



2024 OCC AGM PROPOSED
POLICY RESOLUTIONS
COMPENDIUM



Preface

This booklet contains the proposed policy resolutions for debate at the Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce on **April 27, 2024**. These resolutions were developed and submitted by our network of chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

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

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

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

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

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

The resolutions contained within this book are also available on the OCC website at occ.ca

Resolutions Debate Procedures

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

Resolution Debate

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

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Proposed Policy Resolutions**

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1. 2+1 Roads Save Time, Lives and Taxpayers Dollars

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

Issue

The highway network in Ontario plays a vital social and economic role in the transportation of goods and people. Yet in rural and northern regions it consists primarily of two-lane roads that limit passing opportunities and produce high rates of serious and fatal collisions, especially on primary roads with high traffic volumes. The typical approach to resolve these issues has been twinning – creating a four-lane road by building an additional road platform alongside the existing one. The findings of the recent Northern Policy Institute Paper “Closing the Gap: How 2+1 Roads Can Save Time, Lives, and Taxpayer Dollars” reveals that the 2+1 road model reduces fatalities and serious injuries while requiring relatively little new construction, thereby delivering substantial benefits at a limited cost.

Background

Highways connect people to communities, services, and economic and recreational opportunities. Gaps in the highway network throughout Northern Ontario represent gaps in access to such opportunities. These gaps do not only exist in the form of an absence of roads. Road inadequacies that compromise the speed and safety of transportation should also be understood as 'gaps' that need closing. Notably, most of the highway network in the regions that make up Northern Ontario consists of two-lane roads that offer few safe passing opportunities. Consequently, this highway network sees many serious collisions, road closures, and delays for motorists. An elevated risk of severe collisions and collision-related delays on northern highways harms the economies of communities that rely on these roads.

2+1 roads offer a favourable benefit-cost ratio, with substantial benefits and limited costs. For example, upgrading one stretch of two-lane road on Highway 11 between North Bay and Temiskaming Shores to a 2+1 configuration would deliver a benefit-cost ratio of 1.01 after 20 years, 2.20 after 40 years, and 3.64 after 60 years. Any value of 1 or higher means a project is worthwhile.

These roads comprise three-lane roads with one lane in each direction and a passing lane alternating direction every few kilometres. Globally, 2+1 roads usually include, but do not always include, a median barrier to divide traffic. They address the major shortcomings of two-lane roads at a relatively low cost. They provide regular passing opportunities and a median barrier, significantly reducing dangerous head-on collisions. 2+1 roads also reduce delays for motorists. Fewer drivers become stuck behind slow-moving vehicles as they are able to pass, and roads are closed less often because there are fewer collisions. Finally, 2+1 roads cost less than highway twinning since they can be built entirely on the existing platforms used for two-lane roads.

If introduced in Northern Ontario, 2+1 roads will save lives. They will also improve Northerners' access to other communities and strengthen national supply chains.

As they achieve these benefits at a relatively low cost, we recommend that 2+1 roads be implemented widely across the Ontario highway network in Northern and rural areas with specific attention paid to sections that are a critical transportation link for regional and cross-country travel and where alternative routes are limited or non-existent in the event of road closures.

Using costing guidelines from Ontario's Ministry of Transportation, it is estimated that upgrading these roads in Northern Ontario to a 2+1 configuration would cost approximately \$1.5 billion. Costing has not yet been undertaken for roads in rural Southern, Eastern and Western Ontario.

Recommendations

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

1. Implement 2+1 roads widely across the Ontario highway network in Northern and rural areas on sections with annual average daily traffic between 3,000 and 20,000.
2. Expedite implementation of 2+1 roads by 2034 on sections of the Northern Ontario highway network where the roads are a critical transportation link for traffic travelling within these regions and across Canada, and where alternative routes are limited or non-existent in the event of road closures.
3. Expedite implementation of 2+1 roads by 2039 on sections of the Ontario highway network in rural Southern, Eastern and Western Ontario where the roads are a critical transportation link for traffic travelling within these regions and across Canada, and where alternative routes are limited or non-existent in the event of road closures.

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

2. A Circular Approach to Electric Vehicles

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Leamington Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario is increasingly moving towards the goal of a circular economy. More and more the focus is being put towards reducing waste and producers shoulder increasing responsibility for their products at the end of their lifespan, Ontario needs a plan to manage the end-of-life for electric vehicles (EVs).

Background

In 2023, the Government of Ontario started moving the cost of recycling over to companies that produce the waste. This policy pushes the cost of recycling onto producers with the aim of reducing the amount of recyclable goods ending up in landfills. The idea behind this approach, the circular economy, can easily be applied to electric vehicles and their components. While these present unique challenges as compared to traditional internal combustion engine vehicles, a circular economy approach to electric vehicles and their components presents great opportunities to make the new technology even more environmentally sustainable.

The batteries that power EVs present unique challenges for recycling. Extracting reusable material that can be salvaged for future use and developing future uses are essential in responsibly dealing with the end-of-life waste created by EVs. There needs to be a holistic approach that encourages not only recycling but also reuse of the salvageable parts of EVs. Promoting one approach can lead to neglect of the other¹ so any circular approach to dealing with EVs needs to contain both elements.

Manufacturers should first look at reuse as their primary means of dealing with these batteries. If a new EV gets in an accident, unless it is damaged, that battery should not be written off. Recirculating that battery allows it to still be productive. For example, Nissan reuses old batteries from its Nissan Leaf models to power robots that move parts around its factories.² By exploring alternative uses for EV batteries, they offer manufacturers additional value beyond their initial purpose.

As these batteries approach their end-of-life point beyond when their reuse is possible, companies must then salvage what materials they can. According to the United States Department of Energy, current recycling methods for lithium-ion batteries can recapture 95 percent of the original raw materials.³ Recycling these materials can supply a significant amount of anticipated demand for cobalt, manganese, lithium, and nickel.⁴

As this industry is in the midst of its growth in Ontario, the time is now to address this issue and before an influx of EVs end up in our junkyards. By implementing best practices now, Ontario can avoid playing catch up when confronted with this challenge down the road.

¹ [A circular economy approach is needed for electric vehicles | Nature Electronics](#)

² [Electric cars: What will happen to all the dead batteries? \(bbc.com\)](#)

³ [EV Battery Recycling and Sustainability | Arrow.com](#)

⁴ [A circular economy approach is needed for electric vehicles | Nature Electronics](#)

Recommendation

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

1. Work with industry and post-secondary institutions to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that the end-of-life treatment of electric vehicles follows a circular approach including:
 - a. Strategies for how batteries can be reused at the end of their vehicle use lifespan, and
 - b. Incentivize increased recycling of electric vehicle components including from their batteries.

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

3. A New Deal for Ontario Municipalities

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Current fiscal arrangements between the Ontario government and municipalities are not resolving on-going challenges for provincial businesses.

Background

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has indicated that current fiscal arrangements between the provincial government and municipalities are not working for communities or the businesses and industries at the foundation of local economies.

The system is not working for taxpayers during an affordability crisis and not addressing homelessness, gridlock, or declining infrastructure. A New Deal has been provided for the City of Toronto however challenges extend to every municipal government across Ontario.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has recommended a Social and Economic Prosperity Review. A detailed and objective analysis of current fiscal arrangements for services and infrastructure should ultimately provide options that are affordable for governments and taxpayers. Residents and businesses expect inter-governmental collaboration and appropriate decisions around effective delivery models.

The proposed review would include revenue options, costs and financial risks, detailed analysis around infrastructure investments and service delivery requirements.

An effective relationship between the Government of Ontario and 444 municipal governments is the foundation for collective prosperity and sustained economic growth. Ontario municipalities own and operate nearly half a trillion dollars of infrastructure that is the foundation of the provincial economy. Providing businesses and taxpayers with the best possible decisions to manage these assets is a core municipal focus. Municipalities are consistently forecasting growth and accompanying activities to further understand supports required for sustained economic activity.

Property taxpayers, including small business and seniors on fixed incomes, cannot afford to continually pay for provincial costs covering health and social services that municipalities are increasingly responsible for administering. As noted by AMO, the property tax base was never implemented for income re-distribution.

Recommendation

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

1. As recommended by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), initiate a major review of provincial-municipal fiscal arrangements to ensure cost-effective program delivery and maintenance/expansion of infrastructure.

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

4. Accelerating Student Housing to Support Student Success and Local Economies

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Windsor Essex Chamber of Commerce, & South Niagara Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Foreign and domestic students don't buy homes, they rent, resulting in a demand impact on the rental part of the housing system. In the affordable rental side, you have low-income renters, all battling each other for a low number of spots on top of student rental demand. In some case landlords are preferring the student renter over the family household. Additional challenges arise from some investors buying large quantities of single-family homes and turning them into student rentals, legally and illegally, making it nearly impossible for first-time home buyers and family household renters to find a place to live.

In order to accommodate the growing demand for post-secondary education in Ontario, continue to meet Ontario's workforce needs and attract highly skilled talent to our province, it is important for the government to collaborate with universities and colleges as they work to provide housing for students, faculty and staff. At the same time leveraging best practices to and working with private sector partners to limit the impact of the rental market.

Background

Ontario is well-positioned today to be the first choice when it comes to post-secondary education, but the demographic of the student is a very specific niche. Students don't only need affordable housing, but accommodations that are intentionally planned, designed, and built for this specific stage of their lives. Purpose-built student housing provides a solution to the issues surrounding affordable housing by fulfilling a specific need for students and by keeping that market pressure out of the mainstream residential market.

In the current market, students end up finding lodging that will suffice. But developers like WerkLiv know that the post-secondary education experience isn't just what happens in the classroom, but what happens outside of it. Purpose-built student accommodation creates an environment that allows students to get the most out of their education and daily life, while still getting the traditional college/university experience of living with their cohorts. Not only does purpose-built student accommodation fill a gap, but they create practical function, design, and value for students, investors, and buyers of their purpose-built assets.

The ability to provide affordable housing options for college and university community members is critical to attracting and cultivating the highly skilled talent Ontario's local employers and economies need to fill critical labour gaps, build a stronger economy and develop its competitive advantage as a global market. Providing adequate housing is essential to ensure that students and post-secondary community members have the resources they need to thrive in their campus communities. This need will only grow in the years to come, with the Ontario population aged 18 to 24 projected to grow over the next five years.

To this end, post-secondary institutions across Ontario are taking steps to expand their supply of student housing, with many universities offering first-year residence guarantees for their students. In fact, a survey of 16 Ontario universities conducted in the summer of 2023 found that as of 2022-23, there were more than 62,000 residence spaces at Ontario universities – more than 6,400 of which were added in the last five years – in addition to 10,000 off-campus spaces. That number will continue to grow with more than 10,800 new spaces projected to be added over the next five to six years⁵.

⁵ Council of Ontario Universities, "Partnering to Increase Access to Student Housing", August 2023, <https://ontariosuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Student-Housing-One-Page-Aug-2023.pdf>

In addition, Ontario colleges offer approximately 19,000 on-campus residences spaces in nearly 50 residences across Ontario. Previous to learning of the anticipated cuts to international student enrollment, colleges had plans to significantly expand on-campus student housing. The impact of revenue reductions from these plans are not yet fully known.

The construction of post-secondary housing can be costly, as institutions do not receive funding from government for housing development, maintenance or upkeep, and restrictions arising from planning regimes often complicate the construction of new housing projects.

In Ontario, universities and colleges that receive more than \$10M from the Government of Ontario are guided by Ontario's Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive, which mandates lengthy Request for Proposal (RFP) processes for all construction and service contracts. What's more, colleges cannot take on debt as their balance sheets roll up to the province, and universities are unable to assume and afford greater levels of debt.

Most often, a university or college will maintain day-to-day operations once the building is built. To execute these kinds of public-private agreements, universities and colleges must run an RFP process and then engage in contract negotiations; all before they can go through entitlements and build the residence. The RFP and negotiation process alone can take years, delaying the delivery of much-needed student accommodations.

By partnering with the post-secondary sector to remove impediments and support the development of on-campus and off-campus housing, the province can reduce pressure on local housing markets, expand the sector's capacity to support a growing student population, and help attract highly skilled talent to regions across Ontario.

Furthermore, there is a need to expand private purpose-built student accommodation market in Canada which is nascent compared to other markets. The country's ratio of students to beds (also known as the provision rate) is 12 percent—among the lowest in the world. The U.K.'s provision rate of private PBSA beds is 34 percent; America's is 16 percent.

In comparison to on-campus student housing, there is also private purpose-built student accommodation where the developer owns the lands, assumes the finance and construction risk, and engages a third-party property manager, or the college/university, for day-to-day operations once built.

A niche asset class with a proven formula might be the next best way to diversify a commercial real estate portfolio and generate value. It's not for every investor, but this is an up-and-coming niche with room for a few more creative and proactive investors. There will always be the tried-and-true multi-family assets to build incremental value. But right now, this is an opportune time to invest in affordable student housing projects in Ontario and across Canada.

Developers who want to build purpose-built student accommodation still face numerous challenges such as escalating costs, extended approval timelines, sourcing equity capital, and navigating a risk adverse debt environment. As well the uncertainty surrounding interest rates is closely tied to valuation risk and investors must solve the dilemma of introducing new supply to the market while fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities as investors.

Recommendations

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

1. Identify leading/best practices that can be leveraged to enable the timely launch of critical housing projects, in consultation with municipalities, including new on- and off-campus residences and student housing.
2. Work the federal government to implement programs through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that promote high-density Purpose-Built Student Accommodation developments.
3. Work with municipalities to develop appropriate zoning plans for transit-oriented development and implement zoning reforms that treat campuses similarly to major transit areas to support increased density on college and university campuses. This includes development process, streamline bureaucratic processes, fast-tracking applications for building permits, and encourage the construction of energy-efficient buildings for Purpose-Built Student Accommodations.
4. Work with the post-secondary sector to review potential amendments to the *Municipal Act, 2001*, to support post-secondary housing development.
5. Provide dedicated capital funding and financing to universities and public colleges for on- and off-campus residence and student housing projects.
6. Work with the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to attract domestic and international investors and incentivize public/private partnerships for projects related to the construction of on- and off-campus residences and student housing, where appropriate.
7. Review the Broder Public Procurement Directive to lessen restrictions and allow universities and colleges to proactively engage with the private sector to explore a variety of structured agreements to build and service housing on and off campus.
8. Work with Ontario's public colleges to amend Section 28 of the Financial Administration Act to create a fast tracking/guaranteed approval timeline for post-secondary housing development which would expedite Section 28 approvals and lift exemption thresholds.

OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position: The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by OCC staff and/or members. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

5. Addressing Northern and Rural Labour Market Needs through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program

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

Issue

Employers across Ontario, but particularly in Northern and Rural areas, are experiencing a shortage of qualified employees and a shrinking labour market. The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program can help to address these challenges by allocating nominee spots to Northern and Rural communities.

Background

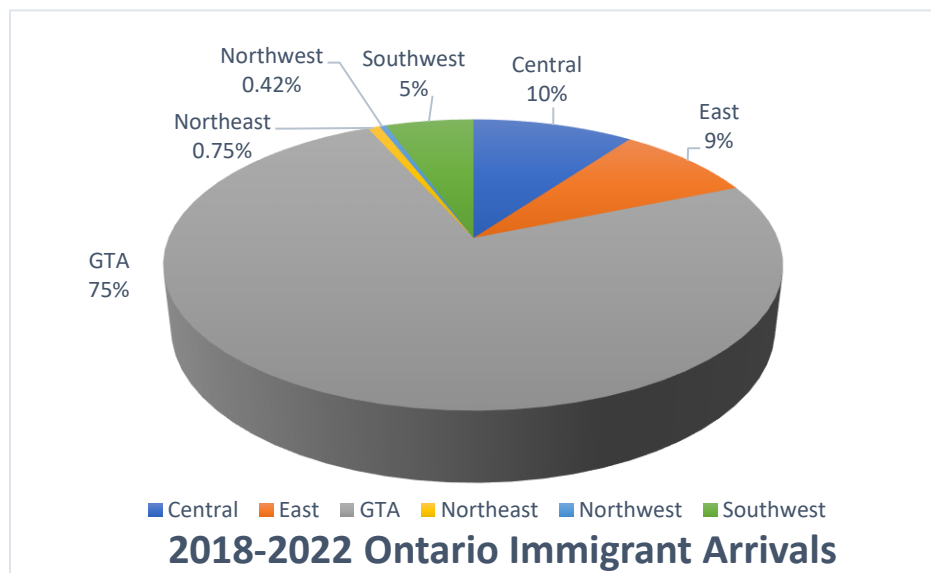
Labour shortages are being felt across the province, but particularly in Northern and Rural areas where population growth is limited. Northern Ontario specifically is experiencing a demographic shift and a population decline that is fueled by natural aging, low fertility rates, a rising life expectancy and an increase of out-migration. Population and migration trends to 2016, suggest that Northern Ontario needs 50,000 newcomers by 2041 in order to sustain current population levels. Furthermore, Statistics Canada's 2021 Census shows that 4 of the top 5 municipalities in Ontario with the highest rate of population decline are in Northern Ontario⁶.

Newcomers represent potential growth and innovation for Northern and Rural communities, however, the vast majority of newcomers to Ontario settle in the Greater Toronto Area.

The federal Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program (RNIP) has proven highly successful in attracting new people to Northern Ontario specifically, and to rural

and northern Canada generally. RNIP has proven to be such a success that the federal government is moving to make it a permanent program and an integral part of Canada's overall immigration strategy. Ontario should learn from and mirror this success through the allocation of Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) spots for Northern and Rural Ontario communities.

Both Northern Policy Institute⁷ and the Conference Board of Canada⁸ have long observed that a portion of the OINP could easily be used to support a provincial rural and northern initiative. That point is even more



⁶ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021001/98-200-x2021001-eng.cfm>

⁷ <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/northerndevelopment>

⁸ <https://canapprove.com/canada-PNP-news/regional-immigration-to-Ontario/>

valid today since the OINP has recently seen a massive expansion. From 9,750 nominees in 2022 to 16,500 in 2023 with the goal of growing that number to 18,000 in 2024.

Northern and Rural communities provide the food, forests and minerals that are essential to our daily lives. Providing an allocation of OINP spots will help to address the labour needs of Northern and Rural areas so that we can contribute to a vibrant economy for all Ontarians.

Recommendations

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

1. Ensure that the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program addresses labour market challenges by allocating 3,000 nominee spots to Northern Ontario and 6,000 nominee spots to Rural communities in Southern Ontario; and
2. Provide sufficient Newcomer Settlement & Language Training and Language Interpreter Services to address the growth of OINP nominees in Northern Ontario and Rural communities.

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

6. Building Faster Fund and Housing Starts: Strong Mayors don't pour foundations

Submitted by: Belleville Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Brockville & District Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Funding provided through the Building Faster Fund should be based on a municipality's efforts to approve permits (that lead to foundations) rather than the current measure of housing starts (poured foundations). The power of municipalities to control or meet housing targets is limited to the permit approval process while funding is currently based on the number of housing starts (poured foundation) which applies additional pressure on the private sector, currently impacted by multiple barriers within the building industry.

Background

On August 21, 2023, Ontario announced the new Building Faster Fund, a \$1.2B three-year program that will provide funding to municipalities based on performance towards annual housing targets.

Municipalities that fail to meet at least 80% of their annual target will receive no funding and those meet 80% to 99% of their target will receive reduced funding.

The Building Faster Fund and the assessment by the provincial government for funding municipalities for supporting housing growth assess this performance on the basis of housing starts. Neither Council or even Strong Mayors pour foundations.

The power of municipalities to achieve housing targets is within the permit approval process and funding should be based on municipal permit approvals rather than the current measure of housing starts. The power of a Strong Mayor is meant to counter NIMBYism and the red tape that play a role in delaying the land development and building process; but once the initial permit is approved, the next step towards a housing start is dependent upon the private sector.

Municipal permit approvals are typically required before construction can commence on a new housing project. Therefore, tracking and using municipal permit approvals as a basis for housing starts is a common and logical approach.

Building Faster Fund is based on CMHC definition of housing start :

A housing start is defined as the beginning of construction work on the building where the dwelling unit will be located.

This can be described in 2 ways:

- *The stage when the concrete has been poured for the whole of the footing around the structure.*
- *An equivalent stage where a basement will not be part of the structure.*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/housing-market-data/monthly-housing-starts-construction-data-tables>

Housing starts refer to the number of new residential construction projects that have begun during a specific period and this action is dependent on the capacity of the builder to perform the work. The building sector may face multiple barriers post-permit approval that will prevent the defined housing start as noted above, not least of which is a skilled labour force.

Municipalities do not build houses, they approve applications. The private sector builds housing. It is important to consider the impact on the relationship between the municipality and the private sector when funding is deemed dependent on a private sector action that is vulnerable to multiple external forces.

It's also important to note that the current economy and rising interest rates greatly affect market demand, and there's been a decline in housing starts across the country. According to recent CMHC data, Canada's 254,966 starts were down 10 per cent in July from June of this year. Additionally, there are labour shortages, increasing material costs, rising municipal fees and charges, and changing legislation that add challenges to getting shovels in the ground.

One Ontario is a non-profit organization bringing together all levels of government, industry, experts, and academic leaders to streamline the development approvals process and make it more transparent and efficient. It is moving towards incorporating as a non-profit in order to bring together government, industry and academia to empower municipalities and regulatory agencies. Their vision is to break down silos to improve data exchange, streamline development approvals, and collaboratively address the housing crisis.

It is important to incentivize municipalities, through Council, to manage the permitting process efficiently but when housing starts are the measure, municipal councils with or without Strong Mayor powers are no longer in control of meeting the target that defines their success in approving development and the permits required to begin.

There are multiple layers to the housing crisis and many more phases within the approvals process from foundation to occupancy permit that warrant additional review. This resolution seeks only to adjust funding approval to performance measures in control of the municipality where it relates to the Building Faster Fund. Additional recommendations below are submitted on behalf of council and private sector representatives consulted in the development of this resolution.

Recommendations

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

1. Assess performance of a municipality on **the number of permits approved** that allow a builder to pour a foundation, not the poured foundation itself.
2. Implement ALL recommendations within the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force Report.
3. Consult with One Ontario to streamline the development approval process to the benefit of all partners in the housing industry.
4. Provide an Ombudsman to the Building Industry to review disputes between municipalities and developers.

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

7. Deploying Economic Principles to Policing

Submitted by: Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant & Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce & Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

Issue

As homelessness, addictions, and mental health continue to plague large numbers of individuals in urban settings, business communities continue to grapple with disruptions, vandalism, threats of violence, and intimidation of staff and customers. Police budgets are ballooning to deal with this problem reactively while not effectively targeting the root cause of these disruptions. By critically evaluating and deploying funding to crime deterrent programs, long-term success can be achieved at reducing incidents of crime and tax-payer funding of over-inflated reactionary policing budgets.

Background

The interconnectedness of social issues facing Ontarians today has led to an increase in the frequency of negative interactions between persons struggling with substance abuse, mental illnesses, and homelessness and businesses in many urban cores across Ontario. While superficially this may appear to be a social issue only, the cost of policing, social services, healthcare, and other emergency interventions are ever increasing costs to the taxpayers of Ontario. The tax burden borne by local businesses to support these services, as well as the threats and interruptions these negative interactions present is making the province of Ontario a less and less attractive place to invest and do business.

Policing and enforcement in these situations are certainly a necessary response to protect the public welfare, but often more can be done to prevent individuals from falling into these situations in the first place taking into consideration that Municipalities are regarded as also playing a significant role in providing crime prevention intervention in Ontario⁹. Quite often, they are considered the best source to identify crime and problems in their area as well the conditions that contribute to these problems, including addiction and poverty.

Community-based crime prevention programming, especially those aimed towards at-risk youths, are seen as key methods to reduce criminal activity. However, valid concerns surrounding police-driven programming involving youths, especially those from marginalized communities, can't be overlooked¹⁰. While there have been strides in the judicial realm pertaining to those facing Youth Criminal Justice Act involvement, including a reduction in charges, increased diversion tactics and decrease in the use of youth court, obstacles remain for some youths¹².

In the meantime, businesses, especially small businesses, continue to face growing challenges surrounding robberies and break-ins¹³, highlighting the need for immediate solutions making the urgency for current, and additional community-based initiatives, imperative.

⁹ Crime Prevention in Ontario: Booklet 1 – Section 5 – Ontario's partners in crime prevention.

<https://shorturl.at/mwLS8>

¹⁰ Police, advocates differ on ways to address rising youth crime rates – Cambridge Today. <https://shorturl.at/qryAV>

¹¹ Police school resource officer program cancelled by Waterloo region's public school board – CBC News, 2021.

<https://shorturl.at/mnqEM>

¹² Youth criminal justice – Good progress but more to do – John Howard Society of Canada, June 2023.

<https://shorturl.at/OS014>

¹³ Rising crime is raising big challenges for Canada's small businesses – Financial Post, November 2023.

<https://shorturl.at/lyQRZ>

¹⁴ Toronto councillor sounds alarm on rise in small business break-ins across the city – CBMC, March 2024.

<https://shorturl.at/yBHK6>

Initiatives that can involve businesses directly, such as the CAMSafe program launched by the Belleville Police Service in June of 2021 and is now being adopted in other communities, deserve closer consideration¹⁵.

Programs such as this, as well as programs that receive provincial grants¹⁶, and the potential for others that can offer measurable cost savings on police and social services for every dollar invested, should all be considered.

It follows, then, that an economic analysis of potential provincial programs and funding can be deployed to assess the highest value return on investment of provincial funding allocations.

Additionally, pending updates to the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act are contemplating removing the ability for Municipal Police Services to deploy Special Constables on proactive community patrols, instead compelling Police Services to utilize only fully sworn officers. This change could dramatically increase the cost of servicing urban cores that have been successfully managed using special constables to date. The Province should ensure that this option be maintained so that municipal policing budgets can be as economical as possible.

Recommendations

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

1. In consultation with the municipalities, police boards, business communities, and the populations they serve:
 - a. Use economic analysis principles in assessing crime diversion program efficacy in communities of all different demographics to establish an evidence-based approach to provincial funding of diversionary police programs.
 - b. Identify underperforming programs that do not adequately serve communities of all types and prioritize provincial funding for programs according to efficacy for each demographic cross section and community.
 - c. Implement a system to measure long term impacts of the investment in diversion programs to systematically gauge performance across all community types and demographics.
 - d. Evaluate the efficacy of these programs in the context of other wrap-around services available to individuals in each community to gauge the broader impacts of the Provincial Programs and ensure no individuals are systematically excluded from these services.
2. Ensure that municipalities can continue to use Special Constables in proactive patrolling of urban areas in lieu of fully sworn officers to reduce tax burdens.

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

¹⁵ Belleville Police Service launches new CCTV camera registry – Quinite News, June 2021. <https://shorturl.at/rACM3>

¹⁶ Community safety initiative and resources – Province of Ontario. <https://shorturl.at/betl0>

8. Enforcing Fair Property Tax Ratios

Submitted by: Peterborough and the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant, Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce, & Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Businesses in Ontario pay much higher property tax rates than residents, despite using fewer services. The Ontario Municipal Act requires municipalities to tax commercial and industrial properties at a ratio of 0.6 to 1.1, but many municipalities have no plans to comply.

Background

Commercial and Industrial property taxes in Ontario municipalities are calculated based on a ratio of what residential property owners pay. For example, if a municipality has a commercial tax ratio of 1.75, commercial property owners are paying 175% what a resident is paying for the same amount of property tax assessment.

The Ontario Municipal Act Reg. 386/98: Tax Matters – Allowable Ranges for Tax Ratios sets an allowable range for property tax on commercial and industrial properties at 0.6 to 1.1.

A quick look at tax ratios from a selection of municipalities from across Ontario from 2023 demonstrates that this range is not being followed:

	Commercial	Industrial
Barrie	1.43	1.51
Milton	1.46	2.09
Peterborough	1.5	1.5
Brantford	1.75	2.25
Guelph	1.84	2.2
North Bay	1.88	1.4
Woodstock	1.9	2.63
Sudbury	1.91	3.45
Belleville	1.92	2.4
Kingston	1.98	2.63
Thunder Bay	1.98	2.37
Clarington	1.98	2.49
Sarnia	2.02	2.4
Niagara Falls	2.15	2.95
Sault Ste. Marie	2.31	4.38

Municipalities are coming under increasing financial pressure due to factors that include inflation in everything from capital projects to wages, increased demand for services, and an increased role in areas like public health and homelessness. Despite this pressure coming from a variety of sources, they essentially have one tool for raising the funds to do it — property taxes.

More financial pressure on municipalities is leading them to further increase tax ratios to the benefit of residents at the expense of the business community.

The City of Peterborough spent a decade lowering its commercial and industrial tax ratios to 1.5, achieving that several years ago. This year it voted to increase the tax ratios to 1.65, shifting \$3 million in taxation from residents to businesses. Businesses in the City of Peterborough will on average pay 22% more in property tax in 2024.

Similar stories are playing out across Ontario and businesses cannot continue to bear the brunt of property taxation on behalf of residents. Businesses use fewer services but are expected to pay significantly more for them.

It is clear Reg. 386/98 of the Ontario Municipal Act has no teeth. Municipalities across Ontario have been charging property tax ratios well outside the allowable range for decades with no plans to change. The Government of Ontario needs to put some teeth in the act and hold non-complying municipalities to account.

Recommendation

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

1. Enforce existing property taxation ratios set out in the Ontario Municipal Act Reg. 386/98: Tax Matters – Allowable Ranges for Tax Ratios by withholding provincial support — including access to provincial funding streams — to municipalities that:
 - a. are not taxing commercial and industrial properties at the required rates or
 - b. are not actively transitioning to the required rates based on a plan that specifies gradual decreases on a timeline approved by the Province.

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

9. Enhancing Landlord and Tenant Relationships

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Leamington Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Challenges have emerged in the rental market since the COVID-19 Pandemic. Tenants and their advocacy groups have raised concerns around landlords evicting people on fraudulent grounds while landlords are stuck with tenants refusing to pay rent and relying on the backlog at the Landlord Tenant Board to avoid their removal from the residence.

Background

The vast majority of landlords and tenants in Ontario are responsible actors within the real estate market. Tenants are looking for a place to live and landlords are looking for someone to occupy their space and pay rent. However, some bad actors have given both landlords and tenants a bad reputation.

Landlords who have owned and operated for years without complaint are grouped together with landlords who have tried to manipulate the system to defraud or exploit their tenants. This includes landlords who claim family or personal use of the space only to quickly return the unit to market ignoring the one-year occupancy requirement or fail to maintain a property or provide necessary repairs in a timely manner. Further landlords have been known to evict tenants to “renovate” spaces simply to relist the unit and increase the rent more in line with higher market prices (so-called “renovictions”)

On the other side, tenants are occupying spaces while waiting for the eviction process. In Ontario, this can take over a year in some cases¹⁷, meanwhile landlords must continue to pay the mortgage on the property. Reports have emerged of landlords paying significant sums for the tenant to vacate the property. There are also cases where tenants cause extensive damage greater than the value of their security deposit, leaving the landlord on the hook for potentially thousands of dollars in costs to repair the property.

To respond to these challenges, some cities in Ontario have taken steps to try and prevent bad landlords. The City of Windsor is running a pilot project that requires landlords in certain areas of the city to possess a rental licence.¹⁸ The City of Hamilton has recently passed a bylaw to prevent “renovictions” by requiring landlords to make arrangements with any tenant who wants to return after renovations are complete.¹⁹

These differing approaches can make it difficult for landlords to operate across municipalities even in the same region. By establishing universal guidelines for what can and how municipalities regulate landlords it will provide a uniform approach and stability for the sector across the province.

By establishing increased awareness, enhanced protections, and universality across the system, the province can foster stronger relationships between landlords and their tenants and potentially avoid increasing the burden on the already overburdened Landlord Tenant Board. Increasing education, enacting provisions for vexacious landlords and tenants, and implementing universal guidelines for municipal regulations permitted under the *Municipal Act* for rental units can foster stronger, and more productive relationships among property owners and their lessees.

¹⁷ [Landlord and Tenant Board Wait Times Continue to Grow | The Local](#)

¹⁸ [Get a residential rental licence \(citywindsor.ca\)](#)

¹⁹ [Hamilton to become 1st Ontario city with bylaw to stop 'bad faith' renovictions \(msn.com\)](#)

There are also concerns around the enforcement of the Landlord Tenant Board with many rulings ending up in small claims court in order for landlords or tenants to receive any funds they may have been awarded. The lack of enforcement power means even greater delays for those seeking justice from their landlord or their renter.

Recommendations

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

1. Create and implement guidelines similar to vexatious litigation standards to apply to landlords and tenants to prevent inordinate delays.
2. Develop and enhance educational materials for landlords and tenants to better understand their roles, responsibilities, and rights within the relationship to help avoid conflict and establish better partnerships between the two parties.
3. Create universal guidelines for municipalities under the *Municipal Act* that regulate how municipalities can regulate landlords and tenants in order to prevent a patchwork approach developing across Ontario municipalities that makes it harder for landlords to operate across municipalities.
4. Give the Landlord and Tenant Board enforcement powers to bypass the need for small claims court.

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

10. Establishment of Small Vessel Marine Trades in Ontario to include Marine Electrician, Service Technician, and the overall expansion for Marine Training Certifications across Ontario

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by: Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Brockville District Chamber of Commerce, Muskoka Lakes Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Peterborough and the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's marine industry lacks vital support and standardized safety regulations compared to land-based vehicles. Although there are specific certifications for electrical, engine, etc. technicians for other industries, skilled trades for recreational boats apprenticeships are limited. Not only would the safety of residents and tourists on Ontario's waterways be improved, but an increase in the current number of technicians and the creation of two voluntary new skilled trade designations would strengthen this industry to build the skilled workforce necessary to meet this sector's growing demands.

Background

Ontario has a thriving marine industry with dealerships and marinas and is home to manufacturers of small vessels for both personal and commercial use. While construction standards exist (see TP1332E, TC), there is no standardization or oversight to ensure the safety of vessels on the water except as applies to their engines (Marine technician is effectively a mechanic trade - Trade Code 435B). As with Recreational Vehicles (RVs) on land, there is more to a boat than its engine, but unlike an RV, if there is a fire, leak, or other issue on a boat, it cannot as easily be moved to the side of the road for repair. Luckily, there are few major safety incidents involving small vessels, but many of the incidents and insurance claims are preventable by improving the general service technician and electrician standards (for construction and maintenance unrelated to engines). Ontario could lead the way for boating safety and supporting the marine industry by expanding marine apprenticeship opportunities.

Transport Canada recognizes training from the "American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC), a non-profit, member organization that develops voluntary global safety standards for the design, construction, maintenance, and repair of recreational boats."²⁰ Courses offered by the ABYC are taught in Ontario by certified instructors, but these classes are not required for technicians to work in the recreational boat sector within the province.

Georgian College is the only post-secondary institution in Ontario that offers the Marine Engine Technician apprenticeship program. Boat dealership owners and staff are required to receive/attend mandatory training to sell specific companies' products, for example, "Legend Boats."²¹ However, not all boats are purchased new and serviced/repared at dealerships with company-certified technicians, especially in emergency repair situations. With cars, all repair shops must have mandatory certified, licenced repair personnel.

Recreational boating is an important past time and sector for Canada. According to Pat's Boating in Canada, "'The Economic Impact of Recreational Boating in Canada Report' by the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada (NMMA) tells us that about 12.4 million adult Canadians go boating yearly. Recreational boating adds \$5.6 billion to Canada's GDP, with over \$10 billion in revenues. About 75,000 Canadians are employed by the core of the recreational boating industry while boaters themselves spend \$1.4 billion annually

²⁰ [About ABYC - American Boat and Yacht Council \(abycinc.org\)](http://abycinc.org)

²¹ [2017 Best in Class: Best Training & Benefits | Boating Industry](#)

in boat trips."²²According to Rick Layzell, the CEO of Boating Ontario, "47% of all boats sold in Canada are sold in Ontario"²³

Other mandatory certified skilled trades, such as electricians and millwrights, have specific training levels (year 1, year 2, etc.) and pay scales that reflect this training, ensuring standardization of knowledge and a path to completion. A clear-cut path with earning opportunities is used to attract talent to specific occupations. Work within the recreational boating industry's ability to attract a skilled workforce is limited, with only a few seats available in Midland, Ontario, a location that is inconvenient to attend the required in-class training. According to Boating Ontario, over two-thirds of marine technicians are offered year-round employment, paying up to \$40 an hour. Although the industry works to promote these opportunities, many companies and individuals do not have access to local apprenticeship training. The current model assumes that people are purchasing new boats that can be serviced, winterized, and stored by local dealerships and marines. To attract talent interested in this industry with growing opportunities, Ontario needs to provide better access to apprenticeship training/certifications across the province.

To protect recreational boaters, the Canadian government has established training and guidelines for people to receive licenses. As boat safety for the operators is a priority, it is logical that the Ontario government would extend these standards to establish certifications under Skilled Trades in more than one location for those responsible for repairing recreational boats, ensuring consumer safety.

Supporting organization for this Policy Resolution:

- Swiftsure Vessel Solutions, Ltd., Consecon, Ontario

Recommendations

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

1. Collaborate with the marine industry, associations, and post-secondary institutions to expand marine apprenticeship training programs and research ABYC courses recognized by Transport Canada.
2. Develop voluntary marine certifications for small vessel technicians and marine electricians through the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.
3. Improve access to marine apprenticeships across Ontario.
4. Work with industry partners to develop and improve certifications.

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

²² [Canadian Boating Statistics | Pat's Boating in Canada \(ncf.ca\)](#)

²³ [Buying a Boat | Pat's Boating in Canada \(ncf.ca\)](#)

11. Expanding Access to Employment Ontario

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

Issue

Recent changes in federal law have made more international students, international graduates and individuals on temporary visas (e.g. spousal visas) eligible to work in Ontario, however many of these same individuals are not eligible for most provincial services. In 2022, the province opened up international student eligibility for the first time ever under the Skills Development Fund.²⁴ This however is limited in scope and does not include access to assisted services to these individuals such as employment counselling, job development, marketing to employers for employment opportunities, resume support etc.

Background

Businesses are predicted to face several challenges in 2024. Cash flow constraints, heightened competition, and increased labor costs driven by a competitive talent market will be prominent issues.

One crucial component of addressing the competition for talent is for employers to utilize the skills of international students, international graduates and those in the province on temporary visas with authorization to work.

While the 2022 memorandum from the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development confirms that international students and graduates have access to self-directed services, it is important to note that what this means for most employment organizations is simply allowing these individuals to use their computer labs to access job boards. While some organizations will offer more personalized assistance when they can, international students and graduates are systemically restricted from almost all provincial employment services and all federal settlement services.

Through access to assisted services such as employment counselling, resume support, etc. many international students and graduates would be able to find employment more quickly which should be considered a win for employers and local economies.

Expanding eligibility to the full suite of programming under Employment Ontario for international students and graduates would enable rising numbers of persons in Ontario the ability to access programming that they need while also enabling employers to access talent from all streams.

Recommendation

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

1. Expand eligibility to the full suite of programming under Employment Ontario to international students, international student graduates, and persons on temporary visas (such as spousal visas with authorization to work).

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

²⁴ <https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/eo-memo-900-sin-policy-2022-en.pdf>

12. Funding to Municipalities for Mental Health & Addictions Treatment Centres & Training of Front-Line Support Workers

Submitted by: The Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Lack of funding available to municipalities to meet the ever-expanding demand concerning mental health and addictions treatment and the limited treatment centres along with limited resources available to train existing and new front line support workers inclusive of police and by-law officers, municipalities are not being able to effectively improve upon this widening failure to our most vulnerable citizens. Furthermore, storefront employees, workers and businesses within the service and hospitality sectors, are often the first responders to instances of mental health or addiction crises yet are not equipped to deal with such situations. Municipalities need the funding support to establish increased programming to tackle the gaps in education and provide the supports towards the creation of additional treatment centres. We appreciate and are thankful of the 5% increase to boost overall operational budgets that was provided to CMHA, Canadian Mental Health Association, in 2023, however, the challenges are much broader than mental health and addictions alone and therefore, increased funding directly to the municipalities will allow for broader collaborative support mechanisms to be established in order to deliver focused and guided solutions to enhance education, training and creation of treatment programs and centres.

Background

The OMA, Ontario Medical Association lists *“that one in five people in Canada experiences mental health problems and illness”*²⁵ which further surged as a result of the pandemic. Statistics Canada states, *“According to data from 2022, over 5 million Canadians (18%) aged 15 and older, met the diagnostic criteria for a mood, anxiety, or substance use disorder in the previous 12 months”*²⁶ When mental health or addiction crises occur and (emergency?) frontline workers including bylaw officers, police officers, and paramedic workers are called for immediate assistance, they are not adequately equipped with the proper training or education regarding how to handle these situations. Policing alone is not a solution to municipalities drug problems and rather an integrated approach including prevention, treatment, harm reduction, as well as policing has proven to be effective among other jurisdictions (municipalities?). According to the National Harm Reduction Coalition, *“Over 750,000 people have died from a drug overdose in the last 20 years, many of which could have been prevented if the people using the drugs had access to life-preserving tools”*.²⁷ The Ontario government developed the Ontario’s Workplace Naloxone Program which provides free online naloxone training for two workers per workplace and a free nasal spray naloxone kit for up to two years. While this is a positive step, it would be favourable to extend this free program and to include injectable intermuscular naloxone, as it is a more effective dose in achieving the spontaneous respiration within ten minutes of drug administration.²⁸

To further illustrate the shortfall in meeting the demands, the International Journal of Mental Health Systems report from Mar. of 2023, outlines *“Canadian youth (aged 16–24) have the highest rates of mental health and addiction concerns across all age groups and the most unmet health care needs. There are many structural barriers that contribute to the unmet mental health care needs of youth including lack of available and appropriate services, high costs, long wait times, fragmented and siloed services, lack of smooth transition between child and adult services, stigma, racism, and discrimination, as well as lack of*

²⁵ CMHA Ontario. (2023, March 23). *Mental health*. <https://ontario.cmha.ca/news/cmha-ontario-welcomes-historic-investment-for-community-mental-health-and-addictions-in-2023-provincial-budget/>

²⁶ Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2023, September 22). *Mood disorders in Canada*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023053-eng.htm>

²⁷ National Harm Reduction Coalition. (2023, December 2). *Overdose prevention resources*. <https://harmreduction.org/issues/overdose-prevention/>

²⁸ Korneev, V. (2023). *New naloxone kit requirements: 7 things you need to know now*. <https://www.wsps.ca/resource-hub/articles/7-things-you-need-to-know-now>

*culturally appropriate treatments.*²⁹ These inequities, which the Public Health Agency of Canada defines as differences in health outcomes or in access to the resources that support health that are systemic (consistently observable between population groups) and can plausibly be avoided or ameliorated by collective action³⁰, require a robust and collaborative approach.

Employees who attempt to address these inequities and are working within the current support streams are overworked, underpaid, and undervalued which has contributed to a massive labour shortage. Reducing this trend will require better equipping the support workers we currently have, as well as urgently attracting more individuals to hire to meet the demand to offset the expanding crisis.

Recommendations

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

1. Develop a provincial funding strategy for all municipalities to deliver more treatment resources to address mental health and addictions.
2. Provide funding so that Municipalities can better train all front-line support staff, namely police officers and by-Law officers, who attend to a person in crisis, so that they may better assist and guide them to the appropriate channel of assistance and support.
3. Deliver funding for municipalities to train and hire mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and addiction counselors.
4. Develop an onsite overdose response policy across law enforcement and mental health facility employees.
5. Continue to provide business with yearly naloxone kits and training without any additional costs.
6. Expand mental health, suicide prevention training, and PTSD support to all first responders, those working in the mental health or substance use sector and shelter sectors.
7. Adopt a social determinant of health approach when aiding individuals dealing with mental health and/or addiction crises.

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

²⁹ Kourgiantakis et al. (2023, September 14). Access to mental health and addiction services for youth and their families in Ontario: Perspectives of parents, youth and service providers. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 17(1).
<https://ijmhs.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13033-023-00572-z>

³⁰ Government of Canada. (2023, June 1). *Social determinants of health and health inequalities*.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

13. Growing Airports & Building More Housing

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

The desire to quickly increase the supply of housing must be balanced with the protection of employment lands near Ontario airports. Considerations need to be made regarding the economic benefits of airports, the preservation of employment lands and the safe take off and landing of aircraft at airports. In urban areas, more housing will come mainly from high-rises and increased population on major transportation corridors. Those transportation corridors often are near airports. While more housing is constructed on these corridors, airports continue to be economic centres through which many jobs are connected. The goal of this resolution is to continue the growth of airports, and their local economic contribution, in parallel with increasing the supply of housing in a measured, responsible way.

Background

The economic benefits of airports are well-documented. In the Pearson Economic Zone, it is estimated that there are 400,000 jobs in and around Toronto Pearson. It contributes six per cent to Ontario's GDP and has 50,000 workers at the airport.

We support the need for housing in Ontario and want to work collaboratively with the government to ensure there is a balanced approach between housing development, aircraft access to airports, and preserving employment lands near airports.

Currently there are many developments which if they proceed as proposed could have an impact on operations and could affect long haul flights to destinations such as India and China. This also directly impacts the economic contributions airports can make to Ontario. If obstacles are placed in and around airports without proper consideration of surrounding flight paths, this could lead to some runways being shut down and some flights being abandoned.

Employment lands around the airport are critical for job creation and for companies which rely on airports. It is therefore important that employment lands around the airport be preserved.

Recommendation

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

1. Consult with airports regarding proposed developments in the vicinity of airports. Considerations need to be made for the economic benefits of airports and the safety issues in relation to the height of buildings.

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

14. Increase Funding to New and Primary Care Teams to Address Critical Health Care Shortages in Ontario and the Health Human Resource Crisis

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

Issue

A health care crisis in Ontario has resulted in 2.2 million Ontarians without a family doctor and increased difficulties in accessing specialty and diagnostic care. Demand for government-funded primary care teams has increased, as well as funding for existing primary care teams. Team-based primary care models continue to demonstrate patient health services benefits as the framework provides a holistic, wraparound approach by bringing together health care providers such as nurses, doctors, social workers, and dietitians. This bridges the gap in accessing primary care services for unattached patients to connect to care when they need it. A team-based model to health care not only decreases the workload of family physicians, but allows for sustainable direct service delivery, support a larger patient population, and improve health care access, which positively impacts economic stability and productivity.

Background

Over the past decade the Ontario Government has made the process of establishing new Primary Health Care Teams excessively challenging and limited. The province's population is an estimated 14.4 million, which is projected to increase by 43.6% from 2022-2046³¹, only an approximate 3.4 million patients are enrolled in one of the 184 teams currently operating within the province. Approximately 2.3 million Ontarians are without equitable access to health care and will continue to grow as 65% of family physicians are considering retiring or reducing clinical hours in the next five years, as per the Ontario College of Family Physicians reporting in their May 2023 survey³².

Ontario's Ministry of Health recently announced³³ a \$110-million investment to the 'Your Health to connect more than 300,000 people to primary care teams and adding 400 new, tripling the original \$30 million announcement. Ontario's investment in team-based care is a significant contribution, and while it is a step in the right direction, more investment, specifically in health human resources, is required to address health care service gaps and reach unserved and underserved communities. There are still substantial pockets of the population remaining unserved and barriered to health care due to geographic locations and available health care providers. While 'Your Health Plan' aims to give 1,200 more physicians access to this model by 2025, other health care sectors issues such as the ongoing physician recruitment and retention crisis remain unaddressed. The health care sector has faced significant human resources challenges as recruitment has become more competitive as HR representatives must compete with higher wages and international recruitment, tenured physicians preparing for retirement, and health care professionals leaving the sector all together.

Patients with complex health needs lack access to team-based primary care, where a collaborative group of inter-professional health-care providers delivers comprehensive services. The Ontario Medical Association (OMA) is advocating for new primary care teams to offer tailored support to meet the needs of patients in different communities. The OMA hopes to see a diverse primary care team that includes a physician, nurse, administrator and at least two other inter-professional care providers, such as a social worker, registered dietitian, nurse practitioner, physiotherapist, pharmacist, specialists, and mental health professional and/or

³¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections#foot-1>

³² <https://ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/news/new-survey-shows-full-blown-crisis-in-family-medicine/>

³³ <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1004143/ontario-connecting-over-300000-people-to-primary-care-teams>

outreach worker.³⁴ Investing in team-based primary care provides a supportive work environment for healthcare workers, benefits existing providers, ensures access to comprehensive and coordinated care, and results in a more connected healthcare system. The benefits of this approach include healthier patients, fewer hospitalizations, and lower health system costs.

At a time where access to health care is underserved and facing an acute shortage of physicians, the Ontario government must urgently address and increase investment contributions, while adjusting to inflation rates, to support health team programs and operating models to address critical gaps in service and continue to build clinical capacity. Findings from the Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) plan, 'Plan of Action, Solutions for Today: Ensuring Every Ontarian Has Access to a Family Physician'³⁵ supports these recommendations and the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) have echoed urgency of the current situation, urging both levels of government to build on their investment and further expand team-based care across the province.³⁶

Technology adoption for health teams' is crucial for advancing healthcare and improving patient outcomes. It will allow teams to stay current with the latest technological advancements, foster innovation, improve efficiency, and enhance patient care outcomes. For example, technology can simplify and streamline prescription process, while telehealth consultations can further alleviate administrative burdens. Strategic investments in technology adoption will ensure patients receive the best possible care while improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the healthcare system.

The health care crisis will continue to grow, and more Ontarians will lose access to quality health care if the government does not address current operating models and develop long-term, sustainable solutions. Investing in team-based healthcare can lead to a healthy and robust workforce, contributing to a thriving economy.

Recommendations

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

1. Strengthen Ontario health care by increasing the target number of Comprehensive Primary Care Teams, and expand the current number of Nurse Practitioner positions available in health team settings, to effectively address health care service gaps in underserved and unserved communities;
2. Build upon the \$110-million investment to grow new and existing multidisciplinary teams through increased funding for new and existing Comprehensive Primary Health Care Teams, Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics, to drive sustainable health care services, including recruitment and retention support;
3. Allocate strategic investments to provide support for technology adoption for Primary Care Teams', fostering innovation, improving efficiency, and enhancing patient care outcomes.

OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position: The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by OCC staff and/or members. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

³⁴ <https://www.oma.org/advocacy/prescription-for-ontario/prescription-for-ontario-doctors-solutions-for-immediate-action/>

³⁵ https://ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ocfp_fp_access_pp_execsummary_01_24.pdf, January 2023

³⁶ <https://www.afhto.ca/news-events/news/primary-care-leaders-urge-canadas-premiers-and-federal-government-strike-deal>, February 06, 2023

15. Lack of Access to, and Affordability of Childcare Hurts Ontario Businesses

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Barrie Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, & Timmins Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Parents seeking childcare face significant affordability and availability challenges in Ontario. The federal and provincial governments have begun to focus on childcare, but we need more immediate action at the provincial level. The new childcare agreement between the two senior levels of government is not a silver bullet solution, and the agreement has increased demand for childcare spots. This issue disproportionately affects female workers, who stay at home with younger children the majority of the time. We must advocate for childcare solutions that will bring more women back into the workforce at a time when businesses are desperate for more workers³⁷.

Background

Do you spend \$25,000 per year to put your child in daycare and return to work, extend your parental leave, or stay home with your child for the first few years?

This is a legitimate dilemma for many workers in Ontario. Many workers with children begin searching for childcare spots years before they need them, and they still find themselves on waitlists when the time comes for them to return to work³⁸. Economists Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky say the cost of not having childcare is borne by all businesses that have workers leave for extended periods to provide childcare. The impact can be primarily quantified by lost productivity, eroded skills, higher absenteeism, and increased mental health impacts on their employees³⁹.

Ontario has the most expensive childcare in Canada⁴⁰. The cost of childcare in Ontario went from an average of \$677 per month in 2011 to an average of \$1,600 per month in 2021⁴¹. The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario reports that mothers with young children have a labour participation rate that is 14.1 percentage points lower than fathers, which is four times higher than the gender gap of adults without young children⁴².

Childcare services face a massive labour crisis due to low pay, short staffing, and uncertain funding from the provincial government⁴³. The Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario signed the Canada-Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning Child Care Agreement in 2022 to address childcare issues in Ontario⁴⁴. Ontario was the last province to sign an agreement with the federal government. Ontario has a licensed childcare space for only 20% of all children⁴⁵.

The agreement introduces fee reductions for parents that will see fees set to an average of \$10 per day by September 2025. It also includes minimum wage increases for early child educators and supervisors starting at \$18/hour and \$20/hour, respectively, and increasing \$1/year until the floor is \$25/hour. Early childhood educators in Ontario currently make \$16.55/hour on the low end, \$20.51/hour median, and \$28/hour on the

³⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/child-care.html>

³⁸ <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/07/24/gta-families-struggling-to-find-daycare-amid-implementation-of-10-day-child-care/>

³⁹ <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/bc.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://arrivein.com/daily-life-in-canada/child-care-in-canada-types-cost-and-tips-for-newcomers/>

⁴¹ <https://simplysmartchildcare.com/how-much-is-the-cost-of-daycare-in-ontario-simplysmart-2/>

⁴² <https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/wilma>

⁴³ <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/10/31/ontario-childcare-centres-concerned-about-keeping-doors-open-as-costs-balloon/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-child-care-deal-ford-trudeau-1.6399694>

⁴⁵ <https://www.childcareontario.org/parents-looking-for-child-care-click-here>

high end, according to a November 2023 Job Bank update⁴⁶. The funding provided to Ontario childcare centres increased by 2.75% to account for inflation, whereas the price of food alone went up 5.5% in 2022. This has put undue pressure on childcare centres suggesting they may have to close without more funding⁴⁷.

Ontario was the final province to sign an 'Early Learning and Child Care Agreement' with the Government of Canada. Over 92% of Ontario's licensed childcare providers have signed onto the federal government's \$10-a-day program, with the remainder of the providers often charging \$2500 or more in major centres like Toronto. These providers have spots available, but then families need to pay their higher costs. The Ministry of Education said the province is building 86,000 new daycare spaces, but building spaces doesn't solve the worker shortage⁴⁸. The proposed spaces are less than half of the estimated 200,000 spots needed to alleviate Ontario's childcare wait times.

An underfunded and understaffed childcare system will lead to growing childcare costs⁴⁹. Private childcare should continue, but we can not support the growth of one industry at the expense of the private sector suppliers that rely on their workers to have affordable and reliable child care.

Ontario must step up so our future generations are cared for while they're young, and parents can continue to work in this era of chronic short-staffing. Our economy depends on it.

Recommendations

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

1. Monitor the effects of the ratification of the *Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* between the governments of Canada and Ontario to ensure issues are addressed quickly;
2. Create a long-term plan for childcare that supports families in Ontario with an eye toward future economic prosperity; and
3. Make the availability of an adequate number of affordable daycare, preschool and after-school spaces a priority so that parents, particularly women, can return to the workforce to help address the labour shortage.

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

⁴⁶ <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/5180/ON?jsessionid=7334BB3E1472EA13807D5965EC2BF1DB.jobsearch75>

⁴⁷ <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/10/31/ontario-childcare-centres-concerned-about-keeping-doors-open-as-costs-balloon/>

⁴⁸ <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/07/24/gta-families-struggling-to-find-daycare-amid-implementation-of-10-day-child-care/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-child-care-1.6875384>

16. Leveraging Natural Gas for a Cost-Efficient Energy Transition and Ontario's Economic Competitiveness

Submitted by: Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario requires a robust energy sector that puts certainty in future access to natural gas and sets a deliberate course which assures natural gas delivery in Ontario's energy mix, impacting millions of Ontarians and businesses who depend on natural gas for heating and day-to-day operation. Any action to destabilize the vitality of natural gas system such as the Ontario Energy Board's (OEB) decision on Phase 1 of Enbridge Gas Inc's (EGI) 2024 rebasing application, is a setback to Ontario's energy and economic efforts.

Background

The Role of Natural Gas in Ontario's Energy Transition⁵⁰

A recent report by the Independent Electricity System Operator warns that phasing out gas-fired plants before 2030 would result in rotating blackouts and higher electricity bills. Meanwhile, natural gas is enabling new technologies such as low carbon fuel blending (e.g. hydrogen, Renewable Natural Gas), and carbon capture and storage (CCS) to reduce emissions from hard-to-abate industries like steel, cement and fertilizers where electrification alone is insufficient.⁵¹

The developments in energy efficiency, and low-carbon fuels such as RNG, low-carbon hydrogen and CCS, the natural gas system will help Ontario and customers transition from higher carbon fuels in a cost-effective way while providing other critical benefits including increased energy system resilience, reliability, customer choice and business competitiveness.

Given Ontario's geography, energy systems must accommodate summer and winter peaks to ensure reliability year-round. Natural gas plays a pivotal role in the province. The electric grid is currently designed to meet the demand on peak summer days when Ontarians turn to air conditioning to cool our inside spaces. And on the hottest summer day, up to 30 percent of that electricity is generated by natural gas. On the coldest winter day, four to five times the energy of a peak summer day is needed to keep people safe and warm in their homes and that energy is currently delivered by natural gas. Warming a home from -30 to a comfortable 20 degrees, is a 50-degree change. This represents a 90 GW equivalent which is five times larger than the energy it takes to cool a home by 10 degrees at a summer peak. The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) projects that Ontario's electricity demand could double by mid-century with expanded use in electric vehicles and manufacturing.

The electric infrastructure to replace the energy provided by natural gas today and meet future expanded use will require an enormous investment in both money and time. In addition, energy intensive industrial processes such as steel or concrete production are relying on natural gas to help them move off higher emitting fuels in a cost-effective way that prioritizes safety, sustainability, reliability, and affordability — requiring all energy sources.

A pipes and wires approach are reflected in the recently released Powering Ontario's Growth plan⁵², which recognizes the critical role that natural gas will continue to play in providing Ontarians with a reliable and cost-effective fuel supply for space heating, industrial growth, and economic prosperity. This plan affirms that with developments in energy efficiency, and low-carbon fuels such as RNG and low-carbon hydrogen and carbon

⁵⁰ Jim Redford, VP Energy Services, Enbridge Gas Inc., Remarks: **Ontario Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Panel – The Role of Natural Gas in Ontario's Energy Transition**, October 3, 2023

⁵¹ [Report Decarbonization and Ontario's Electricity Sector: Assessing the impacts of phasing out natural gas generation by 2030](#), Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, October 7, 2023

⁵² Ministry of Energy [Powering Ontario's Growth](#), 10 July, 2023

capture and storage, the natural gas distribution system will help contribute to the province's transition from higher carbon fuels in a cost-effective way.

Recently, key groups including the Ontario Home Builders Association and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario⁵³ have expressed support to the natural gas system and are actively supporting Government action to pair natural gas to housing affordability across Ontario.

Natural gas as an opportunity for Ontario Homes, Communities and Businesses

With natural gas, communities across Ontario feel the impacts of heating homes and fulfilling daily business operational needs – the stakes are high:

- **Customer Choice:** Natural gas expands customer choice and bolsters Ontario's efforts and policies to bring reliable and affordable energy to all Ontarians. Energy access relies on a fair investment climate for energy infrastructure. Any decrease reductions in capital expenditure (capex) can discourage or threaten the growth of the industrial sector, leading to increased costs for manufacturing, agriculture, consumer goods, and variety of customer market choices.
- **Investment Expansion:** Natural gas operations require enormous, planned capital budgets that run into millions to billions of dollars in the short and long-term. These investments in energy projects greatly contribute to Ontario's economic development, competitiveness, and emissions reductions. There are immediate benefits of such investments to industrial customers, who experience growth in the province, and choose to stay because of the added load on the electricity system that can accommodate their needs in the near-term and positions Ontario as genuinely open for business. According to Invest Windsor-Essex, local agri-food businesses have recently seen a tremendous uptake in their products. A homegrown food chain is important to the province's food supply chain and much of the energy innovation taking place within the expanding greenhouse industry depends on reliable natural gas. Any delay in the enhancement of critical energy enhancements such as the Panhandle Regional Expansion Project (PREP), places the region at risk of losing significant investment to competing jurisdictions outside of Ontario and Canada.⁵⁴ The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG) who are a key customer base for the PREP project and their involvement is necessary for it to proceed, have also echoed that an inability to access natural gas economically will result in greenhouse investments leaving the province.⁵⁵
- **Energy Innovation:** Natural gas has formed the foundation for the implementation of new bold and creative ideas in Ontario. Greenhouse farms have adapted natural gas usage to fulfill both their heating needs and supplement their demand for CO₂. Sourcing CO₂ from natural gas has been fundamental to unlocking efficient winter farming and reducing the demand for imported liquid CO₂. During the spring, summer, and fall natural gas is burned during the day to supply the crop with CO₂ and the heat is stored in tanks to provide the heat when it is needed.⁵⁶ The technological advances in the greenhouse sector including the smart climate systems have further supported greenhouse farms in using natural gas efficiently and maximizing the benefits of natural gas. Natural gas has further supported greenhouse farming with the adaptation of combined heat and power (cogeneration) providing electricity for lights, heat for greenhouse, and CO₂ to the crop. Farms in Leamington and Kingsville adopted cogeneration due in part to a lack of capacity in the local electrical grid. As a result, throughout Ontario, nearly 90 Megawatts (MW) of electricity are

⁵³ Residential Construction Council of Ontario, [RESCON OEB Letter to Minister of Energy](#), 31 January 2024

⁵⁴ Invest WindsorEssex Letter to OEB in support of Panhandle Regional Expansion Project

⁵⁵ Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers letter filed with the OEB

<https://www.rds.oeb.ca/CMWebDrawer/Record/821457/File/document>, 6 November 2023

⁵⁶ Op.cit, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers

produced by greenhouse operations and supplied to Ontario's energy grid with the CO2 generated by these engines sequestered by greenhouse operations.

- **Energy Affordability and Competitiveness:** Energy affordability is closely linked to improved general economics of scale that enhances competitiveness. New gas customers and builders who pay for gas infrastructure spread over many instalments create a significant financial relief to all forms of new residential and commercial developments. Any unnecessary upfront fee/lumpsum payments adds thousands of dollars to individual consumers' cost to obtain or expand an existing gas service at a time where affordability and housing are at the forefront of public concerns. The accommodation of small installment payment approach provides certainty and stability in small and large consumer finances and assures long-term economic competitiveness and development in the province.
- **Economic Growth:** Natural gas expansion puts proposed and future developments in Ontario communities as a viable support to meeting government's target of building 1.5 million new houses by 2031. A guaranteed supply of natural gas will accompany such development and expand economic growth and the ability of future expansion projects to support regional investment to meet the ever-growing energy needs in communities across Ontario.
- **Energy Access:** Preserving customer access is critical. Access to natural gas through an increase in capital will significantly expand the future development of essential energy infrastructure vital to moving manufacturing, agriculture, and the consumer goods industry in Ontario. Guaranteeing access to natural gas positions Ontario as a leader in satisfying the growing heating needs in an equitable and sustainable way from coast-to-coast.
- **Energy Security and Grid reliability:** On an annual basis, natural gas delivers twice the energy to Ontario than electricity and four to five times the maximum peak capacity of Ontario's electricity grid. The natural gas network in Ontario is a system of reliability where consumer access is maintained by low-cost, resilient underground energy infrastructure that is crucial in delivering reliable and clean power. With Ontario's robust gas supply infrastructure, gas generation can provide continuous energy when needed as it is generally available at all times of the day throughout the year, under all weather conditions — it is far more reliable in inclement weather. Given its flexibility, natural gas generation can be ramped up or down within minutes to follow sudden or unexpected changes in demand or in the availability of other generators. This is important when managing the ebb and flow of wind and solar generation and the constant demand changes in the system.⁵⁷

Produced via conventional or renewable methods, the advantages of natural gas as an alternative fuel also include its domestic availability, established distribution network, relatively low cost, and emissions benefits. Using natural gas and other alternative fuels and advanced technologies to reduce petroleum consumption continues to strengthen national security and reduce transportation energy costs for businesses and consumers⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Op. cit., [Report Decarbonization and Ontario's Electricity Sector: Assessing the impacts of phasing out natural gas generation by 2030](#)

⁵⁸ US Department of Energy, [Alternative Fuels Data Center: Natural Gas Benefits \(energy.gov\)](#)

Recommendations

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

1. Focus on an integrated approach where pipes and wires work together to ensure Ontario maintains an energy system that is resilient and cost-effective while supporting decarbonization. A diversified “pipes and wires” approach balances end-use electrification, leverages Ontario’s gas system to deliver made-in-Canada renewable gasses including RNG and hydrogen and pairing natural gas with carbon capture and can achieve net zero emissions with other critical benefits.
2. Accelerate the implementation of the provincial Electrification and Energy Transition Panel recommendation that the government establish a roadmap for an orderly energy transition and provide clear policy direction on the role of natural gas and low-carbon fuels in Ontario’s energy system.
3. Prioritize a diversified approach that gives industrial and residential consumers flexibility. This includes allowing customers to choose a heating system that best meets their needs, such as natural gas and reliable hybrid heating and natural gas and relates solutions for heavy industrial processes (e.g. RNG, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage) and heavy long-haul transportation that cannot be practically electrified.

OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position: The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by OCC staff and/or members. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

17. Making Ontario more Competitive for Permanent Residency

Submitted by: Peterborough and the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce, Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, & Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario is less competitive than other provinces when it comes to approving permanent residency for new Canadians. This impacts our ability to attract talent at a time when we desperately need to increase our workforce.

Background

Ontario offers a lot for prospective new Canadians in terms of job opportunities and multicultural communities, but it has become less competitive when it comes to getting permanent residency.

For many people here on student and work visas, securing permanent residency is a major source of anxiety. Fear of not being accepted before their visas expire is driving people to other provinces that increase their chances of success.

Labour markets are softening, but access to labour remains one of the biggest barriers to business. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce 2023 Ontario Economic Report⁵⁹ found businesses reported investing in workforce development to be their second highest policy priority.

The slowing economy is likely to ease labour pressure, but the slew of impending retirements will further increase demand.

While unemployment increased in the second half of 2023, BDC reports⁶⁰ that it's because the active working population grew with about 430,000 jobs being created between January and November of 2023.

As much as Ontario has to offer newcomers, lack of access to housing and the rising cost of living are increasingly becoming barriers. Add this to the fact that other provinces make it easier to gain permanent residency while offering lower living costs and Ontario is increasingly becoming less attractive.

Currently, the Ontario Immigration Nominee Program (OINP) points system offers similar criteria to the Federal Express Entry program, which does not set the Province apart nor is it helpful for the candidates who fall outside the scope of the federal program. Our province should be targeting those who fall outside the federal criteria, especially if they are currently working or have a job offer in Ontario.

There is a lack of clarity on what National Occupation Codes will be invited in the future, pushing people from certain professions to other provinces that are more likely to sponsor them. Additionally, provinces like Alberta have had success by removing the requirement to select a specific job or occupation from a list, opening up more opportunities for new Canadians to work in any job or business sector.

We have small and microbusinesses in Ontario that have a desire to sponsor new residents but their business does not meet financial requirements. In the Greater Toronto Area, sponsoring businesses must have five

⁵⁹ OCC 2023 Ontario Economic Report <https://infogram.com/oer-2023-report-1hxj48pd90gx52v?live>

⁶⁰ BDC Monthly Economic Letter <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/entrepreneur-toolkit/publications/monthly-economic-letter/2312>

employees and \$1 million in revenue. Outside the GTA that drops to three employees and \$500,000 in revenue. This financial threshold especially impacts small family businesses from immigrant communities.

Some candidates for residency have been working in Ontario for years with programs like the Labour Market Impact Assessment, but still do not qualify for residency here. Others are here studying for in-demand vocations like personal support workers, but don't qualify for the Student Job Offer stream because their program is less than two years.

It has been pointed out by a number of industry professionals that the online application system is not as user-friendly as it could be, especially when those trying to apply may have language barriers, technology barriers, and slow internet connections.

Ontario needs to make some strategic changes to its approach to immigration and sponsoring candidates for permanent residency.

Recommendations

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

1. Make Ontario more competitive for securing permanent residency by:
 - a. Tailoring the Ontario Immigration Nominee Program to target candidates who fall outside the federal criteria with an emphasis on those already working in Ontario, including establishing a program for those with long-term work experience in Ontario as a pathway to residency.
2. Reducing employment criteria barriers, including:
 - a. Providing clarity on what NOC codes will be invited in the future or eliminating the requirement to select a specific job or occupation from a list altogether.
 - b. Lowering the revenue requirement and requirements for a specific number of employees for businesses to allow for smaller businesses to sponsor permanent residents.
3. Opening up the Student Job Offer Stream program to students in one-year programs.
4. Improving the functionality of the OINP website, providing a more up-to-date and user-friendly experience.

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

18. Maximizing Growth in Built Areas

This is a sunseting resolution.

Submitted by: Peterborough and the Kawarthas Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce, Belleville Chamber of Commerce, Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, & Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Historic downtowns in cities across Ontario are full of underused mixed-use buildings. These multi-storey buildings have commercial space on the bottom and un- or under-used residential space in the upper floors. Inquiring about updating to once again have people living in these buildings can trigger expensive inspection processes on buildings that were built long before building, fire, and accessibility codes. Those that do try to develop these spaces are often met with unrealistic costs to meet heritage preservation and accessibility regulations, leaving empty housing in the heart of our towns and cities.

Background

The ability of the municipality and a property owner to understand the full scope of a renovation or upgrading required of a building early on in the process is imperative.

In the Places to Grow Act, there is great focus on density requirements. For a downtown such as Peterborough, the requirement is 150 residents per hectare. Yet, with older, sometimes heritage-designated, buildings in Ontario downtowns there are unique challenges to realizing redevelopment and infill of these spaces.

The Community Improvement Plans provide an incentive framework to address some of these concerns; however, in many cases these programs tend to be overextended or see limited uptake because costs of renovations can easily outpace the incentive. Many communities have façade improvement programs, brownfields tax assistance programs, energy efficiency programs and, in Peterborough, there is even a Residential Conversion and Intensification Grant Program that provides property owners with a grant of \$10/square foot renovated as part of a Community Improvement Plan.

These programs do not adequately address the challenges most commonly faced by businesses in these core areas with regulatory requirements that are substantially higher than when the buildings were first constructed. Restoring older buildings to current safety standards by meeting Ontario's Building Code, the Fire Code, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Municipal by-laws can be too expensive for many developers to be able to make the renovation profitable. Knowing how expensive upgrades can be, many businesses fear seeking advice.

Creative approaches require architects, engineers, planners, and municipal officials to work with businesses to derive viable solutions for redevelopment. This is not something that should be done on a piecemeal basis, but as an extensive program that involves systematic analysis of the key challenges and a targeted response from each municipality.

The benefits of upgrading or development of these types of units are numerous, in that, they could be used for commercial space, housing diversity, help infill urban areas and become economic catalysts for continued development. Reuse of existing buildings is also an effective way of fighting climate change. The challenge is encouraging development with an economically feasible model that results in buildings that are safe and occupied.

In order to strengthen our built areas, there needs to be a good understanding of the current infrastructure needs and capabilities. Ideally, grants for investments like common fire escapes across the rear of multiple buildings to create an efficient second means of egress would assist developers to make good use of space and finances.

The Government of Ontario has used the Downtown Revitalization Program to strengthen the economic heart of rural communities across the province since 2018. As such, this resolution proposes that the Downtown Revitalization Program be used for a pilot project that allows private building owners and municipal officials to assess, without punitive action, the needs of a building or series of buildings in a downtown core.

Additionally, local policies around heritage preservation and accessibility can create barriers to refurbishing housing units that are both economically and practically unfeasible. We need a provincial policy that creates consistency between municipalities on these issues and provides reasonable and economical solutions that maximize heritage preservation and accessibility while also encouraging the refurbishment of existing housing stock in our communities.

In a time when there is a critical shortage of housing and our downtown cores are struggling, it's a shame we have empty housing units with the potential to revitalize our communities.

Recommendations

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

1. Designate the Downtown Revitalization Program be used for a pilot project that allows private building owners and municipal officials to study and assess, using an independent consultant and without punitive action, the needs of a building or series of buildings in a downtown core.
2. Implement a policy for municipalities that will allow for the redevelopment of upper floors of aging mixed-use downtown buildings for use as residences that takes a fiscally responsible approach to heritage preservation and accessibility standards.

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

19. New Durham Hospital and Trauma Centre - Support for Advancing Lakeridge Health's Master Plan

Submitted by: Whitby Chamber of Commerce

Issue

To support Durham Region's rapidly growing community and increasing healthcare demands, Lakeridge Health and many stakeholders established a Master Plan which includes the building of a Hospital and Trauma Centre in Whitby. Currently, those efforts hang on the approval for the 2-million-dollar planning grant, from the Ontario Government. The Whitby Chamber of Commerce brings forth a resolution in support of the Lakeridge Health planning grant.

Background

The development of a new hospital in Durham Region is a key component of Lakeridge Health's Master Plan, which provides a roadmap for the future of health-care delivery in Durham Region, which aims to provide inpatient bed growth of almost 1,000 beds to meet projected demand over the next 25 years.

In January 2022, Lakeridge Health's Board of Trustees accepted the Expert Panel's recommendation of the site in Whitby as the preferred location for a proposed future hospital. The Panel was made up of a diverse group of professionals who bring many years of leadership experience and expertise in health care and real estate development to this site selection process.⁶¹

The preferred site is located on 50 acres of land south of Highway 407, west of Highway 412, east of Lake Ridge Road and north of Highway 7/Winchester Road (owned by the Province). The location is easily accessible given its proximity to existing major highways and roadways, as well as planned public transit projects. Its location in central Durham Region will help to efficiently serve residents across the region.

The panelists also had knowledge of the Region, grounding their final recommendations on fact and experience. The process of selecting the hospital site was independent, transparent, and understandably expensive.

Healthcare Demands in Durham

There is a dire and growing need for increased and improved Health services in Durham. In 2023, it was estimated that 44 thousand Durham residents have no family physician, this number rose by 11 thousand since 2021. With a lack of healthcare workers and sufficient resources, the Region's residents are forced to find medical services in neighboring Regions and are often transported to hospitals outside Durham; this adds undue loan on the Provincial healthcare system, increasing costs and pressures on the system that could be avoided by the Regional Hospital. The significant population growth projected for Durham Region will only add greater pressure on the current services available. According to Statistics Canada, the population of Durham Region grew by 6.3% between 2016 and 2021, which is higher than the national average growth rate of 5.3%. Moreover, Durham Region is projected to have a population of over 900,000 by 2041, which represents an increase of almost 30% from its current population.

To illustrate the rapid changes, Durham Workforce Authority's 2023 Data Walk shows that between 2016 and 2021 (a mere five years) our region:

- Experienced 7.91% population growth;
- Is home to 4.9% of Ontario's residents; and

⁶¹ Site Selection Process for a Proposed New Hospital - Lakeridge Health

- Saw the percentage of residents who are 65 year or older increase 19.71%.⁶²

In parallel to the increasing demand, Durham current hospital facilities are aging; according to Lakeridge Health, the average age of its facilities is 50 years, which is well above the recommended lifespan of most hospital buildings.

Despite being the second largest municipality in Ontario, Durham Region still has no trauma centre within our boundaries. This means that that we must frequently continue to engage the services of Ornge to evacuate critically-injured or endangered patients, costing both valuable treatment time and vastly more than local ground ambulance service. The new hospital is also planned to provide acute care, which are not currently available in Durham Region. Neighbouring the Greater Toronto Area, Durham Region's success will have a direct impact on the distribution of available resources and services in the GTA, which is facing its own strain on healthcare services.

Economic Impact and Timing

A new hospital is crucial for the success of our local businesses and organizations. By providing high quality healthcare services locally, we can ensure a healthier and more productive workforce, which in turn will drive economic growth and prosperity. Additionally, a new hospital will attract and retain new businesses, investors, and employees, ultimately contributing to the long-term sustainability and success of our community. Currently, our Chambers advocacy surveys indicate that hiring skilled labour is a significant challenge to our local businesses, without strong infrastructure and community, Durham region will continue to lose skilled talent to neighbouring regions that offer better support and services.

The hospital will also undoubtedly fuel local and support local spin off industries, like sports and fitness, medicine, therapeutics, physio, private labs, and nurse practitioner services.

It could be as much as 10 years before this new hospital is open and the rate of growth across the entire region is too fast to continue to delay this process. Regional reports indicate that the Durham population is expected to rise from 723,200 in 2021 to 1.3 million by 2051, almost doubling, and becoming a more important economic hub in southern Ontario.

Ontario's success relies of the strength and sustainability of its regions, particularly along the Greater Horseshoe area. If one of the links is weak, it adds pressure of the rest, threatening the health and growth of the Ontario economy.

Strengthening our healthcare infrastructure in Durham gives Ontario another continued powerhouse of economic success.

Recommendations

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

1. Approve Lakeridge Health's requested Planning Grant;
2. Release the proposed lands to Lakeridge health for the construction of the new hospital.

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

⁶² Data Walk – December 2023 - <https://durhamworkforceauthority.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Data-Walk-December-2023-Posters-FINAL-Corrected-Posters-Dec-6-2023.pdf>
Durham Community Foundation – Vital Signs –Health - 2023 - <https://durhamcommunityfoundation.ca/dcfwp/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/VitalSigns-Report-11-24-23.pdf>

20. Ontario Infrastructure Bank

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The Ontario Infrastructure Bank (OIB) was recently established to reduce taxpayer risks on major infrastructure projects and expedite construction.

Strategic investments and the capacity to deliver in an efficient and cost-effective framework will benefit all provincial economic sectors. The new bank should provide sustainable growth across all regions of Ontario.

Background

The 2023 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review (Fall Economic Statement) formally launched the Ontario Infrastructure Bank (OIB), a new board governed agency to enable public sector pension plans and other institutional investors to participate in large-scale infrastructure across the province. Projects will be focused on long-term care homes, affordable housing, and infrastructure in the municipal, community, energy and transportation sectors. The bank has also been provided a \$3 billion funding allocation from the provincial government.

Ontario currently supports major construction projects from borrowing and financing through the OIB will reduce provincial risks. An analysis compiled by Desjardins Financial Group economists Marc Desormeaux and Marc-Antoine Dumont (November 2, 2023) indicated the need for improved infrastructure in Ontario is well established and will become more pressing if delays continue against population increases. An appropriate assessment of the new bank will require analysis related to investments generating optimal returns for taxpayers and models for private sector support.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) indicated on November 2, 2023, that further details are required on how the OIB can meet infrastructure needs across Ontario.

Ehren Cory, CEO of the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB), indicated in a November 2, 2023, news release that the creation of an Ontario Infrastructure Bank is a positive step forward in getting more infrastructure built in the province. He noted that a growing number of infrastructure bank-like organizations globally are focused on creating innovative private-public partnerships for the purpose of accelerating project construction.

The CIB consulted with the Ontario Ministry of Finance and Ontario Financing Authority on options for initiating and expediting major projects. Cory further believes there are significant opportunities for the CIB and OIB to partner and deliver value for all taxpayers.

The national bank is investing in infrastructure that will positively impact the long-term strength of the national economy. Their five key sectors are clean power, green infrastructure, trade and transportation, public transit and broadband.

In a November 7, 2023, Toronto Sun editorial, Cory further notes that a new infrastructure bank in Ontario is not surprising since the province faces a significant infrastructure deficit and cannot afford to support projects through the tax base alone.

A release from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (November 30, 2023) noted that infrastructure is key to increasing productivity and growing the economy. Strategic investments are required now more than ever in low-carbon transit, broadband, housing, energy grids and retrofits. The current Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) is leading the way in demonstrating how private and public stakeholders can collaborate on innovative financing options that produce positive infrastructure outcomes while generating economic efficiencies.

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, in a November 2, 2023, statement, noted that as a pension plan providing retirement security for 336,000 working and retired members in Ontario, they invest in global markets to provide the diversification and long-term performance to ensure that the plan remains fully funded. They welcome opportunities to add to their \$25 billion investment portfolio in Ontario and look forward to engaging with the provincial government to learn more on new projects created by the Ontario Infrastructure Bank.

Recommendations

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

1. Establish timelines for the Ontario Infrastructure Bank (OIB) to commence investments into projects.
2. Ensure the OIB formulates and follows a strategy to ensure investments in major projects in municipalities and regions across all of Ontario.

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

21. Position Ontario for life sciences success in the 2020s and beyond

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

Ontario has become a home of leading life sciences endeavors. Whether it has been through businesses of all sizes, Ontario is a player globally in life sciences. To ensure that Ontario has a place in the life sciences industry worldwide in the decades to come means we should contemplate today how we lay the foundation for success.

Background

A majority of Canadian provinces as well the federal government have started signaling the importance of Life Sciences as a sector. The strategies that are enabled through the various components that included medical technology, biotech/pharma, digital and others have shown to be a backbone for “healthier economies and healthier people”. During the pandemic, these industries and individuals, amongst others, supported innovation partnerships to enact care within the province for many communities.

We note that the Ontario government, along with other Canadian governments, are looking for ways to thrive in innovation. This is being done while trying to increase access to unmet needs to solve some of the largest health care system challenges. A successful strategy needs to include not only funding for implementation but also being tied to the support and creation of industry growth and increasing access to care.

Aligned with the vision released by the government of Ontario, “Establish Ontario as a global biomanufacturing and life sciences hub leading in the development, commercialization and early adoption of innovative health products and services”, there is tremendous potential to support propelling this vision forward.

Phase 1

Phase 1 will build up our life sciences sector through securing commercial-scale manufacturing capacity and supply chains while improving manufacturing readiness of Ontario’s small- and medium-sized businesses through four pillars:

1. Grow Ontario’s biomanufacturing footprint
2. Build domestic resiliency in PPE and critical medical supplies
3. Boost commercialization capacity of Ontario companies and startups
4. Adopt Ontario innovation to improve healthcare

Phase 2

Phase 2 will build out Ontario’s industry to become a leader in next-generation life sciences technology.

2030 anchor goal

Maintain and grow Ontario’s biomanufacturing and life sciences sector by targeting 85,000 high-value jobs in the life sciences sector by 2030, a 25% increase from 2020.

Recommendations

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

1. The creation of a permanent industry enabled government partnership table including representatives from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) chamber network. The OCC played a leadership role during the pandemic with rapid tests but also with the formulation of the province wide Vaccination Council. This would also include various businesses from across the province including medical technology and pharmaceuticals to support this framework. Many organizations within the province, in particular the Mississauga community, have resources, expertise and the ability to foster research and development aligned with priorities.
2. Continue meaningful engagement with the Life Science Council in supporting and fostering innovation, investment, and commercialization in the province's life sciences. This will lead to a stronger implementation of key recommendations developed by the Council and show the provinces ongoing commitment to this sector.
3. Aligned with the **OCC Power of Procurement** report, develop a provincial wide mechanism to identify the value and impact of procurement and increased access to medical needs through acceleration of pathways. While at the same time, keeping patient care at the centre of the proposition. This will in term assist with demonstrating value for money and value-based procurement practices aligned with government mandates.
4. Support the need for provincial participation from institutions such as Invest Ontario to support sector events as an economic development opportunity. In the coming months, the largest medical technology conference in US will be hosted in Ontario, AdvaMed. Support from both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade could lead to new opportunities for business but also shows their commitment to Ontario's Life Sciences Sector.

OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position: The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by OCC staff and/or members. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

22. Province of Ontario Oversize/Overweight Permits

This is a sunset resolution.

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

Issue

The Ontario Provincial Oversize/Overweight Permit System is very complex making it difficult for companies to comply when their vehicles travel throughout Ontario's county roads that are not designated as King's highways.

Background

Most companies do not understand the requirements of the permit system. A provincial oversize/overweight permit costs a business \$448.75 annually and is valid ONLY for King's highways. This cost is considered very reasonable.

Alternatively, a business can also purchase a single "trip" permit valid for a limited timeframe with costs varying between \$66.25 to \$714 depending on distance travelled and weight of the load carried.

Since the provincial permit is valid for King's Highways only, in some cases businesses must also purchase county oversize/overweight permits as well as permits from the "lower tier" municipalities in that county.

This current system forces a business to contact each county and municipality that maintains the roads their vehicles will be travelling on to determine the trip permit process and requirements. This is a very inefficient, time-consuming and complex process.

It is a burden to small and medium sized companies (SMEs) that require oversize/overweight permits to fulfill their obligations to their clients. Ontario companies affected are: excavating companies, construction companies, farm machinery dealerships, agricultural suppliers, for example.

Complexity Highlights

The regions of the Province of Ontario contain 23 Counties with 241 "lower tier" municipalities embedded within the 23 Counties. And there are 11 single tier municipalities (i.e. Brantford-Brant, Toronto, Ottawa, Chatham-Kent, Haldimand, etc.); which leaves a total of 252 potential contacts for permits.

Considering these statistics, business owners must know what municipality maintains the particular road their vehicles will be travelling on to legally transport equipment. To determine this, a business would need access to an entire database of Ontario roads and who maintains/owns them.

In our research, most businesses did not know their compliance requirements; and only one knew that County permits were required but did not know about the lower tier municipal permits.

In speaking with local businesses who were stopped and charged multiple times in the past 15 years, the fines were at least \$500.00. It is their feeling that it is cheaper to pay the fine than to spend the time to acquire the necessary permits.

In summary, the current oversize/overweight permit system is a barrier and a financial burden for companies in Ontario to do business.

Recommendations

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

1. Investigate the opportunities available to create a one-permit system for wide, high, and heavy loads to navigate throughout Ontario's roads regardless of the regions, counties or municipalities vehicles must travel through.
2. Develop a database with a real-time, interactive map with each municipality's rules, restrictions, and information to provide businesses with a centralized hub for all permit information.

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

23. Rebalancing Democracy in Ontario's Workplaces

This is a sunset resolution.

Submitted by: Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The *Labour Relations Act, 1995* creates a legal regime which unduly favours union certification, instead of neutrally regulating the process. In 2005 there was an amendment to the Act which reinstated card-based certification to the construction industry only. (Bill 144, Section 128.1) The card-based certification process is undemocratic and should be repealed, as it deprives workers affected of the ability to vote for or against union certification.

Background

It is time for the *Labour Relations Act* to be overhauled, with the aim of balancing the rights of employers and employees. The current regime unduly favours union certification and allows for creative and selective union organization tactics, with limited opportunities for the will of employers and individual employees to be heard in the process.

Card-Based Certification:

Under Ontario's current labour legislation, a card-based system means that the Ontario Labour Relations Board can order a vote on union certification in construction-industry workplaces if more than 40 percent of employees have signed membership cards to join the union, and furthermore, if more than 55 percent of employees in the proposed bargaining unit (on the day of the application) have signed cards, the Board can order certification of a union without a vote at all.

Card-based certification makes employers particularly vulnerable as certification is based on those working on the date of application. This means that certification without a vote can apply even where 55 percent of the employees at work on the date of application constitute a minority percentage of the employer's total workforce. Under the card-based system, if the union can demonstrate that more than 55% of the affected employees who were at work on the application filing date were doing bargaining unit work, and have signed a card with the trade union, then the Board **may** certify the workplace **without** holding a vote. The Board can also direct a vote (as described below); however, in our experience the Board usually does not do this.

Remember, it is **only** the employees who were at work on the application filing date who are counted. It might be that you have 500 employees, but if only 4 of them were working on the application filing date (for example, on Christmas Eve) and 3 of them signed union membership cards, then the Board can certify the union based on the support of only those 3 employees. Under the current rules, the employer and the remaining 496 employees of that company find themselves unionized on Monday morning with no say, and no chance for a vote to have their say. This also creates unfavourable circumstances for workers whereby the Union organizers may not have spoken with or provided any information about their organizing campaign to these other employees and may never have spoken to them at all.

It is also important to note that while section 77 of the Act clarifies that nothing within the Act "authorizes any person to attempt at the place at which an employee works to persuade the employee during the employee's working hours to become or refrain from becoming or continuing to be a member of a trade union", this does

not in fact prevent Union organizers external to the company's workforce from attending (often safety-sensitive) jobsites to attempt to do just that.

Union strategies can also include the use of "salts" (individuals sent by the union to seek employment for the sole purpose of bringing a union to the workplace) to certify companies against the will of regular, longer-term employees by bringing forward applications on a day where it is known that only a few employees are working. Once again, the effect of the card-based system permits organizers to bypass larger groups of workers in the course of organizing a workforce in favour of opportunities to bring an application supported by a select group of employees only.

Secret ballot voting safeguards employees from intimidation or pressure from union organizers or employers and helps ensure their true opinion is represented – this logic is accepted in election voting around the world in democratic countries. While a secret ballot vote is conducted in a neutral environment by the Labour Relations Board, the collection of signatures on union membership cards is controlled entirely by union leadership. Union organizers can pressure employees to sign union cards without communicating the full effect of those signatures and can submit applications with cards that may not reflect the final true wishes of some signees. The current process provides little means and opportunities for workers who signed cards to review their options or, where desired, change their minds.

Card-based certification is undemocratic, threatens economic prosperity and significantly shifts the balance in certification votes in favour of organized labour and against both employers and the workers themselves. Since there is no evidence to suggest that secret ballot voting does not allow employees to express their wishes, and significant risk that card-based certification does just that, the provincial government should eliminate card-based certification and repeal Section 11(2)(c) of the Act, which permits the Ontario Labour Relations Board to automatically certify a trade union without a secret-ballot vote taking place, under certain circumstances.

Recommendations

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

1. Eliminate the card-based certification system for union certification;
 - a. notwithstanding recommendation 1, the threshold for automatic certification should be raised from 55 percent of the workforce on the day of application to at least 66 percent of the employer's entire workforce;
 - b. notwithstanding recommendation 1, allow employees a "cooling off" period of at least three business days to dispute the voluntariness of the signature on their union card or their continued interest in membership notwithstanding its use in any application;
 - c. notwithstanding recommendation 1, repeal Section 11(2)(c) of the Labour Relations Act;
2. Amend the wording in Section 77 to read that "*no person shall attempt at the place at which an employee works to persuade the employee during the employee's working hours to become or refrain from becoming or continuing to be a member of a trade union*"; and introduce a remedy that where a membership card is signed in violation of this section it cannot be relied upon in a certification application;
3. Mandate that union organizers be required to communicate clearly to employees the purpose and impact of their card signature during their organization campaigns, including union dues, restrictions on working for non-unionized employers, and their use in a certification application in the employee's current workplace; the certification cards should include an acknowledgement via a signature that this information has been communicated to the employee; and
4. Introduce a mechanism that allows for legal costs recuperation in failed certification cases
 - a. introduce a filing fee for certification applications and unfair labour practice applications.

- b. where the union has made numerous attempts to certify a workplace, the Board may find that union to be a vexatious litigant and dismiss the proceeding as an abuse of process for that reason. It may also require a union found to be a vexatious litigant to obtain permission from the Board to commence further proceedings or take further steps in an application or proceeding.

OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position: The committee did not reach a unanimous decision on this resolution.

Part of the committee supported the resolution, arguing that the card-based certification system is biased and leads to outcomes that do not accurately reflect the preferences of employees.

Others on the committee cited concerns about the legal language in the resolution. This includes, for example, recommendation #2, (banning union talk in the workplace), which would lead to constitutional challenges under Section 2(d) of *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom*, as employees have a right to organize and collective bargain, and noting there are already provisions in place to penalize a union acting improperly, under Section 11.1 of the *Labour Relations Act*.

Following discussions with the authoring chamber and the PAC, some changes were accepted. Overall, the Policy & Advocacy Committee cannot reach a unanimous decision on this resolution.

24. Strengthening Long Term Economic Prosperity Through Post Secondary Education & International Study Permits and Work Permits After Graduation

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

Issue

For the better part of four decades, Ontario has been a kind of post-secondary-education superpower. Our universities and colleges are among the best in the world, and the world has taken notice. Growth in foreign students have not only been the key to financial stability of the education sector they have diversified our communities, local economies, created entrepreneurial ecosystems, contributed to GDP and tax revenue at every level of government while bring a vibrancy to Canada's reputation as one of the most diversified and welcoming country's in the world. Limiting access of foreign students to post-secondary education and after graduation work permits, temporary or long term, will have significant impact on the viability of trusted post-secondary institutions, local economies, tax revenue and (Ontario's) Canada's brand as a destination for education.

Background

Canada is often stereotyped as a land of hockey lovers and Tim Hortons coffee swirlers. And while those statements may be true, as a country, we're so much more than that.

What do an online marketplace that directly connects small business to B2B and B2C both domestically and globally, what is everyone's favourite go-to lunch spot at the mall food court, and who is the Dragon turned activist combating racism in business, all have in common?

Tobias Lütke, CEO, Shopify

Wes Hall, founder Kingsdale Advisors and the BlackNorth Initiative

Karim Hakimi, Founder, Hakim Optical

V. Prem Watsa Chairman and CEO, Fairfax Financial Holdings

Shahrazad Rafati CEO, BroadbandTV (BBTV)

Dimitrios "Jimmy" Antonopoulos Owner, Jimmy the Greek

Robert Herjavec, CEO, Herjavec Group (Dragon)

Maninder Dhaliwal, CEO, Lions Gate International

They are enterprises and initiatives of former international students and immigrants who have in some way, shape or form relied on post-secondary educators for their own personal growth, access to markets, labour and inspiration.

International students are extremely important to Canada's economy. The 640,000-strong international student community in Canada also creates a diverse environment on campuses across the country. They contribute a whopping \$22 billion to the Canadian economy every year; greater than exports of auto parts, lumber or aircraft, and they support 2,000,000 jobs.

International students have created jobs, built billion-dollar companies, and invented processes that have changed the way we live. Key Insights at a glance:

- Over 25% of the 583 US companies valued at a billion dollars or more in 2022 were founded by international students.
- International students will contribute £3.2 billion to the UK economy over 10 years through income tax and National Insurance payments alone.

- Immigrants are 40% more likely than Canadian-born individuals to own businesses in knowledge- or technology-based industries.
- In 2020, International students represented 24% of students in Canada’s post-secondary education system, up from 12% in 2016.
- Canadian businesses led by immigrants are much more likely to export and derive a greater share of revenue from exporting. They rely less on the US as a market and export to more diverse markets, resulting in the growth and diversification of Canadian exports.⁵
- This growth is powered by the number of immigrant-led businesses that export at twice the rate of that of their Canadian-led competitors.⁶³

The federal government has set the tone since 2015 and two factors that came into play in the post-2015 period may have influenced the international student trajectory in terms of numbers and characteristics.

First, international student program regulatory changes took effect on June 1, 2014, and, as described in the associated Regulations Amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, the aim of these changes was “to strengthen the integrity of Canada’s immigration program by explicitly requiring study permit holders to actively pursue their studies, reducing the number of non-genuine and poor quality educational institutions hosting study permit holders, and facilitating the entry into Canada of those foreign nationals that sincerely wish to obtain a Canadian education” (Government of Canada 2014). One major change that occurred under the amended regulations is that study permits are issued only to successful applicants who are pursuing studies at an educational institution that has been designated by the province or territory to receive international students. Prior to these changes, applicants could apply for a study permit to pursue studies at any educational institution in Canada. Another major change occurred with respect to opportunities for international students to work in Canada during their studies. Under the amended regulations, all international students with a Canadian study permit are automatically authorized to work off-campus for up to 20 hours per week without being required to apply for a separate work permit, which were suspended during the pandemic.

Second, in 2014, the Government of Canada launched the International Education Strategy (2014-2019) with the goal of doubling the number of international students in Canada by 2022 (Government of Canada 2014). The strategy argued that “a robust and forward-looking strategy to attract a significant proportion of these students to Canada will create new jobs and sources of prosperity, address key labour-force challenges and create new opportunities for Canadians in every region of the country” (Government of Canada 2014). The strategy further suggested that international students are an important future source of skilled labour, as they may be eligible for permanent residency through immigration programs after graduation (Government of Canada 2014). Viewed in this way, the choices made (such as those related to sex, age, source country, and level and field of study) by educational institutions when it comes to attracting and accepting international students have a downstream impact on the sociodemographic characteristics and spectrum of human capital associated with the pool of potential candidates for permanent residency and for the Canadian labour market.

The subsequent International Education Strategy (2019-2024) cited a need for diversification in the flow of international students to Canada. This more recent strategy highlighted the need to “diversify the countries from which international students come to Canada, as well as their fields, levels of study, and location of study within Canada” (Government of Canada 2019). The document argued that attracting students from a wider diversity of countries, as well as to a greater variety of regions and programs, would foster sustainable growth in Canada’s international education sector and distribute the benefits more equitably across the country.⁶⁴

⁶³ The Impact of International Students on Destination Economies in 2023, Apply Board, March 9, 2023 <https://www.applyboard.com/applyinsights-article/the-impact-of-international-students-on-destination-economies-in-2023>

⁶⁴ International Students As A Source Of Labour Supply: The Growing Number Of International Students and Their Changing Sociodemographic Characteristics, by Eden Crossman, Youjin Choi and Feng Hou, Release date: July 28, 2021

Looking forward, trends in the sociodemographic characteristics of international students have the potential to influence the sustainable growth of Canada's international education. This strategy, however, is about more than Ontario's economic competitiveness. It's about connection, and the ties we form as people.

When more students are able to learn in diverse parts of the world, they create bonds with different cultures, communities and ways of thought. The same could be said for international students who study in Ontario. These bonds do more than enhance one's learning, they lay the groundwork for a better way to work and live — one that is more empathetic, diverse and connected.

Colleges and their private partners, alongside all levels of government, must share in the responsibility for international students' experiences and well-being. A strategic approach can support institutions as they build safe, welcoming communities and can help protect Ontario's reputation as a destination for high-quality education and enterprise.⁶⁵

Recommendations

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

1. Work with the federal government to ensure rural and northern Ontario communities and the post-secondary institutions in those communities, as well as those ion communities delivering the Rural Northern Immigration Pilot, are allocated the current level of permits, with no reduction in their allocations.
2. Work with the federal government to review demand for Attestation Letters and cash requirements doubling.
3. Work with the federal government as well as post-secondary institutions to protect and elevate Canada's brand as an international destination for foreign student education.
4. Support building more capability, capacity, and human resources for the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (CQAAP) and Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance to ensure enforcement and compliance of post-secondary educators in meeting Quality Assurance Audits.
5. Adopt the following recommendations by The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario:
 - a. Examine recruitment practices and incentive structures used to attract international students. Accurate information and ethical practice can help ensure student success.
 - b. Revisit MCU's "Public College-Private Partnerships: Minister's Binding Policy Directive" (2019) to clarify college accountabilities related to enrolment management, program quality, advertising and student support requirements; monitor and enforce these directives.
 - c. Develop a provincial strategy to guide colleges' internationalization activities. Ensure alignment between labour market gaps and high intake programs and emphasize the variety of credentials needed to meet labour market priorities.
 - d. Work with the Federal Government to review the goals and outcomes of the current program to ensure it is meeting federally identified priority programs, provide a PSE pathway for immigrants to become highly skilled workers, and is taken up across the full range of credential and programs offered by PSE institutions.
 - e. Work with the Federal Government to examine international student work permits (and the 20-hour pilot project in place) to evaluate student experiences, outcomes, completion rates and time-to completion.
 - f. Work with the Federal Government to evaluate the permits required for co-op opportunities to reduce barriers to access.

⁶⁵ Ontario's International Postsecondary Education Strategy 2018 Educating Global Citizens Mitzie Hunter Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development

- g. Work with Ontario Colleges to review the academic requirements for international students' admission — including language exam scores and assessment of prior learnings — and consider language programs for accepted students who lack adequate skills. Adhering to admission standards can help reduce pressure on students and staff.
- h. Work with Ontario Colleges to collect and publish international student satisfaction data related to available supports and resources to understand where there are persistent gaps and challenges; coordinate approaches with other colleges for comparability.
- i. Work with Ontario Colleges to leverage local community contexts for individual campuses (location, programming and populations); work closely with municipal governments to address some of the challenges facing students and institutions, including housing, health and wellbeing, inclusion and local employment.⁶⁶

OCC Policy & Advocacy Committee Position: The submitting chamber amended the resolution based on suggestions made by OCC staff and/or members. The committee supports the resolution as amended.

⁶⁶ The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, How Colleges and Government Can Enhance International Student Experiences in Ontario. Colyar, J., Pichette, J., & Deakin, J. (2023). Matching Rapid Growth with Adequate Supports: Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

25. Strengthening Ontario’s Workforce and Innovation Ecosystem by Supporting a Financially Sustainable Post-Secondary Sector

Submitted by: Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, South Niagara Chamber of Commerce, & Windsor Essex Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario’s post-secondary institutions are critical partners, as the province works to build a strong economic future by filling labour market demands in key sectors, building the capacity of local industries and developing its innovation ecosystem to hone its competitive advantage in emerging markets. As such, a financially sustainable post-secondary education sector is vital to achieving these goals and creating a better future for Ontario.

Background

Ontario has made strides in recent years to build its competitive advantage as a strong player in the global marketplace. Our ability to capitalize on recent successes and improve the province’s economic outlook in the years to come will depend on the actions taken today to cultivate the highly skilled workforce and innovation ecosystem that will propel Ontario forward. As key drivers of growth, performance, prosperity, and competitiveness, Ontario’s colleges and universities will play a vital role in fortifying our province.

However, growing financial pressures on the post-secondary sector, including rising costs to support students, the cut and freeze to tuition, declining real per student operating grants and the impact of the repeal of Bill 124, are jeopardizing Ontario’s competitive advantage and are impacting the student experience, research output, and economic development. In fact, as of 2023-24, at least 10 of Ontario’s universities are projecting operating budget deficits with a cumulative total of more than \$175 million, increasing to \$274 million in 2024-25.⁶⁷

In the college sector, average domestic tuition is just \$2,700 annually – higher only than Newfoundland and Labrador in tuition-fee charging provinces.

In 2021-2022, Ontario’s funding per college student was \$6,891, 44% of the figure for the rest of Canada (\$15,615), and universities received \$11,471 per student, which represented 57% of the figure for the rest of Canada (\$20,772), according to the government’s [Blue-Ribbon Panel on postsecondary education](#). When combined, average tuition and per-student funding levels place Ontario as the only province in the country that requires its public college system to operate with less than \$10,000 per student.

The Ontario government had the foresight to commission the work of the Blue-Ribbon Panel, which lays out an action plan for the financial health of the sector – a plan that will benefit both Ontario’s students and local economies.

The recommendations put forward by this Panel respond directly to key factors in the ongoing financial pressure experienced by the post-secondary sector. For example, implementing the Panel’s recommendations in their entirety would inject a much-needed \$1.9 billion into the university sector, alone, over the next three years.

Taking immediate action on the recommendations of the Panel to provide stability to the sector will produce tangible economic benefits that will be enjoyed across sectors and in regions throughout the province, resulting

⁶⁷ Council of Ontario Universities, “The Council of Ontario Universities’ Opening Remarks to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs”, January 2024. <https://ontariosuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SCFEA-Remarks-Final.pdf>

in better student experiences and outcomes, and allowing post-secondary institutions to continue to deliver their highest potential for the good of Ontario.

Recommendations

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

1. Invest in the postsecondary system by increasing multi-year base operating grants, immediately boosting operating grants by 10% and indexing them over time; and
2. Lift the tuition freeze for general programs at post-secondary institutions, beginning in Fall 2024.
3. Implement common sense changes to create the opportunity for students to study high-demand programs or to enrol part time.
4. Implement the Blue-Ribbon Panel recommendations on tuition, while protecting low income students.
5. Engage with the federal government and postsecondary institutions to establish clear and reasonable guidelines and timelines for the implementation of the federal cap on international study permits and determine how the cap aligns with previous commitments to develop a Recognized Institutions Framework.

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

26. Support Essential Infrastructure in Ontario with a New Municipal Funding Framework

Submitted by: Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Business growth and success depends on infrastructure, yet the state of infrastructure in the province is in an increasingly poor state of repair. Most infrastructure is municipally-owned, but municipal governments do not have sufficient financial resources to maintain their current infrastructure stock, much less close the multi-billion-dollar backlog of infrastructure that has fallen into disrepair. It is imperative that a new funding model for municipal government be found so that the infrastructure that supports economic growth can be maintained.

Background

Municipal governments have, over previous decades, become responsible for more and more public goods, and yet must do so with broadly declining revenues. To deliver the services we need for prosperity, growth, and social well-being in a changing world, we need a changed approach to municipal financing.

Municipal governments are responsible for 52% of Ontario's infrastructure, with the Province responsible for 38%, and the Government of Canada for 10%.⁶⁸ This distribution places the lion's share of the responsibility for essential infrastructure on municipal governments, yet of all three levels of government, municipalities have the fewest financial tools and the smallest sources of revenue to build and maintain infrastructure.

The financial pressures on municipalities are only growing. Over the next quarter century, Ontario's population is expected to grow by 43.6%.⁶⁹ This growth will be front-loaded, with the rate of increase at its highest point in current years and forecast to slowly decline until 2046.⁷⁰ That increase alone represents a massive new demand on roads, utilities, schools, healthcare, and emergency services. In addition, Ontario's aggressive housing targets are placing additional pressure on municipal governments to build new infrastructure, frequently without the financial support of the Province.

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) has reported that 45.3% of municipal infrastructure in the province is in a poor state of repair.⁷¹ The exact cost to address this backlog cannot be accurately estimated since even a comprehensive municipal asset dataset does not exist, however, the FAO believes the current backlog is between \$45B and \$59B.⁷²

Business depends upon this infrastructure. The cost to repair the province's municipal roads, water, and wastewater infrastructure alone would cost over \$33B.⁷³ The Province currently transfers approximately \$2.9B per year for infrastructure not under their control, but this is woefully insufficient for the maintenance of infrastructure assets in their current condition, let alone their repair to an acceptable level.⁷⁴

The FAO reports that a medium-emission scenario for climate change will add another \$4.1B to annual infrastructure maintenance costs, and municipally-owned infrastructure will incur about four times the climate-

⁶⁸ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, *Provincial Infrastructure*, 2020. Retrieved from [https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/provincial-infrastructure-2020](https://www.fao.on.org/en/Blog/Publications/provincial-infrastructure-2020) on 2024-01-15.

⁶⁹ Government of Ontario, *Ontario Population Projections*, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections> on 2024-01-15.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, *Municipal Infrastructure*, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/publications/municipal-infrastructure-2021> on 2024-01-15.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, *Provincial Infrastructure*, op. cit.

related infrastructure costs than the Province.⁷⁵ The backlog of crumbling infrastructure will only grow under the pressures of population growth, extreme weather, and budget shortfalls.

Municipal governments themselves do not have the budget to deal with this increasing backlog of deteriorating assets. Provincial tax fortunes have been good in recent years, with revenue increases of 6.5% in 2022-23 and 12.2% in 2021-22.⁷⁶ Annual corporate tax revenues rose 81% between 2019 and 2022, while annual income tax revenue rose 40% in that same period.⁷⁷ Municipal revenue, however, has grown only 17% in four years.⁷⁸ Across the country, when adjusted for inflation, municipal tax revenue growth between 2016 and 2021 has been negative, at an average annual rate of -1.1%.⁷⁹

The last full-scale review of how municipalities are funded in Ontario was conducted sixteen years ago.⁸⁰ Without a new model for municipal funding in the province, the alternatives are either the continued deterioration of infrastructure to the point where it can no longer support business and population growth, or swingeing property tax increases that will impoverish businesses and residents alike. With far deeper pockets and many more revenue options available to them, the governments of Ontario and Canada must re-examine their fiscal relationship with municipal governments.

We suggest the Municipal Growth Framework model proposed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) as a potential option for the provincial and federal governments. These proposals would allow municipal governments to maximize their existing revenue-generating tools and grant them new ones, enhance current federal and provincial/territorial transfers, and create new transfers. Additionally, the framework seeks to tie municipal revenue to economic growth and population growth in support of the targets that the Government of Ontario has set for housing and population growth, and that the Government of Canada has set for immigration.⁸¹

Whether or not the Government of Ontario chooses to adopt this framework, a new funding model is needed for municipal governments, and with each passing year, the cost of failing to do this increases.

Recommendations

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

1. Work with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and the Government of Canada and adopt the FCM Municipal Growth Framework model for municipal government funding and inter-governmental transfers.

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

⁷⁵ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, *Costing Climate Change Impacts to Public Infrastructure: Summary Report*, 2023. Retrieved from [https://www.fao-on.org/web/default/files/publications/EC2302%20CIPI%20Summary/CIPI%20Summary%20Briefing%20Deck-EN.pdf](https://www.fao.on.org/web/default/files/publications/EC2302%20CIPI%20Summary/CIPI%20Summary%20Briefing%20Deck-EN.pdf) on 2024-01-15.

⁷⁶ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, *Economic and Budget Outlook, Spring 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/EBO-SP2023> on 2024-01-15.

⁷⁷ Mike Crawley, “As Ontario rolls in tax dollars, why are its cities so cash-strapped?” *CBC*, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-cities-municipal-finances-revenue-1.6792990>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Federation of Canadian Municipalities, *FCM Municipal Growth Framework Backgrounder*, 2023. Retrieved from <https://media.fcm.ca/municipal-growth-framework-backgrounder.pdf> on 2024-01-15.

⁸⁰ Association of Municipalities of Ontario, *Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review*, 2008. Retrieved from <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/PMFSDR/FacingtheFutureTogetherProvincialMunicipalReviewReport.pdf> on 2024-01-15.

⁸¹ Federation of Canadian Municipalities, op. cit.

27. The Revitalization of Manufacturing in Ontario

Submitted by: Oakville Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The provincial government has a critical role in addressing key competitiveness issues that have a real impact on Ontario's manufacturing sector. This includes retaining skilled workers, introducing competitive incentives to invest in technology and helping Ontario-based manufacturers become more competitive and lower their business costs.

Background

The manufacturing sector is a cornerstone of Canada's economy, playing a crucial role in creating jobs, fostering innovation, and driving economic growth. The nation's 90,000 manufacturers directly generate 9.5 per cent of Canada's real gross domestic product (GDP), make up one-quarter of its business research and development spending, and account for 60 per cent of the country's outbound goods. Taken together, the sector's direct, indirect and induced impacts amount to 27 per cent of Canada's total economic activity. In addition, by employing 1.79 million Canadians and supporting 3.58 million more jobs through supply chain activity and employee spending, the manufacturing industry undoubtedly makes substantial contributions to communities across Canada.⁸²

However, Canada's productivity has been declining for more than two years and productivity has declined in 10 out of the last 11 quarters. This is due to several factors such as limited innovation adoption, skills gaps, inefficient regulatory processes, and weak business investment in machinery, equipment, and technology.

As stated by the C.D. Howe Institute, new capital per worker in Canada was less than \$15,000 in 2022, compared to \$20,000 in other OECD countries and almost \$28,000 in the United States.

Canada's productivity has not only just fallen back to pre-pandemic levels but has fallen to a point that is now lower than at any time since 2017. Meanwhile, U.S. productivity surged 4.7 % in the third quarter of 2023.⁸³

In addition, according to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Business Data Lab we are lagging as compared to other developed countries from low rates of business research and development spending (BERD).

Data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) consistently shows that Canada underperforms well below average against global peers in terms of research and development (R&D) investment intensity (i.e., R&D investment as a share of GDP).

In comparison to our international peers, Germany plans to increase research investment to 3.5 percent of GDP by 2025 and Finland to 4 per cent of GDP by 2030, while Canada currently only sits at about 1.6 per cent.⁸⁴

In support of encouraging innovation, investment, and technology within the industry and the commercialization of products in manufacturing, the Ontario government should implement a complementary patent box regime that grants preferential tax treatment for income derived from patented inventions.

Previous budgets have committed to review the implementation of a Patent Box system to encourage commercialization of products and new technology adoption in Ontario. This has also been successfully

⁸² <https://cme-mec.ca/initiatives/manufacturing-canadas-future/#:~:text=Manufacturing%20is%20a%20cornerstone%20of%20Canada's%20economy&text=The%20nation's%2090%2C000%20manufacturers%20directly,of%20the%20country's%20outbound%20goods.>

⁸³ <https://www.cdhowe.org/expert-op-eds/feeble-business-investment-shows-morneau-right-about-economic-stagnation-financial>

⁸⁴ <https://bdl-lde.ca/terminal/>

adopted in other international jurisdictions and Canadian provinces. Such a system would support initial production scale-up by reducing corporate taxes paid on earnings from new products.

Finally, attaining skilled labour continues to be a challenge for Ontario manufacturers. To that end, the province should continue to promote skilled trades and apprenticeship programs through an on-the-job training investment tax credit. There are many supportive measures for technology purchases and apprenticeship programs, but what often stops employers from fully leveraging these supports is limited resources to upskill employees through work-focused training programs. This can be training to use new machinery or completing the implementation of a new digital platform.

The current ***Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit*** certainly helps, providing funding to purchase new machinery and real estate. However, small changes to eligibility would improve the measure to make sure it can capture hardware, software, moulds and die, and benefit more companies who have a strong local footprint, but some level of foreign ownership.

This tax measure would be effectively supplemented by an on-the-job training incentive. By providing matching funding for training done in relation to technology improvement in a work environment, we can provide workers the tools to succeed, not in a classroom environment, but in the real world, where the knowledge can immediately grow their skills and their income. Making businesses more productive.

Several North American jurisdictions have similar training in place, for example Georgia, Kentucky and Quebec.

There is clearly a movement among many large Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs -automotive market) to on-shore or bring back manufacturing to North America (US, Canada, and Mexico) to shorten supply chains and reduce risk of related disruptions.

Geopolitical tensions and domestic trade considerations in the US have further encouraged and supported the onshoring activities particularly related to China. Also, the recent UAW and UNIFOR labour agreements have fueled a push within North America to focus new investments in addition to production relocation from US and Canada to Mexico.

Canada and Ontario need a clearly stated strategy aimed at taking advantage of the move to onshoring as well as presenting Ontario as a better alternative within the above to Mexico or the US.

In addition to a strategy, we need to focus on taking some very deliberate actions, immediately to support and encourage business investment and confidence in Ontario.

Furthermore, Ontario needs a world-class, agile regulatory system that supports growth and innovation. Although there have been steps taken by both the Ontario government and the federal government to reduce the regulatory burden on manufacturers, additional steps are required surrounding meaningful regulatory statements.

The province needs to streamline and significantly reduce bureaucracy surrounding investments in Ontario. New construction or other building permits, process permits, and other related licenses required to set up or expand manufacturing in Ontario are taking five to ten times longer than in the US.

While some progress was made in streamlining these approvals through an online portal, some applicants are still required to submit applications via fax, and processing times remain significantly above those noted in other provinces and US states.

Ontario should learn from neighboring jurisdictions (especially Manitoba, Dakota and Illinois) to establish a single online window covering all types of permits and streamline the various local approvals currently required for transit across Ontario regions.

The timeframe and complexity of getting approvals for investments from multiple layers of government is directly delaying and, in some cases, stopping investment decisions. As such, the ongoing ability of companies to comply with complex regulations is increasing business costs.

For many companies, it still takes them over a year to obtain a permit or an approval. Whereas in US states, it can take as little as two weeks. We urge the provincial government to adopt similar processes that will result in an accelerated timeline.

Recommendations

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

1. Leverage the ongoing provincial tax review to establish measures effectively rewarding commercialization and production of goods and advanced technologies in Ontario such as the Patent Box System.
2. Enhance the current ***Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit*** with an on-the-job training incentive to include all on-the-job training for manufacturing workers, up to 50% for the first 5 years.
3. Establish a single online window covering all types of permits and streamline the various local approvals.

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

28. Workforce Transitioning to Electric Vehicles

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Leamington Chamber of Commerce

Issue

As electric vehicles become an increasingly large share of the automotive market, certifications for mechanics need to have the relevant training to make sure they can service electric vehicles. Especially as the Canadian Government pushes for 100% electric vehicle sales by 2035, plans need to be put in place to transition the workforce for upcoming needs.

Background

Electric vehicles require entirely different knowledge sets than traditional internal combustion engine vehicles. For example, electric vehicles do not possess transmissions, one of the most key components for internal combustion engine vehicles. 310-S and 310-T certifications are required to work on vehicles but don't have any required training for electric vehicles.

Thus, the education required to work on this component is irrelevant for mechanics that are working solely on electric vehicles and their drivetrains. As an increasing share of the automotive market transitions towards electric vehicles, those who are only trained and knowledgeable on internal combustion engines will have decreasing number of vehicles to work on, especially as the federal government requires all vehicles sold in Canada to be electric by 2035.

Not only do we need more technicians certified to work on electric vehicles but also need to transition the existing technician labour force away from internal combustion engines. Currently there is almost 50,000 Ontarians employed as automotive technicians working on both passenger vehicles as well as transport trucks.⁸⁵ They will need retraining in how to manage electric vehicle components such as battery fuel cells and charging ports. The risk for many auto shops is that they do not have the skilled workforce necessary to service electric vehicles and are excluded from working on these new vehicles until they can hire or have their personnel trained to work on electric vehicles. Retraining their existing technicians to work on electric vehicles could be a costly and prohibitive challenge facing the sector.

Beyond the questions of personnel concerns are the concerns that shops will have to upgrade their equipment to deal with electric vehicles and their unique needs. This will be a costly transition that will be hard to justify until the demand is present from their customer base. However there needs to be a proactive approach to help those businesses adjust to changing market conditions imposed by government initiatives.

Unless these challenges are addressed the mechanic shops of today could struggle to operate in the world of tomorrow.

⁸⁵ [Automotive Service Technician in Ontario | Job prospects - Job Bank](#)

Recommendations

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

1. Provide financial assistance through loans and grants to help those already trained and 310-S and 310-T certified to get training to work on electric vehicles.
2. Provide financial assistance through loans and grants to help small auto mechanic shops adapt to electric vehicles and their unique needs including any specialized equipment purchases necessary.
3. Work with post-secondary institutions to develop and enhance certification programs for 310-S and 310-T to be inclusive of electric vehicles.

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