

December 9, 2024

Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G5

Hon. Anita Anand
President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Transport
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5

Re: Support for the Chicago-Toronto Passenger Rail Service Project

Dear Ministers,

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is the indispensable partner of business and Canada's largest, most influential provincial chamber. The OCC's mission is to convene, align and advance the interests of its members through policy work, value-added business services and broad engagement to drive competitiveness and inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

I am writing to express our strong support for the Chicago-Toronto Passenger Rail Service Project, to be operated by Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada. With Detroit border crossings rising 35 percent from 2022 and 2023, and air travel demand between Toronto/London and Detroit/Chicago up 37 percent from 2008 to 2018, there is a clear need to provide a new avenue for cross-border travel. With 66,500 passengers expected to take advantage of this new connection, this project will strengthen U.S.-Canada trade, stimulate investment in local economies and businesses, and bolster Canada's tourism sector.

Our organization represents a diverse network of 60,000 businesses across the province, including many in the southwestern Ontario corridor. Efficient transportation networks are essential for the flow of goods and people, and this rail service will seamlessly connect passengers through intermodal hubs, enhancing tourism, trade, and regional economic activity. This project has long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits, contributing to both regions' shared ambitions for future economic growth, sustainability, and competitiveness.

On the environmental front, VIA Rail's new fleet, recently commissioned in southwestern Ontario, will also support a sustainable transportation option between Windsor and Toronto, aligning with broader industry shifts toward environmental responsibility.

We look forward to collaborating with you to reinforce Canada's role as a leader in innovation by investing in infrastructure that enhances connectivity, drives economic growth, and supports sustainable development across regions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Tisch".

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