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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Budget 2019 Strikes Right Balance for Business Community: SSM Chamber**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce (SSMCOC) is pleased to see that the Government of Ontario has heard the message of the province's Chamber Network, and is taking reasonable steps to build a stronger Ontario. The Ontario government's balance of fiscal sustainability and critical investments in skills and infrastructure will promote long-term economic growth. The proposed investments in broadband infrastructure and skills development will create real value for Ontarians, especially communities in the North.

"Steps to address the skilled labour shortage across the province is something that the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce Chamber of Commerce has advocated for both provincially and federally," says Don Mitchell, President of the local Chamber. "Skills development opportunities for our Indigenous people are also important and we also saw this addressed in Thursday's budget."

In 2018, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce authored a policy resolution advocating creating private, public and Indigenous partnerships to Address the skills gap.

Some key measures in Budget 2019 supported by the Ontario business community include:

- **Skills and workforce development:** With 75 percent of Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) members stating the ability to recruit and retain talent is a critical factor to their competitiveness, the SSMCOC and OCC have long called on the government to address the province's skills mismatch. Modernizing Ontario's apprenticeship system, reforming skills and employment training programs, and improving the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program are all critical steps to create the workforce of the future.
- **Infrastructure:** The SSMCOC and the OCC are pleased by the government's \$315 million investment in critical broadband and cellular infrastructure over the next five years. Access to high-speed internet is a basic requirement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, much like roads, bridges, and electricity. Regarding the government's planned investments of \$14.7 billion in the province's infrastructure over the next ten years, the SSMCOC and OCC hope to see more details on the plan. The Ontario Chamber network will continue to press the government to address the province's infrastructure deficit.
- **Competitive taxation:** Building a more competitive tax environment is critical to fueling investment, innovation, and economic growth across Ontario, particularly in times of fiscal limitation. The Ontario Job Creation Investment Incentive will provide much-needed tax relief for industry while promoting investment and job growth. The SSMCOC and OCC also continue to encourage the government to help small businesses scale-up by creating a variable small business tax rate.

The Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce notes that it watched Thursday's budget closely to see what steps would be taken to move toward a balanced budget and was pleased to see a plan tabled that outlines steps to get the province back on track without large cuts to programming and services.

According to Don Mitchell, "Ontario already has relatively low per-capita expenditures on health care, education, and social protection, so as a Chamber, we do not advocate deep cuts to any programming, but rather we were looking at this budget to highlight responsible spending and investments that will offer solid return on tax-payer dollars by spurring and encouraging business growth and re-investment."

In a statement from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, OCC President and CEO Rocco Rossi, states: “Our message to the government in advance of Budget 2019 had been clear: bring down the deficit, focus on competitive taxation, and choose strategic investments that contribute to Ontario’s long-term economic growth. We are encouraged by the robust plan for returning the Province to a balanced budget, including meaningful action to improve government accountability. This Budget is focused on spending smarter rather than resorting to austerity measures.”

***About the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce***

*The Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of 700 plus business and agencies in Sault Ste. Marie and has been serving the needs of this community since 1889. The Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce will lead the way as the voice of business, advancing economic prosperity for its membership and the business community. Learn more about the SSMCOC at [www.ssmcoc.com](http://www.ssmcoc.com)*

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