



SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

TO: HONOURABLE PETER BETHLENFALVY, MINISTRY OF FINANCE, PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

CC: MINISTER FULLERTON, MINISTER MACLEOD, MPP ROBERTS, MPP GHAMARI, MAYOR WATSON, DR. ETCHES, ROCCO ROSSI (ONTARIO CHAMBER CEO)

PRESENTED BY: SUELING CHING, PRESIDENT AND CEO, OTTAWA BOARD OF TRADE

SUBJECT: 2021 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS - OTTAWA

DATE: JANUARY 29, 2021

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to present. My name is Sueling Ching and I am the President and CEO of the Ottawa Board of Trade. Congratulations and thank you, Minister Bethlenfalvy, and your colleagues for your continued and high level of collaboration as we work together to stay safe and navigate a complicated economic and health recovery.

The Ottawa Board of Trade is the voice for business in Ottawa, our Nation's Capital. Our mission is to create prosperity through advocacy, collaboration and leadership. Over the last ten months we have been supporting businesses with access to relevant information and programs. We have convened with business and community leaders, stakeholders and politicians as well as our colleagues at the Ontario and Canadian Chambers to advocate for policies and programs that directly support business and our community. We are pleased to provide the following input for the next provincial budget.

The key to economic recovery is to empower and inspire private enterprise to lead the way. We appreciate the government support our businesses have received to keep our economy going. Now, we must refine our focus to invest in the right infrastructure and human capital and eliminate all barriers to business. The main theme we wish to convey as we set our financial priorities is the same one we have asked our decision makers to consider when designing our health measures. **Public health and safety, mental wellbeing and economic prosperity are completely entwined.** No lever can be pulled on one that does not impact the other. And this lesson can be leveraged to accelerate our collective prosperity.

Today, we are asking the provincial government to focus on three main areas for our economic evolution

1. **STAY OPEN**
2. **INVEST NOW**
3. **INNOVATE POLICY**

1. STAY OPEN. Get back to business and get people to work while living with COVID.

- a. Ensure public and employer access to sophisticated tools and high levels of screening, rapid testing, contact tracing and digital immunization records. Prioritize vaccines to older adults who are most likely to overwhelm our hospitals. Invest in the physical spaces of our institutions and workspaces that require in person work such as schools. Target restrictions only to areas, sectors and businesses presenting the most risk.

- b. Invest in a school and child-care strategy that inclusively supports education of our children which allows parents to productively contribute to our economy, and preserves the emotional wellbeing of the entire family unit.
- c. Training and retraining for employees and entrepreneurs who are displaced or must close their businesses – leverage mentors and peer groups with relevant experience.
- d. Invest in access to mental wellbeing and workplace wellness resources and services for entrepreneurs, employees and executives. Establish public campaigns that destigmatize mental health issues that inhibit creativity, productivity and further burden our health care system.

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2. INVEST NOW. Target support in the most vulnerable sectors, areas of business that need to be modernized or transformed as well as sectors that will contribute most to future growth.

- a. Broadband for all, immediately. Set bold goals and develop innovative solutions, leveraging private sector options. In today's global economy, this issue is our primary competitive disadvantage and barrier to growth.
- b. Access to capital and start-up funding with more leniency, less risk to personal assets and with a focus on a marginalized population. Access to grants for the hardest hit sectors including SMEs, tourism, downtown and main street businesses who have exhausted all other options and cannot accumulate more debt.
- c. Additional support and flexibility for municipalities to ensure grass roots, community centered priority setting. Review municipal responsibilities such as affordable housing to ensure we are operating as effectively and competitively as possible in Ontario compared to other jurisdictions.
- d. Investments in key strategic sectors and regions that will result in a high economic return in future years. For example, as the Nation's Capital, Ottawa should be a prime prospect for national and international business events and conventions. There is an enormous economic spin off from these activities in the region and across Ontario, as well as the potential to gain the attention of future investors, leisure travelers and residents. However, we require additional support for sales, marketing and destination development to compete with global competitors who are bidding now for business in the next two to three years. This is a key opportunity for Ontario.

3. INNOVATE POLICY MAKING. Prioritize policies and programs that foster a competitive environment and inspire business confidence and growth.

- a. Government procurement practices that demonstrate leadership in supporting Ontario first, Canada next and the world third.
- b. Greater collaboration with all levels of government to optimize resources, eliminate duplication and reduce deferral of responsibilities – and which will also result in clear, confidence building communications.
- c. Elimination of interprovincial trade barriers to support access to our own markets, Ontario should lead this agenda item.
- d. Advance the regulatory modernization agenda to leverage emerging trends and accelerate recovery.

We believe the COVID challenge can be turned into an opportunity if we become visionaries and collaborators focused on priorities that create inclusive and sustainable growth. Thank you for your continued commitment and your attention today.