



Wednesday, November 4, 2015

An Open Letter to all Ontario Members of Parliament:

On behalf of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and our diverse network of 60,000 members, I would like to congratulate you on your recent electoral victory.

The OCC represents local chambers of commerce and boards of trade in over 135 communities across Ontario. Our mission is to support economic growth in Ontario by defending business priorities on behalf of our members. It is for this reason that we took on an active role during the recent federal election, highlighted by the release of our report *In Focus: Federal Priorities for the Ontario Economy*.

Please find enclosed with this letter that report in addition to *Emerging Stronger*, our five-year agenda aimed at spurring growth and prosperity in Ontario by providing clear and achievable recommendations to business, government, and the not-for-profit sector.

We were encouraged to see that many of the OCC's policy recommendations made it into the federal parties' platforms. We will be even more encouraged when federal representatives have acted upon these commitments.

We believe there are three key priorities that this government and all Members of Parliament (MPs) should address in the near term. Those priorities are outlined below:

- **Reinstate the mandatory, long-form census.** We are encouraged to see that, according to media reports, the new government is moving to reinstate the census. A mandatory census will ensure that Ontario employers have access to reliable labour market data. It will also allow businesses to better foresee trends in the labour market and tailor their policies and decisions accordingly.
- **Get infrastructure dollars out the door.** The new federal government has committed to increasing the federal government's infrastructure investment to nearly \$125 billion over the next decade. These funds are badly needed to ease productivity-zapping congestion in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, as well as for strategic transportation infrastructure that will spur development of the Ring of Fire, the generational mining opportunity in Ontario's far north.
- **Move forward with tax relief measures for small businesses.** The new federal government has committed to reducing the small business tax rate from 11 percent to 9 percent. We urge the new federal government to work with the business community as it designs and implements the tax cut.

In addition to these priorities, we urge all MPs to recognize that Canada's economic growth is driven largely by growth in Ontario and, further, economic success in this province signals a rise in prosperity across the country. For too long, Ontario's economic challenges have not been adequately addressed by federal governments of all political stripes. As a result, the gap between what Ontarians pay to the federal government and what they receive back now stands at \$11 billion. All MPs, especially those representing Ontario ridings, must keep the interests of Ontarians and Ontario businesses top of mind.

Finally, we encourage all Ontario MPs to engage in a meaningful dialogue with their local chamber of commerce or board of trade, who are eager to partner with you to improve Ontario's business climate.

We look forward to furthering the dialogue between Ontario businesses and all federal political representatives to enact federal public policies that will help Ontario transition from a path of recovery to growth.

Sincerely,



Allan O'Dette  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

#### **About the Ontario Chamber of Commerce**

For more than a century, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has been the independent, non-partisan voice of Ontario business. Our mission is to support economic growth in Ontario by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of our network's diverse 60,000 members.

From innovative SMEs to established multi-national corporations and industry associations, the OCC is committed to working with our members to improve business competitiveness across all sectors. We represent local chambers of commerce and boards of trade in over 135 communities across Ontario, steering public policy conversations provincially and within local communities. Through our focused programs and services, we enable companies to grow at home and in export markets.

The OCC provides exclusive support, networking opportunities, and access to innovative insight and analysis for our members. Through our export programs, we have approved over 1,300 applications, and companies have reported results of over \$250 million in export sales.

The OCC is Ontario's business advocate.