-k-12-teachers>.

⁴⁰ Bryant et al.

22. Improving Skilled Trades in the Secondary Schools

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

Many businesses cite lack of workers in the skilled trades to fill positions within their companies today and into the future. There is a general concern that young people are not getting encouragement and opportunity to participate and learn about skilled trades at an early age so they can give serious consideration to a career in the skilled trades while in high school.

Background

The Mississauga Board of Trade (MBOT) authored a report entitled “Review of Skilled Trades in the Secondary School System” which looked at the current state of skilled trades training and curriculum in high schools and made recommendations that can improve and support this going forward.

MBOT met with representatives of all four local school boards and teachers in the Regional Skilled Trades program and found great support and interest in supporting and expanding skilled trades courses in the secondary schools.

While the full report makes many recommendations, this resolution focuses on some key ones for the Ontario Government to consider. The full report is available at https://issuu.com/mbotontario/docs/mbot_skilltrade_report.

Recommendations

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

1. Allow for the engagement of outside skilled trade expertise to teach segments of classes where this involvement is either warranted or required. The School Boards should be able to compensate these instructors working along with the designated Teacher for the class.
2. Ensure that School Boards have the budget and resources to obtain the proper, up-to-date equipment to teach skilled trades. The Ministry should encourage companies to donate equipment to the schools and be eligible for a tax receipt for the donation.
3. Consider creating a tax credit for companies that accept students for co-op placements in their businesses.
4. Allow students to claim co-op work placements in the 40 hours of Community Service program.
5. Continually assess co-op placement programs to ensure the rapid pace of technological change and industry requirements is met.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

23. Investing in Ontario's International Undergraduate Student Entrepreneurs

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Leamington Chamber of Commerce; Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario attracts an increasing number of international students each year. The Ministry of Advanced Education has estimated international students will account for 20 per cent of all Ontario post-secondary enrolments by 2022.¹ These students have an incredible impact on the local economy.

With an increasing talent shortage across the province coupled with a significant business succession issue, it is vital that international students are encouraged to remain in Ontario to continue their positive effect on the economy.

The Ontario Government can support international undergraduate student entrepreneurs by creating a nominee program to provide a more expedient pathway to permanent residency. Both Nova Scotia² and Saskatchewan³ have implemented such pathways in recent years.

Background

International student enrollment in Canada is on the rise. Since 2014 there has been a 73 per cent increase in enrolments bringing the 2018 total to 572,000.⁴ The total number of post-secondary international students in Canada as of December 31, 2018 was 435,415, a 17 per cent jump over 2017 (370,975).⁵ In 2017, Ontario hosted 48 per cent of the nation's international students.⁶

The positive impact of international students to the economy is remarkable. Approximately 170,000 jobs were created nationally as a result of international student spending in 2017.⁷ International students contributed \$21.6 billion to the Canadian economy in 2018 with international student tuition surpassing government grants as a revenue source for many colleges and universities across the province.^{8,9}

Some of these students come from entrepreneurial families who wish to expand their family business into Canada. Others may have the desire to purchase established businesses which would address the nation's growing business succession issue.¹⁰

Currently, international students must find an eligible work position before applying for permanent residence status.¹¹ This puts their entrepreneurial ambitions on hold. If they could commence their business plans after graduation, they would become not an employee, but an employer, boosting the local economy even further.

Needing to find employment often means these students move to larger city centers. When eligible, the majority will choose to start their new business in the city of their employment – not the city where they completed their studies leading to a huge economic loss for the smaller cities of Ontario.

Ontario does currently have an Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) in place but most international students will not meet the requirements of this program.¹²

Recommendation

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

1. Emulate Nova Scotia's International Graduate Entrepreneur program that allows the Government of Ontario to nominate International students to start and operate their own company in Ontario and meet the eligibility requirements to apply for Permanent Residency.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

24. Maintaining Investment and Innovation in Ontario's Public Education System

Submitted by: Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant

Issue

The effectiveness of the education system is a priority for the future prosperity of the province and the active participation of all Ontarians in the workforce of the 21st century. That said, it must be efficient as well as effective. This requires strategic continued investment based on the value Ontarians can derive now and in the future.

Background

The Government of Ontario has initiated a process to reduce funding to the public education system based on two policy decisions:

An increase in average class size at the elementary and secondary level,

A requirement for all high school students to take several mandatory online courses, and

It is the responsibility of local school boards to manage the implementation of cost reductions to achieve compliance with reduced funding. It is of note that many Boards have identified certain innovative, specialty consulting positions (literacy and mathematics coaches for one, and guidance/pathways coordinators for another), and courses with small enrollments among the first wave of potential cost reductions. Increasing class sizes and mandating online learning can be particularly detrimental to students with special needs in education, a student population which has shown alarming growth, almost doubling since 2000.

It should also be noted that while online learning offers a marvelous opportunity to improve the efficiency of some learning situations, there is a proportion of the population that does not learn effectively in an online environment. Further, there are many areas in Ontario that do not have access to high speed internet, and many classrooms lacking the hardware required to offer online courses. There are also students who do not have access to a computer at home.

In the April 2019 publication "Accounting for Ontario's Debt", the Ontario Chamber of Commerce stated:

"Assessing when and whether to invest in needed infrastructure and services (such as transportation infrastructure, broadband internet, or skills development) the government must not only consider the present and future value of such an investment as dictated by interest rates, but the value Ontarians could derive from an investment now versus in the future."

"Local companies tend to derive great value from government initiatives that aim to develop Canadian and provincial economic opportunities both domestically and internationally, such as skills development and export programming. Raising taxes or implementing austerity measures to reduce Ontario's debt burden may, therefore, have the unintended effect of squandering current opportunity to grow Ontario's economy."

The OCC has steadfastly advocated for skills development including a policy paper in October 2006 “Retooling for a Prosperous Ontario, a global perspective on skilled trades” and continues to identify Skills and Workforce Development as one of its Key Issues, stating that “there are clear signs that some groups are being left behind, and that our training and education systems could do more to create a workforce suited for the 21st century.”

Recommendations

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

1. Re-orient its approach to education funding policies and practices to emphasize measurable return on investment in terms of improved student outcomes and financial performance, rather than a pure budgetary control emphasizing cost-reduction. This new approach should stimulate and reward innovations that result in more effective educational processes.
2. Establish a fund and a mechanism for benchmarking and communicating best educational practices on a provincial, national and international scale with the goal of ensuring that all school boards and all Ontarians are aware of advances that are leading to improved student outcomes.
3. Once innovations have been identified, tested, and proved, province-wide phase-in by stakeholders should be planned and implemented locally by teaching and administrative staff to account for differences due to geographic and socio-economic limitations.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee does not support this resolution because they feel it is not sufficiently a business issue and requires more research to develop recommendations that address the complexity of the problem.

25. Maintaining Rural Emergency Services

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Recent reductions in emergency room services across southwestern Ontario have escalated concerns over health care delivery to rural communities.

Background

Canadians living in rural areas comprise 18% of the population but are served by only 8% of total physicians across the nation.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada, in their 2019 pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, noted that Canada needs a rural economic policy that narrows the existing disparities in health and wellness and ensures that rural Canadians have better access to health care with an opportunity to realize their economic potential. A strategy/policy also needs to catalyze rural communities' abilities for employment, improved health care efficiencies, stronger rural health infrastructure, and ultimately attracting more people to live, work and invest outside major urban centres.

Over the past year, hospitals in the southwestern Ontario communities of Chesley and Clinton have reduced hours at their emergency rooms by closing from 8 pm to 8 am. In both institutions a shortage of nurses required difficult and potentially volatile decisions by local administrators.

At the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Annual Conference in January of 2020, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott noted the Auditor General reported in 2017 that health services are delivered inconsistently across Ontario, a predicament that is neither fair nor equitable for people living in rural communities. The status quo, according to the Minister, is not an option.

In October of 2019, the Ministry of Health appointed Jim Pine as an advisor for conducting consultations on public health and emergency services. He has been asked by the province to facilitate discussions with emergency health providers and municipal stakeholders. To address the impact of service reduction such as the aforementioned predicaments in Chesley and Clinton, the provincial business sector should be invited to discussions in relation to any negative effects on rural economic development and investment attraction.

Recommendation

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

1. Include the business sector on consultations for emergency rooms across rural Ontario and ultimately develop solutions for avoiding any future service reductions.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

26. Make the Ring of Fire a Provincial Priority

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce and the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

The Ring of Fire is a transformative project for Canada. Provincial action is required to expedite the development of the Ring of Fire and ensure the economic and social potential of this multi-generational project is realized.

Background

The Ring of Fire is a mineral resource rich area of approximately 5,120 km² located in the James Bay Lowlands region of Northern Ontario. Since the early 2000s, significant deposits of copper, zinc, nickel, platinum, palladium, vanadium, and gold along with the first and largest deposit of chromite in North America have been discovered. Based on current projections, the Ring of Fire is estimated to hold more than \$60 billion in geological riches⁴¹ with deposits being significant enough to sustain activity for a century.⁴²

The Ring of Fire is not only a Northern Ontario, but it should be a priority for all of Ontario as it will have far-reaching impacts across the nation. In the first ten years of the Ring of Fire development, all levels of government stand to increase their tax revenues by nearly \$2 billion, with the provincial government projected to accrue between \$700 to \$760 million.⁴³ In the long term, the provincial government is expected to receive \$2.34 to \$2.63 billion in taxes from the Ring of Fire.⁴⁴ Long-term benefits to Ontario's GDP (32 years) have been forecasted to range between \$16.8 and \$27 billion.⁴⁵ The Ring of Fire is also estimated to sustain over 5,500 full-time equivalent jobs annually within its first ten years, along with significant GDP increases and economic activity in multiple sectors.⁴⁶ Benefits will not only impact the mining and mining supply sectors but will also generate economic opportunities within the manufacturing, construction, utilities, wholesale/retail, trade, and financial services sectors among others.

The Ring of Fire's polymetallic deposits are of global significance and have the potential to enable the diversification of Canadian exports – a shared goal of both the provincial and federal governments, and the business community. The Ring of Fire holds billions of dollars' worth of high-quality chromite, an essential metal in stainless steel production, demand for which is expected to increase in the years to come.⁴⁷ China, the largest importer of chromite, accounting for 60

⁴¹ <https://www.oma.on.ca/en/news/index.aspx?newsId=02d35d94-38c9-4daa-953e-996cf3469ec0>

⁴² "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 1.

⁴³ "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 11.

⁴⁶ "Beneath the Surface," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2014, pg. 12-14.

⁴⁷ <http://kwgresources.com/ring-of-fire-railroad-chromite-supply-and-demand-roskill/>

percent of global demand, has already demonstrated significant interest in the Ring of Fire.⁴⁸ The provincial government should promote the Ring of Fire's polymetallic deposits internationally as a significant investment and trade opportunity.

Further, the Ring of Fire has the potential to result in significant innovation gains in Ontario. Private sector actors for example are already developing innovative energy saving methods such as refining ferrochrome using green and low-cost natural gas rather than electricity. The provincial government should work with Indigenous groups and private sector actors to spur environmental innovation and explore technologies that can reduce energy costs and help make exploration in the Ring of Fire more efficient. Recent announcements by the province on further exploring the potential of small modular reactors is a step in the right direction, and such technology can be tested and applied in projects such as the Ring of Fire.⁴⁹

The Ring of Fire has endless economic opportunities but will only be successful if community needs are addressed. In August, 2019, the province decided to end the regional framework agreement with nearby Indigenous communities, and proceed instead with a series of bilateral agreements.⁵⁰ In Budget 2019, the federal government committed significant funding toward skills training and building Indigenous capacity, both critical investments needed for the Ring of Fire to succeed; the provincial government should match such initiatives. These communities will require access to continuous skills and educational programs to build capacity in management, finance and regional/community-based infrastructure planning in order to participate in decision-making and resource development and to prepare community members for potential job opportunities.

Now is the time for the provincial government to scale-up efforts and work jointly with the Government of Canada, Indigenous communities, and industry to capitalize on the window of opportunity and advance this project forward. Following conversations with industry stakeholders and federal government representatives, the chamber has learned that the Government of Canada is willing to partner with the province on developing the Ring of Fire, but it requires the province to prepare a funding proposal for the project. The Premier has advocated in recent months for the necessity of cross-government collaboration following a contentious election, and such a funding proposal could be an example of such a partnership.

The Ring of Fire has been referred to as a “game changer,” and “the most promising mining opportunity Canada has seen in a century.” The Ring of Fire also offers a unique opportunity to be a template for the development of natural resources in remote and isolated locations alongside Indigenous communities. This type of framework can serve to help inform resource development across the country.

The Ring of Fire should be treated as a national priority and communicated to all federal government departments as such.

⁴⁸ <http://kwegresources.com/global/>

⁴⁹ <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2019/12/premier-ford-premier-higgs-and-premier-moe-sign-agreement-on-the-development-of-small-modular-reacto.html>

⁵⁰ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/regional-framework-ends-1.5261377>

Recommendations

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

1. Recognize and promote the development of the Ring of Fire as a project of provincial and national economic and social significance across all sectors;
2. Partner with the federal government to immediately begin negotiations on a cost-sharing agreement to fund infrastructure needs in and around the Ring of Fire;
3. Begin to work without delay with the federal government, industry and community partners to build capacity and community readiness of Indigenous communities so that they may take full advantage of resource development in the Ring of Fire;
4. Actively promote the Ring of Fire, along with other mining projects, in the global arena as a trade and investment opportunity; and
5. Partner with the federal government, the private sector, and Indigenous communities to explore innovative technologies and R & D opportunities to reduce energy costs and create efficiencies in the Ring of Fire.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

27. Making Data More User Friendly

Submitted by: Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

There is currently a deficit of tools for businesses to receive data in a timely and easy to read and understand.

Background

The Ontario government is currently building a data strategy. Among the goals of the new strategy is to “create economic benefits by enabling Ontario firms to develop data-driven business models and unlock the commercial value of data” along with the idea that data can be a key economic driver.

The Peterborough Chamber of Commerce hosted one of six in-person consultations welcoming about 40 businesses, residents and organizations into our boardroom. There was great discussion about how business can ask and receive the right data in a readable format and a timely fashion.

One consultant said even asking for specific business counts in an area can be difficult and a query mechanism or help desk that can provide an answer would be appreciated.

Our local Workforce Planning Council has such a staffed query desk that businesses and organizations can access to get answers on labour market information (LMI). This help function is extremely useful and has proved to work very well for much needed local context on LMI. A similar program for data would be welcome.

According to Forbes.com’s Bernard Marr, 90 per cent of all data ever collected was generated in the last two years. An article by MaRS on how innovative companies are using data states that connecting and understanding data related to people, platforms, the Internet and supply chains (and most importantly, turning it all into profitable insights) is crucial when achieving competitive advantage.

Our resolution asks for the opportunity for businesses in all communities in Ontario to enhance their competitive advantage through the creation of a query dashboard that can easily compile data and communicate the information in a simple, easy to read format for the business.

Recommendation

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

1. Develop a data query dashboard that can merge and release data sets upon request for businesses and Ontarians.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

28. Making Ontario a Leader in Smart Government

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario and its municipalities are competing with other governments throughout the world to become a “Smart Province” and “Smart Cities”.

The government of Ontario should become a leader in the adoption of ‘smart’ government technologies to improve efficiencies, reduce costs and improve service delivery to taxpayers and to strive to move toward digital government.

At the same time, Ontario should become a leader in promoting the adoption by its municipalities of ‘smart cities’ technology including providing province-wide standards, benchmarks and best practices, facilitating information-sharing and providing stable and consistent funding to allow municipalities to make investments in the technology and infrastructure required to achieve these goals and to also move toward digital government.

Background

A ‘Smart Government’ has been simply defined as “the use of technology and innovation by governments for better performance”.⁵¹ Similarly, a Smart City has been defined as “innovation, not necessarily but mainly through information and communications technologies (ICT), which enhance urban life in terms of people, living, economy, mobility and governance”. As such, smart government and smart cities use technology and the data it collects to tackle challenges such as traffic congestion, reducing environmental impacts, fighting crime, providing social services, fostering economic growth, and improving the delivery and accessibility of government services. It includes the use of technology in the delivery of services (often known as digital government).

The diminishing cost of IT infrastructure and the continued development of more powerful and efficient internet and wireless networks has created the potential for governments to collect, use and analyze data for the betterment of the lives of its citizens and for the benefit of all taxpayers including businesses through increased efficiencies and reduced costs in the delivery of government services. For example, the ability to collect instantaneous feedback through smart devices (e.g. smart street lights with internet-connected sensors that collect data of all types from weather, movements, loud noises associated with threats to public safety or open parking spots) allows governments to be more efficient and effective in their delivery of services to citizens.

Various individual department projects and systems within the federal and provincial government have provided good examples of ‘smart’ government, including the online systems to manage federal immigration applications, which could be used as potential models to promote a broader movement toward ‘smart’ government.

⁵¹ Smart City and Smart Government: Synonymous or Complementary, Abstract by Prof. L. Anthopoulos & Prof. C.G. Reddick, submission to 25th Annual World Wide Web Conference (2016).

In the fall of 2019, the Ontario Government introduced its Building Smarter Government Initiative and while the Ontario Chamber of Commerce applauds this initiative as a good start, there is still much more that can be done to make Ontario a truly “Smart Province”.

One of the most striking examples of the benefits of smart government is the ‘e-Estonia’ project in this EU country which has achieved remarkable benefits from a strong focus on the adoption of digital government with an emphasis on accessibility and usability for its citizens.⁵² This includes adopting processes to ensure that data is only required to be entered once into a government system and that appropriate access is granted to and shared by various levels of government and departments whom require it but is also limited to such departments.⁵³ These processes are estimated to have saved 820 years of working time for government employees on annual basis or an estimated 2% of the country’s GDP derived from savings on government employee salaries and costs.⁵⁴ In addition, it has created business opportunities through its e-residency program which allows individuals and businesses across the world to become ‘residents’ of the country for the purposes of interacting with and accessing certain online government services by allowing them to quickly and easily create a digital profile which facilitates doing business in the country without time-consuming processes for obtaining immigration status or approval to enter and do business in the country in the traditional manner.

At the same time, the government should ensure that an individual privacy-centric approach is taken in the implementation of such measures, including adopting a ‘privacy by design’ approach as promoted by Ontario’s former Information & Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, which focuses on priorities such as preserving consent; minimizing data collection and retention; anonymizing data and ensuring safeguards to restrict unlawful surveillance among other things.

Recommendations

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

1. Mandate an existing provincial agency or Ministry (presently under the purview of the Treasury Board) to lead both provincial government Ministries and agencies as well Ontario municipalities in the adoption, implementation and continuous improvement of ‘smart’ government technology.
2. Empower the said agency to create, implement and promote province-wide standards, goals, benchmarks and best practices on the use of ‘smart’ government technology including facilitating co-operative information-sharing about the successes, experiences and projects undertaken by various levels of governments.

Among the said goals should be:

- A focus on those initiatives that improve the quality of life of taxpayers
- Increase efficiencies, improve service delivery and accessibility
- Reduce costs

⁵² European Commission: Digital Government Factsheet 2019: Estonia.

⁵³ e-Estonia Guide 2018, published by Estonia Chief Information Officer.

⁵⁴ <https://e-estonia.com/how-save-annually-820-years-of-work/>

- Fight climate change

This must all be done while respecting individual privacy rights. Initiatives should be scalable and be focussed on governments of varying sizes and population densities from cities to small towns and rural communities.

3. Commit to providing stable funding and/or tax incentives for ‘smart’ government initiatives both at a provincial and municipal level. Such funding should, when possible, be reasonably tied to outcome-based measurements so as to promote the adoption of those initiatives and technologies which have been proven to further the goals of the initiative. Emphasis should be placed on initiatives involving public private partnerships and private sector involvement.
4. Once the Government of Ontario has introduced these initiatives, it must then leverage its position to attract new business and investment by marketing Ontario globally as Canada’s first “Smart Province.”

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

29. More systems needed in place to encourage women to pursue a career in skilled trades

Submitted by: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

A severe and chronic shortage of skilled trade workers continues to dog the Ontario landscape, despite more than 30 years of ongoing discussion among business, education and government leaders on how to solve the problem.

While a strong focus remains on streamlining immigration policies to introduce some of the world's mostly highly skilled individuals into our labour force more seamlessly, the fact that an existing pool of potential talent already exists among Canada's female population remains virtually untapped unless the necessary encouragement and programming are provided.

Background

Ontario, and Canada in general, are dealing with a severe shortage of skilled trade workers. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that Ontario will face a shortage of 190,000 skilled workers by 2020. This number is expected to triple to 560,000 by 2030.⁵⁵

Left hidden among these staggering numbers is the fact less than 4% of all tradespeople in Canada are women. As outlined in a CBC report in June 2019, it was stated that a Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey indicated as of 2018 approximately 34,800 women were working in industrial, electrical and construction trades nationwide. This represents an increase of 200 women, just under 3.9%, compared to a decade earlier. However, during this same 10-year span there were 38,600 fewer people of the overall 934,000 that were working in trades in 2008.⁵⁶

As well, it's been noted in the first quarter of 2019 there were 60,170 job vacancies in Red Seal trades, an increase of 14 % from a year earlier, according to Statistics Canada's job vacancy and wage survey.⁵⁷

As for those currently rising through the training ranks, according to the Canada Labour Force Survey, only one in 10 apprentices in Canada are women and that most populate female-dominated programs such as hairstylist, esthetician, or early childhood education (which isn't considered a skilled trade in all provinces).⁵⁸

A 2019 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) praised Canada's economic immigration system and recommended streamlining and standardizing

⁵⁵ 'Leading young people into skilled trades is paying off' – Aug. 1, 2019, PLANT (Advanced Canadian Manufacturing) <https://www.plant.ca/insights/leading-young-people-into-skilled-trades-is-paying-off/>

⁵⁶ 'Women are making inroads in the trades but still have a ways to go' – Jul. 23/ 2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-in-trades-1.5215384>

⁵⁷ 'Here's where Canadians are finding well-paying jobs in the trades' – July 12/2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canadian-tradespeople-1.5198394>

⁵⁸ 'Women are making inroads in the trades but still have a ways to go' – Jul. 23/ 2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-in-trades-1.5215384>

the ranking system for skilled workers coming into this country and abolishing the Federal Skilled Trades Program. However, it has been noted that while immigration accounted for 80% of our population growth there are projections indicating there are now only two workers ready to replace every skilled trade retiree in Canada by 2035 compared to seven that were in available in 1971.⁵⁹ This is another indication that filling the skilled trades gap must be accomplished using as many avenues as possible and creating awareness to encourage more young women about the benefits of pursuing a career in these fields. In 2019, the annual BDO Canada Affordability Index, which looks at how affordable life is in Canada, indicated that nearly 60% of women are living paycheque to paycheque.⁶⁰

Education is the key to raising this awareness. In effort to promote skilled trades to all secondary school students, the Ontario government has announced over the course of the last year it was investing approximately \$75 million in three programs: \$12.7 million for the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program; \$20.8 million in a pre-apprenticeship program; and \$52 million for the Specialist High Skills major program that has the potential to reach 54,000 students in 700 Ontario high schools through more than 2,100 programs.⁶¹

As well, continued co-op programs in many secondary schools and having students from grades 7 to 12 participate in province-wide Skills Competitions organized by Skills Ontario and Skills Canada provide opportunities for them to experience the world of skilled trades over a period of a few days. Also, additional supports are provided by more localized initiatives such as Career Pathways, operated by the Career Education Council, which interactively assists Grade 8 students in Guelph by showcasing potential career paths, and the Business And Education Partnership of Waterloo Region which introduces secondary students to various careers through an assortment of programs.

In terms of ongoing education for younger students, in our area the Waterloo Region District School Board does provide tech rooms in some of its grades 7 and 8 schools centred on woodworking, while its counterpart the Waterloo Catholic District School Board provides STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) kits to assist students who show an interest in those areas. Additional skilled trades learning opportunities are provided by neighbouring boards, including the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board.

In hopes of attracting more female students, one-day initiatives such as the annual Build A Dream event co-ordinated between four Waterloo Region school boards at Bingemans help promote the skilled trades to grades 7 to 12 girls and attracts at least 1,200 students. Also, Conestoga College's 'Jill of All Trades' event is held annually and gives approximately 200 grades 9 to 12 students from eight school boards the chance to get 'hands-on' experience under the guidance of female mentors in one day. Conestoga College, which in 2019 announced plans to consolidate its various trade

⁵⁹ 'Canada must adapt quickly to attract skilled workers, immigration minister says' – Aug. 13/ 2019 – CBC.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/economic-labour-migration-hussen-oecd-1.5244416>

⁶⁰ 'Majority of women in Canada are living paycheque to paycheque' – Sept. 30/2019 – LowestRates.ca
<https://www.lowestrates.ca/news/women-canada-living-paycheque-to-paycheque-25809>

⁶¹ 'Ontario takes action to address skilled trades shortage' – Jan. 10/2020 – Ontario Newsroom
<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2020/01/ontario-takes-action-to-address-skilled-trades-shortage.html>; 'Ontario increasing investments in skilled trades' – Nov. 8/2019 – Ontario Newsroom.
<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2019/11/ontario-increasing-investments-in-skilled-trades.html>

schools after purchasing the former 250,000-square-foot Erwin Hymer plant in Cambridge, also provides 'Explore Your Future' days to give Grade 8 students the chance to tour and participate in hands-on activities in specific trades.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

- 1 Continue to market a career in skilled in trades as a viable employment option, and ensure intentional outreach is extended to girls and women.
- 2 Allow students graduating from high school with an interest in any skilled trade to apply to the college of their choice, regardless if they have found employment in the industry.
- 3 Consider working with industry and post-secondary institutions to offer more opportunities at colleges with skilled trades programs to host similar events modelled after Conestoga College's 'Jill of All Trades' in hopes of ensuring more high school students have the opportunity to experience skilled trades training.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

30. Ontario's planning for Urban Mobility – Smart cities and digital transformation

Submitted by: The Oakville Chamber of Commerce, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Milton Chamber of Commerce and Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The role of the Province in the application of data and innovative technologies that enable municipalities to establish intelligent transportation networks and optimize urban mobility.

Background

A reliable transportation network is essential for trade, the movement of goods and services as well as people. It is also integral to our province's economic competitiveness.

As our communities become more connected through the collection of data, artificial intelligence and technology, it is vital that we are prepared for the business climate of the future and that we remain competitive with other jurisdictions.

Population growth as well as increased employment growth, is positive for our local economy; however, it also underlines the need for building a resilient transportation network that works for all modes of transportation to supply the movement of goods and people.

A report recently released by the Province signals that the province is positioning Ontario to be a leader in the development, commercialization and adoption of advanced manufacturing and mobility technologies. Supporting new mobility technologies, enhancing the innovation ecosystem as well as supporting research and development and early stage technology development are all measures that will assist communities in their efforts to adopt new technologies.⁶²

Beyond providing the legislative and regulatory framework, the province can further connect municipalities and establish a common framework for the development of alternative Connected Vehicle/Autonomous Vehicle scenarios, readiness guidelines, and potential projects. The creation of a dedicated program could further incent municipalities to invest in infrastructure/technological updates within their local jurisdictions, thereby creating a healthy environment for emerging transportation technologies.

It is vital that municipalities engage in the development of a technological transportation system where data from smart infrastructure, transportation networks, and connected vehicles can empower planners, transit agencies, and other municipal leaders to make advancements in urban mobility. The future efficient movement of both people and goods and services will depend on the effective management of a connected infrastructure.

As the industry evolves and becomes a reality, it will become a competitive economic advantage for municipalities that embrace it—and a disadvantage for communities that don't.

The new market for automated and connected vehicles is expected to grow exponentially and large economic benefits are expected. Other regions are not standing still (e.g. United States, Japan and

⁶² Driving Prosperity: The future of Ontario's Automotive Sector, February 14, 2019

China) and are already adopting strategies for automated vehicles and attracting investment in this field.⁶³ Companies could soon be including Autonomous Vehicle, connectivity and technology readiness in their decisions on where to locate a business or expand operations.

Recommendations

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

1. Encourage municipalities to include adoption of emerging transportation technologies in their short- and long- term “Transportation Master Plans (TMPs)” to ensure that they are prepared for the inevitable arrival of new modes of transportation (such as Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and related transportation infrastructure).
2. Create a dedicated program (e.g. matching funds) that encourages municipalities to invest in infrastructure/technological updates within their local jurisdictions, thereby creating a healthy environment for emerging transportation technologies.
3. Support academic institutions in becoming agile incubators of young talent, encouraging them to develop innovative solutions for mobility and transportation for Ontario’s municipalities through sustainable technologies, as well as investing in research and skills training to meet the future labour demands.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

⁶³ On the road to automated mobility: An EU strategy for mobility of the future, Brussels, 17.5.2018

31. Provincial Transportation Network Connectedness Enhancement – Ensuring that an alternate highway option is always available from Sudbury to Toronto (Specifically the missing piece between Highway 11 and the Bradford Bypass)

Submitted by: Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Paris & District Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Hill Board of Trade, and Markham Board of Trade

Issue

Major highway transportation between Barrie and the GTA is currently limited to highway 400. From Newmarket South there are several East West connections between Highway 400 and Highway 404 allowing for alternative North/South major highway options. The need for improved North/South transportation flows has already been assessed and deemed important. The Highway 400 - Highway 404 connecting link (also known as the Bradford Bypass) has received environmental assessment approval and has been added to the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan.⁶⁴ The 400-404 connecting link will provide some relief, specifically to the Bradford and Newmarket areas by adding an additional connection point between highway 400 and highway 404. A significant bottleneck will continue to persist however North of the proposed Bradford Bypass to the Highway 11/400 interchange.

Background

It is estimated that "By 2041, the combined population of York Region and Simcoe County will be approximately 2.6 Million People (equal to the current population of the City of Toronto)"⁶⁵ Simcoe County is expected to reach a population of 796,000 and employ 304,000. To facilitate this forecasted growth to population and business, improved transportation infrastructure must be put in place.

In August of 2016 a letter was sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs urging the inclusion of the 400-404 Highway Extension in the growth plan. This letter appears to have had influence as the Bradford Bypass is now visible on the growth plan map.⁶⁶ This letter was signed by: Wayne Emmerson, Chairman, The Regional Municipality of York; Virginia Hackson, Mayor, Town of East Gwillimbury; Margaret Quirk, Mayor, Town of Georgina; Tony Van Bynen, Mayor, Town of Newmarket; Gerry Marshall, Warden, County of Simcoe; Terry Dowdall, Deputy Warden, County of Simcoe; Rob Keffer, Mayor, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury; Gord Wauchope, Mayor, Town of Innisfil.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (page 92): <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-greater-golden-horseshoe-place-to-grow-english-15may2019.pdf>

⁶⁵ Highway 400-404 Connecting Link, Making the Connection. County of Simcoe Transportation Engineering document: https://www.simcoe.ca/TransportationEngineering/Documents/400-404%20Quick%20Facts_V4.pdf; <https://www.simcoe.ca/connectinglink>

⁶⁶ A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (page 92): <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-greater-golden-horseshoe-place-to-grow-english-15may2019.pdf>

⁶⁷ Letter to Minister Mauro on August 12, 2016 regarding Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review and the Highway 400-404 Connecting Link <http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/Assets/5+2015+Government/404+connecting+link/Letter+to+Minister+Mauro.pdf?method=1>

Estimated Financial Impact to the Province: There will be significant positive financial impact to the Province from this project, including, but not limited to:

- Faster travel times
- Back-up options for emergency shut-downs and logistics
- Increased access to airports, jobs
- Efficient transport of goods and services

From the general user perspective, the estimated financial impact to traffic delays is estimated at \$25/car/hour.⁶⁸ According to the Ontario Provincial Police, in 2014 there were 882 crashes on Highway 400 between Canal Road and Duckworth Street.⁶⁹ Each of these incidents would cause delays to drivers, whether they be single lane reductions or full highway closures.

The extension is 47 kms of a 4 lane highway. A four lane highway costs \$6.7M/km⁷⁰, therefore the approximate cost of the extension would be in the neighbourhood of \$315M. Even with very conservative estimates, this would be met in user-delays alone in under 4 years, and the benefits would last decades:

$$103,000 \text{ vehicles/day}^{71} = 4,292 \text{ vehicles/hour}$$

$$\$25/\text{vehicle/hour} * 4,292 \text{ vehicles/hour} = \$107,300/\text{hour}$$

$$882 \text{ crashes/year, estimating 1 hour delay per crash} = \$107,300/\text{hour} * 882 = \$94,638,600$$

The estimated economic benefit to Ontario of improved transportation accessibility has not been measured but is likely in the Billions, as unexpected shipping delays can not only lose customers, but longer supply chains also increase inventory levels and carrying costs related to financing and warehousing⁷². Adding the 400-404 Highway Extension⁷² will give Ontario manufacturers a means of remaining competitive in the current economy.

Without a solution to the single highway access to this part of the province, the number of vehicles per hour will go up proportionally as population density increases in this region, resulting in more lost productivity from every incident, and perhaps a stall in the current growth in the region's manufacturing segment due to the economic cost of delays.

Recommendation

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

⁶⁸ *Incorporating User Delay Cost in Project Selection: A Canadian Case Study* by Ken Huen, M.A.Sc. Candidate (now P.Eng); Susan Tighe, Ph.D., P.Eng; and Brenda McCabe, Ph.D., P.Eng (page 7):

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bd21/6069cbd83e450391311ddf691d5ace02bc20.pdf>

⁶⁹ *Hwy. 400 crash stats in line with average*, article in The Barrie Advance by Janis Ramsay <https://www.simcoe.com/news-story/4445261-hwy-400-crash-stats-in-line-with-average/>

⁷⁰ Parametric estimating guide, 2011 by Statulevicius, Kai; Sosney, Paul; Wood, Kathy (page 18):

<https://www.library.mto.gov.on.ca/SydneyPLUS/Sydney/Portal/default.aspx?component=AAAAIY&record=34bc157f-2277-4728-90f0-abb32b51dfe8>

⁷¹ Provincial Highways Traffic Volumes 2016 | King's Highways / Secondary Highways / Tertiary Roads; (page 32): [http://www.raqs.mto.gov.on.ca/techpubs/TrafficVolumes.nsf/fa027808647879788525708a004b5df8/f51986ea499a13b08525745f006dd30b/\\$FILE/Provincial%20Highways%20Traffic%20Volumes%202016%20AADT%20Only.pdf](http://www.raqs.mto.gov.on.ca/techpubs/TrafficVolumes.nsf/fa027808647879788525708a004b5df8/f51986ea499a13b08525745f006dd30b/$FILE/Provincial%20Highways%20Traffic%20Volumes%202016%20AADT%20Only.pdf)

⁷² *Is Your Supply Chain Ready for the Congestion Crisis?* by George Stalk and Jr.Petros Paraniakas <https://hbr.org/2015/06/is-your-supply-chain-ready-for-the-congestion-crisis>

1. Link the Bradford Bypass (Highway 400 - Highway 404 connecting link) to Highway 11 on the West side of Lake Simcoe parallel to Highway 400.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

32. Re-Calibrating Primary and Secondary Education to Close the Skills Deficit

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario is facing a skills shortage crisis. While there are currently approximately 500K unemployed in Ontario⁷³, there is a job vacancy rate of 3.3% or approximately 250K unfilled jobs.⁷⁴ While retraining the unemployed and recruiting skilled foreign workers does help to relieve some of the deficit, it has proven not to be enough. And while these efforts are still very much needed to alleviate the current problem, the government should be looking to early childhood education to provide a more long-term solution to the future skills needs of the province.

Background

The skills gap crisis in Ontario is not new but it is getting worse. In 2013, the Conference Board of Canada reported that the skills gap was costing the Ontario economy \$24.3 billion in foregone GDP⁷⁵ and it projected that the problem would only get worse if action was not taken. In a more recent report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, it was noted that “the skills mismatch is multi-faceted. We are confronted by a supply-demand mismatch driven in part by the decisions of students to pursue qualifications in fields with limited employment opportunities”.⁷⁶

In an effort to better understand which fields suffered the highest vacancy rates, Statistics Canada introduced a new quarterly Job Vacancy and Wage Survey in 2015.⁷⁷ This massive regular poll of 100,000 businesses – the largest business survey that Statscan conducts – drills deeply into the nature of unfilled jobs and wage offers, on a city-by-city and region-by-region basis.

While the federal government has been doing its part to relieve the skills gap by bringing in more economic immigrants, and the provincial government has been introducing new programs to encourage more young people to get into skilled trades⁷⁸, more needs to be done from an early age to ensure that children have exposure to a wide variety of career choices. Doing so will help not only to reduce future job vacancy rates, but future unemployment rates as well.

The Ministry of Education in Ontario did introduce a revised Career Studies Program in the fall of 2019 for secondary school students however, by the time a child reaches high-school there is a high likelihood that their career aspirations are already set.

As a recent article from Nesta (a registered education charity based in England and Wales) said: “Children’s conceptions of who they are and what they could be are products of their wider socio-economic surroundings:

⁷³ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-november-2019>

⁷⁴ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190920/dq190920b-eng.htm>

⁷⁵ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=5563>

⁷⁶ <https://occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Talent-in-Transition.pdf>

⁷⁷ <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/business/5217>

⁷⁸ <https://www.chathamdailynews.ca/news/local-news/addressing-skilled-trades-gap-top-priority-for-monte-mcnaughton>

influenced by social (who their families and friends are) and cultural capital (what they consider a reasonable and possible future to be)⁷⁹ Therefore if children are not introduced to a variety of career options through the educational system, the choices will be limited by their own backgrounds, further exacerbating the skills gap crisis when these children graduate from high school or post-secondary school.

As an example of a best-practice that the Ontario Government might consider in introducing career options to children at a younger age, is the Primary Futures Program based in the United Kingdom.

In 2017, primary schools in the UK began to rethink how and when they should introduce career options to school age children. In a national campaign called Primary Futures⁸⁰, employer volunteers are available to visit schools and provide free voluntary support across a range of areas.

Activities that are included in the Primary Futures program may include:

1. Inviting volunteers from the world of work to visit and chat with children
2. Delivering career-related learning programmes that help children connect their subject learning to the opportunities now and in the future
3. Organising career-related learning trips e.g. to a workplace, business or university
4. Making good use of online learning materials in the classroom such as games, videos, role play, and individual/ group activities
5. Exploring the diverse routes adults have taken to get their current job e.g. vocational (Inc. apprenticeships), academic, starting their own business etc.

In order to address the skills gap in Ontario however it will not be enough for elementary schools to offer career studies in a number of different fields. Focussing on options that specifically target sectors where job vacancy rates are the highest may offer the best solutions.

Recommendations

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

1. Implement a Career Exploration Program in elementary schools that introduces children, parents, and educators to a wide range of career options based on the types of careers that are most likely to be needed by the time children in the program graduate high-school. Such programs should bring in special guests/volunteers from targeted sectors when possible and should also combat any gender stereotypes that may be associated with a given profession. Exposure to this programming could start as early as Grades 1 or 2 to students and parents.
2. Implement a Targeted Career Studies Program for children (starting at about Grade 5) who show particular aptitude in areas where job vacancy rates are expected to be most dire (e.g. manufacturing, skilled trades, agriculture). Programming should allow these children to fully explore career options and gain age-appropriate practical training in these sectors. To fill

⁷⁹ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/great-expectations/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/primary-futures-connecting-life-and-learning-in-uk-primary-education/>

these programs, it may be necessary to bus these children to another school (possibly even a school from another board) in their district for half or full day each week.

3. Implement a Career Mentorship Program and co-op vocational training at the high-school level with particular focus on sectors of the economy where job vacancy rates are expected to be the highest. Mentors should be professionals from selected sectors – and ideally employers – who can provide advice to students on which courses they should be taking and which skills they should be developing. Educators and guidance counsellors must also be trained in this area.
4. Revise the secondary school curriculum to make mandatory taking at least one tech or trade course – similar to how students are required to take at least one arts course. Ensure that funding is course-neutral and that tech and trade courses have equivalent funding to other secondary school courses.
5. Review and revise all these programs as necessary based on current and projected job vacancy rates a minimum of every five years.

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

33.Reducing Traffic Congestion on Ontario Highways Due to Vehicular Accidents

Submitted by: Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Woodstock District Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Traffic congestion negatively affects the economy in numerous ways. People are frequently late to work when they are stuck in traffic, resulting in lost productivity and stress. It prevents deliveries from arriving on time, which can delay production, and congestion wastes fuel and causes vehicle emissions, thus increasing the cost of transporting goods and overall pollution levels.

Background

While vehicular accidents occur everywhere, they cause less traffic delays and highway closures in some jurisdictions than others based on the response systems that governments have in place. The state of Georgia's Department of Transportation (GDOT) has implemented measures to minimize closures and delays on metro Atlanta highways. For more than 10 years, GDOT has paid private wreckage companies in metro Atlanta a \$3,500 bonus to clear truck accidents in 90 minutes or less. Since the Towing, Recovery and Incentive Program (TRIP) was launched, the average time to clear an accident plummeted from 4.5 hours to less than two, prompting GDOT to consider expanding the program across the state of Georgia.⁸¹

The agency also works to keep traffic moving by using cameras to monitor highway conditions, and dispatches Highway Emergency Response Operators (HERO) units to help drivers, clear debris, and direct traffic after accidents occur. These efforts have a measurable impact because a least 50 percent of traffic congestion in the Atlanta region is caused by accidents.⁸²

Florida has similar programs in place under its Open Roads Policy, which sets the goal of clearing major highway incidents and truck crashes across the state in 90 minutes or less. The Rapid Scene Clearance (RISC) is a program put in place under this policy which, like Georgia's, provides financial incentives to qualified and participating heavy duty towing service providers. In addition to financial incentives of a \$600 to \$3500 bonus for meeting response and clearance deadlines, the program is successful because its tow operators must meet equipment and training standards to be eligible to participate. This is in contrast to systems in use elsewhere, where heavy-duty tow operators are called without consideration of their capabilities. The operators do not participate in a RISC-type program and so are not contractually obligated to meet training and equipment standards.⁸³

Such efforts are part of Traffic Incidence Management (TIM) quick clearance programs, which is the practice of rapidly and safely removing temporary obstructions from roadways in order to increase the safety of incident responders by minimizing their exposure to adjacent passing traffic, reduce the

⁸¹ David Wickert, 2019, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/gdot-tackles-truck-accidents-metro-atlanta-highways/ZXuWYCvFpBb9aaJihOixjL/>.

⁸² Wickert, 2019.

⁸³ CAA, 2018; Traffic Incident Management, Florida Department of Transportation, <http://www.floridatim.com/Overview.htm>.

probability of secondary incidents, and relieve overall congestion. Quick clearance practices can result in many benefits for drivers, responders, and the environment, including decreases in:

- non-recurrent congestion delay;
- secondary incidents, including those involving responders;
- response time to traffic incidents and other emergencies;
- vehicle fuel consumption;
- vehicle emissions;
- motorist stress levels;
- aggressive driving behavior;
- freight movement impacts in the region;
- regional economy impacts;
- local tourism impacts; and
- future potential land use impacts.⁸⁴

While major urban areas in Canada typically have TIM practices in place, such as Ontario's COMPASS Transportation Management Centre, they are often not used to their full potential. A 2018 [CAA report](#) highlights additional solutions for non-recurrent traffic congestion based on examples of TIM programs in other jurisdictions. A key example is:

- **Freeway service patrol**, such as Florida's Road Rangers program and Maryland's Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART). Freeways are routinely patrolled by personnel who are trained and equipped to perform minor repairs, assist motorists, remove debris, provide fuel, provide first aid, push vehicles out of travel lanes and assist emergency services. Such programs reduce incident duration and prevent secondary crashes, thus decreasing congestion. For every dollar spent, freeway patrol systems bring in \$6 to \$28. A similar program, the Highway 407 ETR Highway Safety Patrol, is in place in Ontario on a smaller scale.⁸⁵

Ontario could therefore benefit from similar practices given the high traffic volume on its highways, especially in the Oxford County area. Approximately 60,000 trucks pass the 401/403 junction in Woodstock each day. Additionally, Drumbo/Innerkip Exit 250 is among the worst stretches on the 401 for accidents. Inspector Tony Hymers, Oxford OPP Detachment Commander, has articulated a need for an accident reporting centre in Oxford County, similar to those in the City of London,

⁸⁴ Traffic Incident Management Quick Clearance Laws, 2008, US Department of Transportation, https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop09005/role_relevance.htm; Traffic Incident Management. FHWA, https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/eto_tim_psc/about/tim.htm.

⁸⁵ Traffic Incident Management: Volume 1, 2018, CAA, <https://www.caa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/18-CAA-Infrastructure-Papers-TrafficIncidentMgmt-ENG-.pdf>.

Chatham-Kent, and the Collision Reporting Centres of Toronto, which are used to report property damage-only accidents. This gets cars off the road quickly.⁸⁶

Recommendations

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

1. Implement a proof of concept vetting program to create a pool of qualified towing companies that can be called to accidents, as well as an incentive program for contractors to clear accidents in 90 minutes or less. Test this program along the 401 from Oxford County to the westerly termination of the 401 in Windsor for 18 months and report on its effectiveness. If it proves to greatly reduce congestion, implement the program for all 400 series highways.
2. Create a proof of concept accident reporting centre in Oxford County covering the areas in Oxford along the 401 and 403. After 18 months report on its effectiveness. If it proves to be effective, establish reporting centres in jurisdictions along the 400 series highways.
3. Implement a temporary highway patrol service, through which roving vehicles patrol congested and high incident areas and provide direct service to motorists in distress, from Toronto to Waterloo Region along the 401 for 18 months and report on its effectiveness. If it proves to reduce congestion, implement the program permanently.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

⁸⁶ Traffic Services Collision Reporting Centres, Toronto Police Service, <https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/traffic/crc.php>; Collision Reporting, Chatham-Kent Police Service, <https://ckpolice.com/collision-reporting/>.

34. Regional Approach to Provincial Procurement Reform

Submitted by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste Marie Chamber of Commerce, and Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The Government of Ontario is moving forward with a centralized procurement model across the Ontario Public Service and the broader public sector which may adversely impact small- and medium-sized businesses and regional economic development across the province.

Background

On March 28, 2019, the Treasury Board of Ontario announced that it would be leading an initiative to transform how goods and services are purchased by the Ontario Public Service and the broader public sector.⁸⁷ The initiative will leverage the government's buying power to develop economies of scale and centralize all provincial procurement in Queen's Park. While the Treasury Board develops this new procurement model, it has restricted long-term procurement contracts by the province's various departments. This initiative by the Treasury Board is projected to save the province \$1 billion per year.

The government's goal of creating efficiencies through centralized procurement is well-intentioned, but it risks leaving small- and medium-sized businesses unable to successfully bid on provincial contracts. Large provincial contracts cannot effectively be fulfilled by regional suppliers, which could result in large contract awards being made only to national or multinational distributors, thereby damaging regional suppliers & economic development. A centralized buying model puts businesses outside of the GTA at a disadvantage, and impedes the ability to build capacity throughout the province.

Rather than focusing on centralization at Queen's Park, regional hubs offer an alternate approach that concentrates on deriving the greatest total value and achieving savings objectives while also supporting regional economic development. Provincial initiatives to centralize procurement would be administered by regional hubs and through regionally awarded contracts with support by provincial/national agreements for commodities which are not tied to a regional supplier base. The procurement hubs would be established and administered within the regions they represent, enabling effective supplier/buyer relationship development to occur.

The government would mandate public buyers to use a blended portfolio of national, provincial, and regional suppliers to select a contract which derives the greatest "total value" for that agency where total value is defined as the balanced consideration of price, regional economic impact, and other important factors including but not limited to sustainability and cultural inclusion.

Positive models of this approach are demonstrated by the Lakehead Purchasing Consortium and other successful regional broader public service cooperatives and provide proof that regional

⁸⁷ <https://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2019/03/creating-efficiencies-across-government.html>

contract awards are as, or in some cases more effective than, singular large provincial agreements. As an example of the strength of regionalized procurement, the City of Thunder Bay recently closed a procurement for confidential waste paper shredding services where a local company provided a price lower than a provincial agreement. Bigger is not always better!

Investing in regional procurement hubs can also support investments in Indigenous businesses, which have long been neglected in Canada's economy. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce's report on regional economic development, *The Great Mosaic*, recommends that the provincial government prioritize economic reconciliation with Indigenous communities. Part of the solution is to encourage more Indigenous involvement in provincial supply chains, either by incentivizing those with government contracts to include more Indigenous suppliers in their own supply chains, or by including Indigenous suppliers in those contracts directly.⁸⁸

Implementing a regional approach to procurement centralization with a focus on achieving the greatest total value provides opportunity for small- and medium-business, Indigenous suppliers, and regional economic development.

Recommendations

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

1. Implement regional procurement hubs that mandate public buyers to use a blended portfolio of national, provincial, and regional suppliers to derive the greatest total value for purchases; and,
2. Define total value as the balanced consideration of price, regional economic impact, and other important factors including but not limited to sustainability and cultural inclusion.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

⁸⁸ "The Great Mosaic," Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2019, pg. 21.

35. Resolving Ontario's Housing Crisis to Support Economic Growth

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce, Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, Guelph Chamber of Commerce, Port Hope & District Chamber of Commerce, Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The rising cost of housing is restricting economic growth opportunities across Ontario.

Background

Businesses of all sizes in all sectors across Ontario are increasingly concerned with rising housing prices and the impacts on local business attraction and retention. An affordable housing market generally provides a stable workforce reducing employer costs for turnover and other related issues. Also, home ownership provides security for employees and improved workplace health and wellness.

The rising costs associated with both entry into home ownership and renting can also lead to higher wages which can be difficult to absorb for many Ontario employers. The current inflated market for rentals also impacts employers as employees moving to a new community are likely to initially rent, and a shortage of rental supply and housing prices can restrict the ability for assuming full time employment or home ownership.

Rural areas of Ontario have unique housing challenges, as rent can be lower than urban areas however hydro and other costs are higher. Public transportation is not available which limits the ability of employers to secure employees in lower wage occupations.

The Quinte and District Real Estate Board and Tillsonburg District Real Estate Board both tracked residential price increases of around 10 percent from 2018 to 2019. In Guelph, the average price increased from \$300,000 in 2010 to nearly \$600,000 by January 2020.

The Better Housing Policy Playbook released by the Toronto Region Board of Trade for the 2018 municipal election notes that a critical factor for attracting and maintaining talent and investment is a better supply of housing and housing options. There is a growing consensus the high cost of housing is driven by a growing shortage of supply.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) indicated in an August 2019 report that the housing crisis in Ontario is serious and widespread, cutting across all four corners of the province. The Ontario government's Housing Supply Action Plan also confirms that the province needs more housing and we need it now.

In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) net migration from other parts of Canada, natural population growth and immigration all add up to an average additional 115,000 residents annually.

The construction of new homes and apartments has fallen behind population growth, leading to an annual shortfall of about 10,000 units every year. The net result is high housing costs, renters unable to buy into the housing market, and decreasing vacancy rates.

According to BILD (Building Industry and Land Development Association), past efforts to balance the market such as a mortgage stress test and the GTA foreign buyer tax have attempted to slow demand. While demand-side policies marginally produce short-term results, the fundamental problems related to basic affordability remain unresolved.

Addressing the long-term challenge of housing in the GTA requires increasing the supply of new homes to meet demand and forcing the market into balance.

The key factors identified by BILD that are contributing to the current market are:

- A shortage of land for new development. Vacant land for housing in the GTA is estimated at 4.5 percent of total settlement lands, down from 6 percent in 2017;
- Multiple studies and reports are required to get approval for a new housing project, adding unwarranted costs;
- Excessive government fees including municipal development charges. Taxes and associated charges from all levels of government account for approximately 25 percent of the cost of an average home in the GTA;
- An annual population increase across the GTA at the above-noted 115,000 residents is creating a market where demand exceeds supply by an increasing margin.

Outside of the GTA, the median house price in Prince Edward County has increased from \$205,000 in 2008 to \$395,000 in 2018. In Kingston, the inventory of homes for sale in 2019 was the lowest in 30 years, combined with the lowest rental-vacancy rate in Ontario.⁸⁹

Robert Hogue, senior economist at RBC Capital Markets, indicated a sharp rise in prices is primarily the result of the supply side not adjusting to demand.⁹⁰ David Wilkes, President and CEO of BILD, noted that housing supply issues extend back over a decade due to under built housing, neglected new infrastructure projects, and inattention to existing infrastructure.

In June of 2019, the Ontario Legislature passed Bill 108, The More Homes, More Choice Act. The legislation provides changes to a series of existing statutes to address and resolve the current provincial housing crisis. Municipalities and developers both expressed concerns around the province's inability to finalize regulations related to new provisions under Bill 108 and the impact on a volatile housing market.

Recommendations

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

1. Work with private developers and municipalities to ensure available lands move to the market for development;
2. Expedite the planning process for developers to start and complete projects, eliminating any excessive regulatory costs;

⁸⁹ Home Truths, Part 1. Why affordable housing isn't just a Toronto issue. David Rockne Corrigan. TVO, August 6, 2019.

⁹⁰ Doug Ford's fix for Toronto's housing crisis is easy. Just build more homes. Chris Fournier, Bloomberg News in the Financial Post. January 28, 2019

3. Ensure the housing supply matches market demands; and
4. Complete the introduction of new regulations under Bill 108 to eliminate uncertainty at the municipal level of government and within the development sector.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

36. Restore the Business Energy Audit Program

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

When the Ontario Government ended the Cap & Trade system, it cancelled a number of energy conservation programs that were funded through this tax. The business Energy Audit program was one of those casualties. However, the program was very successful and encouraged businesses to perform an energy audit and use the findings to implement energy conservation programs.

Background

The Ontario Government has stated that it intends to help Canada meet the Paris 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets through programs that will help residents and businesses reduce their GHG emissions.

In order to develop a successful plan for GHG emission reduction, a business needs an energy audit performed by a qualified contractor in order to use the findings to implement an energy conservation plan.

In the past, the Government has funded up to 50% of the cost of an energy audit as an incentive to get businesses to retain a consultant and complete the audit.

Recommendation

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

1. Restore the Energy Audit program for businesses and fund up to 50% of the cost of the audit to the business through a grant.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee does not support this resolution because the Energy Audit program was previously funded with revenues from cap-and-trade, which the government canceled with support from the chamber network.

37. Sit Less, Move More: Reduce the Health Impacts of Prolonged Sitting in the Workplace

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by Caledon Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Historically, workplace health and safety policies have been directed at occupations that are more physically demanding. However, there is increasing evidence identifying health risks associated with the prolonged sitting typically seen in an office environment. Therefore, there is a need for a coordinated approach to address prolonged occupational sitting to mitigate its negative health and economic impacts.

Background

The average Canadian adult is sedentary for about 10 hours of their waking day.⁹¹ In modern workplaces, prolonged sitting is increasingly becoming the default behaviour for employees. A recent review suggests that office workers are sedentary for 72.5% of their workday.⁹²

Sedentary behaviour is defined as any waking behaviour where energy expenditure is 1.5 metabolic equivalents (METs) or less while sitting, reclining or lying down.⁹³ Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines⁹⁴, including recommendations for physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep, have been published for children and youth and are anticipated to be released for adults in 2020-2021. Other countries, such as the UK, Australia and New Zealand, have developed sedentary behaviour guidelines for adults, encouraging them to sit less and move more.⁹⁵

Health Impacts

Employees who sit at a desk for prolonged periods of their work-day may still be at an increased risk for developing chronic disease, even if they are otherwise physically active. For example, recent research found significant positive associations between sedentary time and all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease mortality, cardiovascular disease incidence, cancer mortality, cancer incidence and the greatest association seen with type 2 diabetes incidence. These findings were independent of physical activity.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Statistics Canada. Directly measured physical activity of adults, 2012 and 2012. 2015: Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-625-x/2015001/article/14135-eng.htm>. Accessed March 2019.

⁹² Prince SA, Elliot CG, Scott K, Visintini S, Reed JL. Device-measured physical activity, sedentary behaviour and cardiometabolic health and fitness across occupational groups: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity* 2019 04/02; 16(1):30.

⁹³ Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology (CSEP). Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines: Glossary of Terms. 2017; Available at <http://www.csep.ca/en/guidelines/glossary-2017>. Accessed. December 2019.

⁹⁴ Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology (CSEP). Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. 2016; Available at <https://csepguidelines.ca/>. Accessed December 2019.

⁹⁵ Leitzmann, M. F., Jochem, C., & Schmid, D. Targeting Sedentary Behaviour at the Policy Level. In: Michael F. Lietzmann, Carmen Jochem and Daniel Schmid, editor. *Sedentary Behaviour Epidemiology*: Springer International Publishing; 2018. P. 565.

⁹⁶ Biswas A, Oh PI, Faulkner GE, Bajaj RR, Silver MA, Mitchell MS, et al. Sedentary time and its association with risk for disease incidence, mortality, and hospitalization in adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Ann Intern Med*. 2015 Jan 20; 162(2): 123-32. Accessed December 2019.

Prolonged sitting can also increase the risk of musculoskeletal injuries. The normal curvature of the spine is usually altered during long bouts of sitting, which can cause musculoskeletal conditions resulting in back pain and possible nerve damage that can impact a worker's ability to perform normal everyday functions and may lead to permanent disability.⁹⁷

Return on Investment

Employees, employers and governments can benefit from reducing prolonged sitting in the workplace. Increasing movement at work can lead to:

- increased employee recruitment and retention, morale and job satisfaction, tolerance to stress and productivity
- decreased absenteeism, health benefit costs and workplace injuries (e.g. repetitive strain, musculoskeletal)⁹⁸

In 2014, the Conference Board of Canada published a report describing the potential benefits of getting 10% of inactive Canadians to sit less and move more. Results estimated a boost to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by a cumulative \$7.5 billion and a reduction in healthcare spending on hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and cancer by a cumulative \$2.6 billion over a 25-year period (2015-2040).⁹⁹

There is a need for a coordinated provincial approach to address the negative impacts of prolonged occupational sitting in a similar way to other occupational health risks.

Recommendations

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

1. Require the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and other Occupational Health and Safety system partners to incorporate the risks of sedentary behaviour and prolonged occupational sitting into prevention programs for employers and employees;
2. Implement a multicomponent approach that combines policy, environmental and behavioural interventions to reduce prolonged occupational sitting as part of the province's strategy for occupational health and safety; and
3. Update the Health and Safety Guidelines from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to include sedentary behaviour in the workplace in alignment with the release of the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee does not support this resolution due to concerns about the impact it would have on employers and the potential that the first

⁹⁷ Billy G., et al. Lumbar Disc Changes Associated with Prolonged Sitting. *American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*. 2014; 6(9): 790-795. Retrieved at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4152382/pdf/nihms-588090.pdf> Accessed January 2018.

⁹⁸ Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. OSH Answers Fact Sheets – Active Living At Work. 2016; Available at https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/active_living.html Accessed December 2019.

⁹⁹ Conference Board of Canada. Moving Ahead: The Economic Impact of Reducing Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behaviour. October 2014; Available at: [https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/7d0ae07a-8d1d-4126-acaf-ce53422773e2/6436_MovingAheadRPI-BR\(PUB3386\).pdf](https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/7d0ae07a-8d1d-4126-acaf-ce53422773e2/6436_MovingAheadRPI-BR(PUB3386).pdf) Accessed January 2018.

recommendation could be interpreted as requiring legislative change. The committee felt this issue is best addressed without government intervention.

38. Support Ontario's Forestry Industry by Establishing an Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program

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

Issue

As a direct result of United States duties on softwood lumber, the Ontario forest sector has more than \$245 million in deposits currently being held at the border. In the face of these baseless trade actions, our forest industries are unable to reinvest in their employees and operations, putting mills and communities at significant risk. To ensure we keep mills open and people working, we encourage the Province to establish a Made-in-Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program to ensure our Forest sector continues to grow and thrive.

Background

The Canada / United States (U.S.) softwood lumber dispute is the longest running trade dispute between our two countries. We are currently in the fifth individual trade action spanning four decades.¹⁰⁰ The U.S. alleges that Canadian timber is sold at below-market prices, and this assertion is used as the basis to impose punishing duties on the Canadian industry.¹⁰¹ However, these duties are arbitrary and punitive, and have never survived Canadian appeals under the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization.

In 2017, the U.S. imposed new import duties as high as 24 percent on Canadian lumber as part of its most recent trade action.¹⁰² As time goes on, the cash tied up in duty deposits becomes an increasing threat to the viability of lumber producers in Ontario and across the country.

The Ontario forest sector accounts for 21 percent of the nation's forest industry employment, employing 172,000 people, and spurs \$15.5 billion in economic activity,¹⁰³ yet as one of the largest sectors contributing to our provincial economy, they are continually face insurmountable barriers with respect to U.S. border tariffs.

Supporting Ontario's renewable industry in a tangible way by providing the lumber sector with commercial loan guarantees, will help preserve the industry's credit and enable it to borrow against cash deposits so that litigation and costly duties cannot hinder the industry as in previous years.

¹⁰⁰ Rahman, Osman, and Stephen Devadoss. "Economics of the US-Canada Softwood Lumber Dispute: A Historical Perspective." *The Estey Centre Journal of International Law and Trade Policy*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2002, pp. 29–45.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Baker, Peter, and Ian Austen. "In New Trade Front, Trump Slaps Tariff on Canadian Lumber." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 25 Apr. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/us/politics/lumber-tariff-canada-trump.html.

¹⁰³ "Canada's Forest Industry: By the Numbers (35 Facts)." Canada Action, canadaaction.ca/forest_sector_by_the_numbers_economic_contribution.

The Federal Government has established a mechanism to help companies seeking to diversify their product line, make efforts to develop new markets overseas, help Indigenous communities and groups improve their performance and participation in forestry, and extend work-sharing agreements in order to minimize layoffs.¹⁰⁴ These programs may be helpful in provinces where lumber market diversification is an option, but for Ontario, whose natural market is the United States, the Federal programs are not realistic. Ontario's lumber producers need to have adequate liquidity to survive the U.S. lumber trade action, and to do that it requires support to maintain access to cash until the legal process is concluded.

Without the establishment of a Provincial loan guarantee program, many of our provinces' sawmills will not be able to finance deposits at acceptable rates without the support of the Provincial government. While such intervention may be claimed by the United States as a countervailable subsidy, such a finding could not have any impact for at least two years and, even then, would not calculate to anything detrimental to the government or the industry.

Keeping Ontario open for business means establishing a Provincial commercial loan guarantee program. As a natural resource-rich province, the government must do all it can to realise the success of our industries who are responsible in maintaining our forests for generations to come.

Recommendations

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

1. Establish an Ontario Commercial Loan Guarantee Program that supports the Ontario forest sector with working capital by:
 - a. offering loan guarantees to assist the industry in maintaining credit and borrow against cash deposits.
 - b. providing access to any Ontario lumber producer that has paid an anti-dumping tariff and countervailing tariff.
 - c. allowing the forest industry access to 75 percent of the paid anti-dumping and countervailing tariff through loans at a commercial rate comparable to current bank rates.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/plansperformancereports/dpr/2018-19-DP-NRCan-EN.pdf>

39. Support Ontario's Growing Cannabis Industry

Submitted by: the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's legal cannabis market has not reached its full potential for growth. Existing regulation inhibits market growth and efficiency in a number of ways. The Government of Ontario needs to focus public policy and investment efforts towards supporting this emerging industry by ensuring post-secondary training focuses on key skills required by the cannabis industry, by investing in post-secondary cannabis research, by considering edibles consumption lounges, and by permitting cannabis retailers and licensed producers to establish a commercial relationship with one another.

Background

Ontario's legal cannabis market is not meeting its full potential. Currently, Ontario has 24 cannabis retail stores serving a population of 14 million people. An additional 50 stores are expected to be operational by spring 2020. The Province of Alberta, in comparison, has opened over 300 cannabis retail stores, serving a population of 4 million people.¹⁰⁵ Provincial government estimates suggest Ontario's cannabis market could support up to 1,000 retail stores and create approximately 14,000 jobs in the retail sector alone.¹⁰⁶ Ontario had the highest cannabis sales of all other provinces in the first year of legalization, with a total of \$216 million in sales.¹⁰⁷ This suggests the legal cannabis market is drastically underserved, allowing the illicit market to continue flourishing.

Ontario is home to about half of all Licensed Producers across Canada, employing approximately 6,000 Ontarians.¹⁰⁸ To support this emerging industry, the Government of Ontario needs to focus public policy and investment efforts effectively in the key areas detailed below.

Now that THC-infused edibles and beverages have entered the legal market, cannabis consumption lounges for edibles (excluding smoking or vaping cannabis) in Ontario would create opportunities for investors, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses and, in turn, create jobs. The emergence of consumption lounges would provide adults with a safe, secure, and sanitary space to consume cannabis products. Consumption lounges also present an opportunity to act as a front-line resource for public education, thereby complementing the Province's efforts to educate consumers on responsible consumption, especially for new products they may be unfamiliar with.

¹⁰⁵ Cain, Patrick. *As Ontario moves to open up cannabis retail, here's what we'll see next.* December 2019. Global News <https://globalnews.ca/news/6289867/ontario-cannabis-store-announcement-whats-next/>

¹⁰⁶ George-Cosh, David. *Ontario expects up to 1,000 pot stores, opens door to shopping malls.* November 2018. BNN Bloomberg <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/ontario-expects-up-to-1-000-pot-stores-opens-door-to-shopping-malls-1.1169064>

¹⁰⁷ Statistics Canada. "The Retail Cannabis Market in Canada." December 11, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2019005-eng.htm>

¹⁰⁸ Statistics Canada. "Labour Force Survey." November, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181207/t005a-eng.htm>

Ontario is home to 44 leading postsecondary institutions. Post-secondary institutions will need to continue to work with the cannabis industry to ensure courses and programs meet industry needs and an evolving regulatory environment. As an example, Niagara College launched an eight-month Commercial Cannabis Production program that focuses on large-scale crop cultivation, the federal regulatory environment around cannabis production, and business fundamentals, in addition to an experiential learning component developed with over a dozen LPs.¹⁰⁹ With access to a strong talent pool, the cannabis industry can flourish in our province.

In terms of infrastructure, Niagara College established the Canadian Cannabis Research and Education Institute, which focuses on applied research and training in cannabis production and food and beverage innovation in partnership with industry. The University of Guelph is also investing in the development of the Guelph Centre for Cannabis Research (GCCR). The GCCR will be a home for cannabis research in Canada and provide opportunities for governments and academic researchers, in partnership with industry and associations, to perform collaborative and multidisciplinary research at a centralized facility. The centre aims to engage in a range of projects, including horticulture research to optimize production, yield, and quality. They are further developing cannabis strains targeting certain human and animal disorders, as well as processing and extracting essential oils to maintain medicinal properties. The GCCR's mandate includes training and enhancing the technical capacity of the cannabis industry.¹¹⁰ To date, the University of Guelph has secured half of the funds needed to complete this 30,000 square-foot research venue. A lack of infrastructure funding hinders the ability of post-secondary institutions to build a talent pool for Ontario's cannabis industry.

The Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) is currently the exclusive wholesaler and online retailer of legal recreational cannabis in the province of Ontario. The OSC is responsible for purchasing cannabis from licensed producers (LPs), setting the prices and markups, and distributing the product to retailers. This structure puts Ontario at a competitive disadvantage in cannabis, as conversations between retailers and LPs can take up to several months with this model.¹¹¹(1)

Permitting cannabis retailers and licensed producers to establish a commercial relationship with one another would allow LPs and retailers to negotiate their product mixes, along with the associated prices, terms and conditions. As an example, an LP would have the ability to make a deal with an independent retailer to establish a new product line and brand at an exclusive price to that boutique retailer. In turn, the retailer could support the LP by entering into significant, long-term, supply arrangements which would help the LP grow its business.

¹⁰⁹ Commercial Cannabis Production. 2020. Niagara College.

<https://www.niagaracollege.ca/environment/program/cannabis-production/>

¹¹⁰ Armstrong, Kenneth. "First Nations cannabis company helping finance new U of G Cannabis Research Centre." December 3, 2018. GuelphToday.com. <https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/cannabis-research-centre-atu-of-g-expected-to-begin-construction-inspring-1146589>.

¹¹¹ Rossi, R. and Beatty, P. *What's next for Ontario's cannabis industry?* December 2019. Toronto Sun. <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-whats-next-for-ontarios-cannabis-industry>

Recommendations

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

1. Consider the licensing of private consumption lounges for Ontarians to consume THC-infused edibles and beverage products.
2. Act as a convener by engaging the cannabis industry and postsecondary institutions, identifying the skills needed for current and future positions in the cannabis industry and developing a strategy highlighting the variety of education and employment opportunities related to the legal cannabis sector.
3. Develop a funding pool that allows post-secondary institutions to apply for capital needed to build new infrastructure, such as those underway at the University of Guelph and Niagara College, to attract research dollars, industry, and students and, in so doing, support the growth of Ontario's cannabis talent pool.
4. Permit cannabis retailers and licensed producers to establish a commercial relationship with one another by working collaboratively to create exclusive and unique products and wholesale pricing, within the broader framework of the OCS maintaining its oversight role as regulator.

OCC Policy Committee Position: The committee supports this resolution.