

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**IMPROVING ONTARIO'S COMPETITIVENESS:
NEW MANDATE AT 95TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

LONDON - Ontario's business community has clearly identified what needs to be done to strengthen the province's competitiveness and build a stronger, more productive economy.

"Our direction is clear," says Len Crispino, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. "Ontario's share of global trade and investment is slipping and we must work together with government to provide real, workable solutions."

A total of 39 priority areas were identified after intense debate among representatives from communities throughout the province.

"The lack of integrated and long-term transportation planning and investment was clearly identified by chamber representatives from across the province as the number one issue curbing Ontario's competitiveness today," says Diana Hills-Milligan, president of the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade. "We'll work with our counterparts throughout the province to press for 30 year planning in transportation infrastructure and investment versus the current trend of five years or less."

Other approved priorities:

- Calling on the provincial government to establish an independent minimum wage review board that conducts periodic reviews in conjunction with an economic impact assessment
- Recommending a change in the way MPP salaries are determined by de-linking them from MP salaries and restoring them to the responsibility of Ontario's Integrity Commissioner
- A long-term tax package strategy for Ontario
- Eastward extension of Highway 407
- Nuclear energy resolution
- Encouraging the exploration of Energy from Waste alternatives as a way of generating electricity and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill sites
- Strategically investing in Ontario's agricultural community considering the importance of the industry to Ontario's economy

This new policy agenda will set the course of the OCC's advocacy efforts for the coming year - forming a framework to guide the Chamber as it works with the provincial government to build and improve Ontario's economy.

"Recent events have demonstrated that business must be part of the solution," said Crispino. "The chamber network, representing 57,000 businesses from across the province of every size and sector, provides government with the insight needed to identify real solutions - solutions that, like Corporate Tax Consolidation, will lead to a more competitive business environment and ultimately, higher productivity and job creation."

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“We look forward to working hand-in-hand with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and other chambers throughout the province knowing that businesses in Ajax and Pickering will be the ultimate winners,” says Hills-Milligan.

A full version of the adopted policy resolutions can be found at www.occ.on.ca

About the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade:

The Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade is the voice of the business community in Ajax and Pickering. Established in 1955, the 460-plus members represent an array of business sectors ranging from the service industry to manufacturers and distributors. The group’s advocacy and policy initiatives focus on issues relating to such things as economic development, healthcare, education, transportation issues, community and social development, environment, and energy.

About the OCC:

The OCC represents over 57,000 businesses through 160 local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, and has been Ontario’s business advocate since 1911. Its advocacy and policy initiatives focus on six areas key to the economic well-being of the province: health; education; energy; finance & taxation; transportation & infrastructure; and border issues.

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