

INFRASTRUCTURE/TRANSPORTATION

A. Encouraging Municipal Government Collaboration to Address Transit Needs and Gaps

Submitted by: The Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by Milton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The lack of adequate or any transit options in small and rural communities impacts business competitiveness and the mobility of residents. Greater collaboration between adjacent municipalities with and without adequate transit solutions could help address transit gaps by extending or building on existing transit systems.

Background

Public transit in small towns and rural communities is often either insufficient or non-existent. Limited mobility negatively impacts business productivity by hindering its talent pool and potential for growth. Limited and/or insufficient transit puts communities at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining industry and investment. Access to affordable, public transit would allow local businesses to remain competitive, and residents to maintain independence with access to healthcare providers, employment and community hubs.

For example, Toronto Premium Outlets, located in Halton Hills, is a very popular shopping destination, attracting tourists from around the world. Located directly off of Highway 401, they employ over 900 full-time workers. During peak seasons, Toronto Premium Outlets employs over 2000 workers, the majority of which reside in the neighbouring municipalities of Brampton, Milton and Mississauga. At any given time, as many as 50% of all employees at the mall are part-time workers, many of whom are students. Transit from both Brampton and Milton terminate approximately five kilometers from Toronto Premium Outlets. Consequently, workers must drive to work, be dropped off, take a taxi or a ride hailing service like Uber, which is costly and contributes to congestion on the 401, Steeles Avenue, and the Trafalgar Road.

Since it is not feasible for every municipality, especially more rural and/or remote communities to invest in community-wide public transit nor for the province to directly subsidize every municipality's transit needs, the Government of Ontario is encouraged to put in place the necessary policies, infrastructure and/or funding to make it feasible for neighbouring municipalities to develop and implement innovative solutions that address transit challenges and gaps that exist across municipal boundaries.

Encouraging or building on existing cross-municipal collaboration adjacent municipalities may opt to extend existing transit systems to service a wider geographic region, specifically into regions that lack transit options and service key employment zones. Addressing cross-municipal transit needs has spillover benefits for surrounding municipalities and economies as workers, commuters, and residents of both, can travel more seamlessly between regions and be significantly better connected.

Municipal government collaboration on current transit gaps in regions lacking transit options, would address the last-mile problem facing residents and commuters, and provide a more cost-effective alternative to owning a personal vehicle.

Recommendations

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

1. Put in place the necessary policies to encourage and streamline transit project collaborations between municipalities and regions. Example: Work with insurance companies to understand and support extensions of transit service into adjacent municipalities.

2. Put in place the necessary infrastructure and/or funding that make it feasible for municipalities and/or regions to identify transit gaps and build on or extend existing transit service across municipal boundaries into adjacent municipalities that lack adequate transit options.
3. Urge the federal government to invest in transportation plans, including multi-municipality or regional plans.
4. Expand the Community Transportation Grant Program (announced January 25, 2019) to encourage and specifically support this kind of municipal collaboration.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

B. Enhancing Highway Connectivity

Submitted by: The Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Orillia Chamber of Commerce, Oro-Medonte Chamber of Commerce, Whitby Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Connecting Highways 400 and 404 is critical to supporting economic development in Ontario.

Background

Highways 400 and 404 serve as backbones of Ontario's economy, together carrying all North/South traffic across the province.

The current lack of connectivity between these two highways is limiting Ontario's economic productivity. Whenever there is an accident that closes down the 400, all North/South movement of goods and people is disrupted for several hours.⁸¹

Congestion along Highway 400 is likely to increase considerably by 2041 as Simcoe and York regions experience explosive population and employment growth.⁸² Appropriate transportation infrastructure is needed to support regional economic growth.

The Highway 400-404 Connecting Link is a proposed 16.2 kilometre, four-lane highway extension.⁸³ The project would result in a significant economic impact through reduced traffic congestion, more efficient transport of goods and services, faster access to airports, back-up options for emergency shut downs, and new employment and investment opportunities.

The reduction in delay costs associated with accidents alone would be significant, with each hour of delay costing an estimated \$25 per car and hundreds of accidents occurring along the 400 each year.⁸⁴

The Connecting Link has passed Ontario's Environmental Assessment process. Prioritizing its completion is fundamental to Ontario's economic development.

Recommendations

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

1. Complete the extension of Highway 404 to intersect with Highway 400 in Simcoe County by 2022.
2. The extension of Highway 404 should not be tolled.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

⁸¹ Freeman, J., 2017, "Frustrated drivers trapped for hours after Hwy. 400 shut down for chemical spill," <https://www.cp24.com/news/frustrated-drivers-trapped-for-hours-after-hwy-400-shut-down-for-chemical-spill-1.3511876>.

⁸² "Highway 400-404 Connecting Link," http://www.eastwillimbury.ca/Government/Highway_400-404_Connecting_Link.htm.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Huen, K., Tighe, S., and McCabe, B, 2005, "Incorporating User Delay Cost in Project Selection: A Canadian Case Study," <http://www.civil.uwaterloo.ca/cpatt/AISIM/PAPERS/Paper%20-%20Huen,%20Ken.pdf>.

C. Improve Ontario's Transportation System with Better Quality Roadways

Submitted by: The Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Premature and repetitive road maintenance creates traffic congestion, increased truck fleet maintenance and repair costs, as well as increased carbon emissions. By improving and enforcing standards for quality asphalt, these economic and environmental costs can be reduced.

Background

According to the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, an audit conducted by the Ministry of Transportation in 2000 found “significant problems throughout the province with pavement cracking years before it was expected to, resulting in increased cost to taxpayers for highways having to be repaired or repaved sooner than expected, and increased inconveniences and time lost for drivers due to more frequent road work.”⁸⁵ Poor quality asphalt that cannot withstand Ontario’s winter conditions was found to be the cause. Since 2007, the Ministry has “in essence, allowed the Ministry’s suppliers to determine the quality of materials that they would supply, even though premature cracking would result in additional revenue for the industry as a whole and incur additional costs for taxpayers.”⁸⁶

As noted by the Auditor General, poor-quality asphalt contributes to additional costs to taxpayers. Repairing cracked pavements alone has almost tripled the Ministry of Transportation’s budget since 2007 from \$45 million to \$125 million per year. Damaged asphalt costs the transportation industry as well. It can cause increased roll resistance, adding to fuel costs, and premature deterioration of vehicles, which increases repair and maintenance costs. Traffic congestion is worsened due to continuous road repairs and resulting traffic delays, which impacts the ability and increases cost of companies offering “Just in Time Delivery”. Overall highway safety and efficiency is degraded.

Higher asphalt standards and quality testing are needed. The Ministry of Transportation plans and budgets for paving of highways every 15 to 20 years, but the Auditor General reports there are numerous instances of Ontario highways being replaced in five to eight years and premature cracks being found as early in the first year. This was tracked by Ministry staff in its Central Region, however typically the Ministry does not measure the performance of asphalt. Its Pavement Condition Index measures only current conditions, not how often it cracks or is in need of repair. Since 2007, the Extended Aging test was recommended for implementation, but only started being phased in in 2015, giving the construction industry time to adapt.

The Government of Ontario could save money, improve highway safety, reduce congestion and support transportation efficiency by establishing and enforcing minimum asphalt standards and measuring asphalt performance.

Recommendations

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

1. Encourage the Ministry of Transport to work with the transport industry to improve the quality of roadways in Ontario.
2. Improve and enforce minimum asphalt standards for all paving contracts taking into consideration the impacts of weather conditions for each region.

⁸⁵ 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, Chapters 3 and 4.
http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en16/v1_310en16.pdf.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

3. Work with industry to review and update the Pavement Condition Index to include lifetime performance metrics.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

D. Investing in Northern Ontario's Highway Infrastructure

Submitted by: The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Co-sponsored by Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Brantford Brant Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Northern Ontario suffers from an infrastructure deficit. Continuing investment to complete the four-laning of Highway 69 (Highway 400 North) should be the first step to rectifying a critical infrastructure shortage that has limited Ontario's economic potential, ability to attract and retain workers, and connectivity both within the province and across Canada.

Background

Highway 69 is the main connective road between Northern and Southern Ontario. It connects Highway 400 North with the City of Greater Sudbury (the largest municipality in Northern Ontario), where it meets Highway 17 West headed toward Sault Ste. Marie and further on to Western Canada. It acts as the funnel for Southern Ontario people, businesses, and tourists heading North and vice versa. Moreover, it is an integral link in the Trans-Canada Highway, connecting the Greater Toronto Area and Northern Ontario to Western Canada.

Despite its importance, the Highway still suffers from a lack of necessary investment to realize its full economic potential. The Highway, between Highway 559 north of Parry Sound to Highway 607 south of Sudbury, is an 81 km stretch of narrow, hilly, winding two-lane road that offers little maneuverability. In recent years, work commenced on the four-laning of a 14 km stretch of Highway 69 from Highway 607 to Highway 522, and it is expected to be completed by 2020. Plans to expand Highway 69 were originally announced in 1991, however, since that point, the project has been paused, modified and forgotten by successive provincial governments.

The provincial government should commit to completing the four-laning of Highway 69 to:

- first and foremost, unlock Ontario's economic potential;
- reduce highway closures due to accidents (often with fatalities) and inclement weather;
- help businesses who depend on this highway get their goods to market;
- improve Ontario's inter- and intra-provincial connectivity; and
- reverse Northern Ontario's declining population trends.

Unlocking Ontario's Economic Potential:

Investment in highway infrastructure has long been recognized as a viable method of creating good-paying, middle class jobs. Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure would create well-paying jobs that would contribute not just to local communities, but to the province's economy as a whole, during the project and for many decades after. A 2011 study by the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers found that every \$1 billion in highway investment could support 13,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs.⁸⁷

Even while Ontario's economy has improved significantly over the past few decades, most of those gains have remained contained in Southern Ontario and have not been realized in the North. In 2016, the Northern Policy Institute estimated that Northern Ontario has seen six years of negative GDP growth since

⁸⁷ <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/otps/pubs/impacts/>

2000, while Southern Ontario only saw two.⁸⁸ Investing in Northern Ontario's highway infrastructure can help revitalize regional economies, which in turn can help unlock Ontario's economic potential.

Whether due to weather conditions or fatal collisions on the narrow, undivided road, Highway 69 is often closed for extended periods of time, adding hours to commutes and disrupting reliable access to and from Northern Ontario for businesses, residents, and tourists.⁸⁹ A safer and more reliable Highway 69 would have a positive impact on regional and provincial productivity by improving ease of access and mobility and reducing the time it takes to transport materials or finished goods, especially for businesses reliant on "just in time" delivery to achieve maximum productivity efficiencies. Four-laning Highway 69 would have a positive cascading effect on not just the economies around the Highway, but all of Ontario.

Improving Ontario's Inter- and Intra-Provincial Connectivity:

Successful inter- and intra-provincial trade is foremost dependent on the existence of a safe, reliable, and convenient highway network that allows passengers, heavy transports, and tourists to travel across the province and country. The Highway was originally designed at a time when the majority of freight traffic was still being transported by railway, and the two-lane highway cannot accommodate the increased heavy transport traffic. Frequent highway closures due to accidents, which often result in fatalities, can have a significant adverse impact on commercial activity, act as an economic and tourist deterrent, and are unsafe for drivers. Completing the four-laning of Highway 69 will help improve traffic flow, safety, and reliability for drivers and improve access for passengers driving on the highway. In its current two-lane state, the Highway negatively impacts residents, businesses, and the supply chain of the entire province.

Reversing Northern Ontario's Declining Population Trends:

A 2018 study commissioned by the City of Greater Sudbury estimated that Greater Sudbury is the only major urban centre in Northern Ontario expected to grow its population by 2046; every other Northern Ontario city of comparable size has been experiencing either declining or stagnant population growth since 2001.⁹⁰ It is difficult to attract and retain people and investment to Northern Ontario when safe and convenient transportation to Southern Ontario and other parts of Canada is inadequate. With the federal government's changes to aviation regulations risking reduced flight service in Northern Ontario, and little to no passenger rail service, building a robust highway connecting Northern and Southern Ontario is not only critical to the region's economy but to the sustainability of Northern Ontario's communities as well. The province cannot afford to neglect such alarming trends in Northern communities, as they are critical to Ontario's economy.

Recommendations

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

1. Commit to investing in Northern Ontario's transportation infrastructure, namely by announcing an expeditious completion timeline for the four-laning of Highway 69;

⁸⁸ <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/article/getting-the-small-things-right-how-data-suppression-distorts-northern-realities-9167.asp>

⁸⁹ <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1471-2458-12-1125>

⁹⁰ https://vmcdn.ca/files/sudbury/pdfs-for-web/planningcommittee_agenda_180409_16_full_report.pdf

2. Adopt the recommendations of the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy, which include the need for connected, safe and reliable transportation systems in the region; and
3. Consider traffic volumes in relation to the rate of accidents, injury, deaths, economic advantage, and regional and northern development, as well as the potential for increased traffic volumes and economic benefits of increased volumes, when highway upgrades and improvements are studied.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

E. Empower all Municipalities to Build and Maintain Essential Infrastructure

Submitted by: The Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario municipalities are faced with a growing infrastructure deficit. Although the Province provides relief through a number of programs, the administrative burden to apply and subsequently report is cumbersome and the funding is inadequate in relation to the demand of a municipality's ability to pay.

Background

Nearly 50% of Ontario's core infrastructure, such as bridges, roads, water systems and public transit systems, is owned by municipal governments.⁹¹ They are essential support systems for our quality of life and research shows that modern, safe and efficient infrastructure increases productivity and competitiveness.

Most of Ontario's infrastructure was built in the 1950s and 1960s with modest investments and repairs in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2007 the average age of all public infrastructure in Ontario was 15.4 years,⁹² and the municipal infrastructure deficit was an estimated \$60 billion.⁹³

Roads, buildings and sewers built more than 50 years ago will not be capable of withstanding the increasing frequency of weather events caused by climate change. For example, water damage is now the number one cause of home insurance losses because aging sewers are incapable of handling the new, higher levels of participation.⁹⁴

Municipalities have been unable to maintain adequate infrastructure for many reasons including downloading of responsibilities onto lower tier governments in tandem with reduced transfer payments from the Province, increasing costs and a limited number of revenue tools. Needs vary depending on the size of a municipality as well. Yet, investment in infrastructure would help grow local economies. Research shows that every \$1 billion invested in infrastructure creates 16,700 jobs and boosts GDP by \$1.14 billion.⁹⁵

The Government of Ontario provides communities with access to predictable, formula based funding through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF), Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), and the Gas Tax for Transit, as well as application-based funding through Connecting Links. In 2020 these programs will direct less than \$1 billion towards closing the \$60 billion infrastructure gap. For some municipalities, this assortment of programs is inequitable and inadequate. The administrative burden is high, meaning that additional funds must be spent on operational costs; allocation formulas change; and because communities must compete via resource-intensive application processes, there is little correlation between need and the provision of funding.

⁹¹ Ontario Road Builders' Association. 2016. "Municipal Infrastructure Deficits." <https://orba.org/municipal-infrastructure-deficits/>.

⁹² Mychèle Gagnon, Valérie Gaudreault and Donald Overton. 2007. *Age of Public Infrastructure: A Provincial Perspective*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2008067-eng.htm>.

⁹³ Rural Ontario Municipal Association. 2017. "Municipal Infrastructure." <https://roma.on.ca/ROMA-Content/Backgrounders/2017/MunicipalInfrastructure.aspx>.

⁹⁴ Insurance Board of Canada. 2012. *Telling the Weather Story*. http://assets.ibc.ca/Documents/Studies/McBean_Report.pdf.

⁹⁵ John Brodhead, Jesse Darling and Sean Mullin. 2014. *Crisis and Opportunity: Time for a National Infrastructure Plan for Canada*. Canada 2020. http://canada2020.ca/crisis-opportunity-time-national-infrastructure-plan-canada/#note_0.

Recommendations

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

1. Consult municipalities on opportunities to reduce the administrative burden associated with infrastructure programs and improve the predictability of long-term funding.
2. Link funding to asset management plans to encourage strategic planning and economic development.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

F. Regional Transportation Fare Integration

Submitted by: Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Toronto Region Board of Trade and Vaughan Chamber of Commerce; Co-sponsored by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

Connectivity in modes of transit is essential to the success of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Regional Transit Plan. A crucial element of this connectivity is a one-card fare integration system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

Although progress has been made in the process of fare integration, there is still more that must be done. To ensure a seamless transportation network, and to build further momentum across the wider region for fare integration, GO Transit needs to be integrated with the Toronto Transit Commission, Durham Region Transit, and other municipal transportation services. This issue must be addressed as soon as possible, to keep up with the needs of the growing population and visitors to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Background

We applaud the federal, provincial and municipal governments for making their largest-ever investments to help fund transit infrastructure within the GTHA. The present transportation system is widely viewed as inadequate and traffic congestion is now a cross-regional issue that affects all municipalities and residents in the GTHA and beyond. The ability of businesses to move people and goods, of commuters to get to work and home, of visitors to travel in and through the GTHA, and the vitality of the regional economy are dependent upon an efficient regional transportation network. This is important to both the region and the province: GO Transit and the municipal transit agencies that connect to it serve two-thirds of Ontario's population (approximately 10 million people).

Network connectivity needs to be the backbone of the regional transportation plan; transfers between municipal transit systems should be easy and efficient. Connectivity must not stop at any particular municipal boundary; rather it should be continuous throughout the GTHA and be based on an integrated fare system which incorporates "smart" card technology.

GO Transit and the nine municipal transportation agencies in the GTHA have already made progress on fare integration. Currently, GO Transit has signed co-fare agreements (allowing for discounting of fares when transferring from one transit agency to another) with eight municipal agencies. The PRESTO fare card allows users of more than one transit agency to get an immediate discount when they transfer between GO and one of the participating agencies. In addition, all the 905 transit operators (except Milton) have agreed to accept each other's transfers without additional fares.

While the TTC currently offers a co-fare, that discounted rate for PRESTO users will expire on March 31, 2020. This will once again increase costs for commuters and create incentives for people to drive and increase the wider region's traffic problems.

To illustrate the cost implications to commuters: a person commuting from their home, to the Ajax GO Station and on to York University would have to pay Durham Region Transit (DRT) a cash fare of \$3.75, GO Transit \$9.65, and then pay the TTC \$3.25, for a total of \$16.65 /per trip, an increase of 73% over what they would pay were the cost integrated into a single GO Transit fare. Alternatively, they could use a PRESTO card to pay DRT a co-fare of \$0.80, GO Transit \$8.12 and then tap their PRESTO card again at the TTC to pay \$1.60, for a total of \$10.52/per trip, an increase of 30% over what they would pay for a fare integrated into the GO Transit fare.

The implementation of a regional fare integration system is integral to the creation of a sustainable, attractive and efficient transportation network. The benefits of the move to a smart card system will support the development of further infrastructure and will make the regional transportation network more customer-friendly, leading to greater use of the network and ultimately assisting in the alleviation of regional congestion and gridlock.

Recommendations

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

1. Through Metrolinx, implement a fully integrated fare system at the earliest possible opportunity for the GTHA regional transportation system including GO Transit and all municipal agencies, which will make for a more customer-friendly, seamless, and affordable transit network, and help alleviate wider-region traffic congestion and gridlock.
2. Facilitate the equitable distribution of fare dollars collected by an integrated fare system among the participating regional transit operators and Metrolinx.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

G. Support for Metrolinx Big Move and ‘Next Wave’ Priority Projects

Submitted by: Richmond Hill Board of Trade. Co-sponsored by Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

Over the past 20 years, there has been tremendous population and business growth throughout the Greater Toronto – Hamilton Area (GTHA), particularly in the 905. In fact, York Region is now one of Canada’s fastest-growing large urban municipalities with nearly 1.2 million people and approximately 25,000 new residents moving there every year. Notwithstanding the many positives that result from urban intensification, increased traffic congestion typically accompanies population growth if infrastructure investments do not keep pace, as they have failed to do in the GTHA and beyond. The average round-trip commuting time in the GTHA is now 84 minutes and many residents grapple with far longer travel times to work as a red-hot housing market necessitates more first-time home-buyers to look beyond local markets. In fact, traffic congestion is estimated to cost the economy in the range of \$7.5 Billion to \$11 Billion per year, according to a study by the C.D. Howe Institute.

This level of traffic congestion, and lack of alternative transportation infrastructure, impacts not simply those directly commuting to and from the GTHA. Lack of public transit options leads to less choice for commuters and ultimately increased vehicular traffic, which results in costs to business supply chains such as movement of goods delays.

Failure of our transportation infrastructure to keep pace in the face of unprecedented growth also affects tourists and visitors to the wider-region and contributes to air pollution and carbon emissions. Recent investments by all levels of government in public transit, including the extension of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension to Vaughan and construction of VIVA-YRT bus rapidways are welcome additions to the transportation network in York Region. It is clear that to maximize these investments in public transit infrastructure, support must be given for the Metrolinx Big Move transportation plan and ‘Next Wave’ priority projects including the Yonge North Subway Extension and the Relief Line in the context of the regional transit network.

Background

Transportation and transit infrastructure is critical to the success of our region, our province and our country. For that reason we must focus on the big picture. Municipal boundaries act as transit boundaries that prevent effective movement of passengers. Transit policies and routes should be planned based upon population growth and need, not on municipal boundaries. The busiest subway in Canada, the Yonge North-South line, has not been expanded since the 1970’s. This despite the fact that York Region is one of the fastest growing areas in Canada contributing to some of the longest commute times in North America. To entice people out of their vehicles and alleviate traffic congestion, the Yonge North Subway Extension has become the top priority of the Regional Municipality of York and each of the nine municipal governments in York Region. In fact, transportation is the top local issue for the vast majority of York Region residents.

The Yonge subway extension and Relief line will complement investments made in our existing transit network and help connect the GTHA by integrating with neighboring transit options. They will also maximize the recent investments in GO Transit, VIVA-YRT, Eglinton Crosstown LRT, UP Express connectivity to Pearson Airport, and the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension. They will ensure for greater connectivity with surrounding communities.

Already included in the Metrolinx Big Move and identified as 'Next Wave' Priority Projects, developments of this magnitude will lead to new business and job creation, intensification, and the attraction of more affordable housing as well as significant environmental benefits. In fact, by eliminating the need for 2,500 bus trips that currently service a stretch of Yonge Street each weekday, the Yonge North Subway Extension has significant potential to reduce carbon emissions and eliminate up to 28 tonnes of GHG each workday. Notably, the Yonge North Subway Extension has already received \$55 million from the Province for preliminary engineering and design, a notable investment that should be maximized.

In June 2019, the Ontario government unveiled a new transit plan for the Greater Toronto Area which included a number of new subway projects including the Yonge North Subway Extension. However, this project still requires significant funding from all levels of government to become reality.

As populations continue to grow and densities rise throughout the GTHA and beyond, there is an urgent need to create connected infrastructure for future generations that ensures for the greatest range of mobility options. Projects of this size and scope require the financial support of all levels of government, over an extended duration of time. The longer we wait, the more expensive projects of this magnitude become.

Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, the Regional Municipality of York and the City of Toronto to:

1. Together, commit the dedicated revenue and begin the construction required as soon as is feasible for Metrolinx Big Move and 'Next Wave' Priority Projects, including the Yonge North Subway Extension, given the benefits to the GTHA and wider-region for current and future generations.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

H. An Economic Connection

Submitted by: The Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce, The Brockville & District Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The provincial government has pledged to assist in helping to connect all Ontarians online. Underserved areas, particularly in rural communities that harbour large agri-business, the broadband gap is significant. The provincial shortfall hinders young entrepreneurs, home-based business and primarily, the food producers throughout the entire province.

Background

The impacts of the escalating broadband shortage are multi-layered. High speed has been confirmed as a “basic telecom service” by the CRTC. Now, the fast-track must begin, ensuring all Ontarians have access to it. Without it, entrepreneurs who live outside of major centers through choice and circumstance will suffer and our economy will not meet its potential. Allan Thompson, the chairman of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, said “broadband services should be treated the same as the provision of clean water, electricity, health care, education and postal services”.

Moreover, the agri-food industry is ever more reliant on technology, featuring every facet of its operation including livestock data, commodity pricing, crop research and monitoring devices. It is as hi-tech as any thriving, front-line industry.

As an example, Doug Knox, vice-president of the Guelph-based Agri-tech accelerator Bio enterprise, points to the growth of “precision” agriculture. He says, “farmers can now use sensors to extract information about everything from soil content to the growth stage of their crops, which helps to make data-driven decisions about fertilizing and planting”.

Knox works in precision agriculture and says “access to data can have a big impact on farmers' crop yields. The problem comes in having to download all that data, which could take hours with a bad connection, Knox said. The time lag is so severe that Knox said many farmers simply choose not to implement these technologies, which can affect their farm's output”.

Still, any monetary investment by the government and private sector can be balanced by economic benefits. Many communities need this digital foundation to grow and prosper. Today’s technology is essential for communications, employment, education, healthcare, doing business and ensuring critical safety networks. Despite the widespread availability of information, some public services in rural, remote and First Nations communities are unable to provide adequate access due to limited or no broadband availability. Increasing broadband investment will help ensure Ontarians have access to the digital resources no matter where they live.

To close the remote/rural and urban digital divide and in order to meet this objective, existing infrastructure across Canada needs to be upgraded and new infrastructure needs to be built. This will require a great deal of time and money and a collective effort from all levels of government and the industry. The CRTC has established a \$750 million Fund to help provide all Canadians with access to broadband Internet and mobile wireless services: The Broadband Fund.

Recommendations

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

1. Support the CRTC determination that broadband is a Basic Telecom Service.
2. Ensure funding for broadband is accessible to both large and small telecom companies. Many smaller providers have the expertise and existing facilities to leverage so that maximum return on investment is achieved.
3. Maximize the potential of the federal Broadband Fund by applying for investment that target the most underserved areas first.
4. Make the CRTC the sole regulator of access to the support structures of provincially regulated utilities.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

I. Provincial Transportation Network Connectedness Enhancement – Ensuring that an alternate highway option is always available from Sudbury to Toronto (Specifically the missing piece between Highway 11 and the Bradford Bypass)

Submitted by: Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Paris & District Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Hill Board of Trade, and Markham Board of Trade

Issue

Major highway transportation between Barrie and the GTA is currently limited to highway 400. From Newmarket South there are several East West connections between Highway 400 and Highway 404 allowing for alternative North/South major highway options. The need for improved North/South transportation flows has already been assessed and deemed important. The Highway 400 - Highway 404 connecting link (also known as the Bradford Bypass) has received environmental assessment approval and has been added to the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan.⁹⁶ The 400-404 connecting link will provide some relief, specifically to the Bradford and Newmarket areas by adding an additional connection point between highway 400 and highway 404. A significant bottleneck will continue to persist however North of the proposed Bradford Bypass to the Highway 11/400 interchange.

Background

It is estimated that "By 2041, the combined population of York Region and Simcoe County will be approximately 2.6 Million People (equal to the current population of the City of Toronto)"⁹⁷ Simcoe County is expected to reach a population of 796,000 and employ 304,000. To facilitate this forecasted growth to population and business, improved transportation infrastructure must be put in place.

In August of 2016 a letter was sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs urging the inclusion of the 400-404 Highway Extension in the growth plan. This letter appears to have had influence as the Bradford Bypass is now visible on the growth plan map.⁹⁸ This letter was signed by: Wayne Emmerson, Chairman, The Regional Municipality of York; Virginia Hackson, Mayor, Town of East Gwillimbury; Margaret Quirk, Mayor, Town of Georgina; Tony Van Bynen, Mayor, Town of Newmarket; Gerry Marshall, Warden, County of Simcoe; Terry Dowdall, Deputy Warden, County of Simcoe; Rob Keffer, Mayor, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury; Gord Wauchope, Mayor, Town of Innisfil.⁹⁹

Estimated Financial Impact to the Province: There will be significant positive financial impact to the Province from this project, including, but not limited to:

- Faster travel times
- Back-up options for emergency shut-downs and logistics
- Increased access to airports, jobs

⁹⁶ A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (page 92): <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-greater-golden-horseshoe-place-to-grow-english-15may2019.pdf>

⁹⁷ Highway 400-404 Connecting Link, Making the Connection. County of Simcoe Transportation Engineering document: https://www.simcoe.ca/TransportationEngineering/Documents/400-404%20Quick%20Facts_V4.pdf; <https://www.simcoe.ca/connectinglink>

⁹⁸ A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (page 92): <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-greater-golden-horseshoe-place-to-grow-english-15may2019.pdf>

⁹⁹ Letter to Minister Mauro on August 12, 2016 regarding Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review and the Highway 400-404 Connecting Link <http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/Assets/5+2015+Government/404+connecting+link/Letter+to+Minister+Mauro.pdf?method=1>

- Efficient transport of goods and services

From the general user perspective, the estimated financial impact to traffic delays is estimated at \$25/car/hour.¹⁰⁰ According to the Ontario Provincial Police, in 2014 there were 882 crashes on Highway 400 between Canal Road and Duckworth Street.¹⁰¹ Each of these incidents would cause delays to drivers, whether they be single lane reductions or full highway closures.

The extension is 47 kms of a 4 lane highway. A four lane highway costs \$6.7M/km¹⁰², therefore the approximate cost of the extension would be in the neighbourhood of \$315M. Even with very conservative estimates, this would be met in user-delays alone in under 4 years, and the benefits would last decades:

$$103,000 \text{ vehicles/day}^{103} = 4,292 \text{ vehicles/hour}$$

$$\$25/\text{vehicle/hour} * 4,292 \text{ vehicles/hour} = \$107,300/\text{hour}$$

$$882 \text{ crashes/year, estimating 1 hour delay per crash} = \$107,300/\text{hour} * 882 = \$94,638,600$$

The estimated economic benefit to Ontario of improved transportation accessibility has not been measured but is likely in the Billions, as unexpected shipping delays can not only lose customers, but longer supply chains also increase inventory levels and carrying costs related to financing and warehousing¹⁰⁴. Adding the 400-404 Highway Extension will give Ontario manufacturers a means of remaining competitive in the current economy.

Without a solution to the single highway access to this part of the province, the number of vehicles per hour will go up proportionally as population density increases in this region, resulting in more lost productivity from every incident, and perhaps a stall in the current growth in the region's manufacturing segment due to the economic cost of delays.

Recommendation

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

1. Link the Bradford Bypass (Highway 400 - Highway 404 connecting link) to Highway 11 on the West side of Lake Simcoe parallel to Highway 400.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

¹⁰⁰ *Incorporating User Delay Cost in Project Selection: A Canadian Case Study* by Ken Huen, M.A.Sc. Candidate (now P.Eng); Susan Tighe, Ph.D., P.Eng; and Brenda McCabe, Ph.D., P.Eng (page 7):

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bd21/6069cbd83e450391311ddf691d5ace02bc20.pdf>

¹⁰¹ *Hwy. 400 crash stats in line with average*, article in The Barrie Advance by Janis Ramsay <https://www.simcoe.com/news-story/4445261-hwy-400-crash-stats-in-line-with-average/>

¹⁰² Parametric estimating guide, 2011 by Statulevicius, Kai; Sosney, Paul; Wood, Kathy (page 18):

<https://www.library.mto.gov.on.ca/SydneyPLUS/Sydney/Portal/default.aspx?component=AAAAIY&record=34bc157f-2277-4728-90f0-abb32b51dfe8>

¹⁰³ Provincial Highways Traffic Volumes 2016 | King's Highways / Secondary Highways / Tertiary Roads; (page 32): [http://www.raqs.mto.gov.on.ca/techpubs/TrafficVolumes.nsf/fa027808647879788525708a004b5df8/f51986ea499a13b08525745f006dd30b/\\$FILE/Provincial%20Highways%20Traffic%20Volumes%202016%20AADT%20Only.pdf](http://www.raqs.mto.gov.on.ca/techpubs/TrafficVolumes.nsf/fa027808647879788525708a004b5df8/f51986ea499a13b08525745f006dd30b/$FILE/Provincial%20Highways%20Traffic%20Volumes%202016%20AADT%20Only.pdf)

¹⁰⁴ *Is Your Supply Chain Ready for the Congestion Crisis?* by George Stalk and Jr.Petros Paranikas <https://hbr.org/2015/06/is-your-supply-chain-ready-for-the-congestion-crisis>

J. Reducing Traffic Congestion on Ontario Highways Due to Vehicular Accidents

Submitted by: Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Woodstock District Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Traffic congestion negatively affects the economy in numerous ways. People are frequently late to work when they are stuck in traffic, resulting in lost productivity and stress. It prevents deliveries from arriving on time, which can delay production, and congestion wastes fuel and causes vehicle emissions, thus increasing the cost of transporting goods and overall pollution levels.

Background

While vehicular accidents occur everywhere, they cause less traffic delays and highway closures in some jurisdictions than others based on the response systems that governments have in place. The state of Georgia's Department of Transportation (GDOT) has implemented measures to minimize closures and delays on metro Atlanta highways. For more than 10 years, GDOT has paid private wreckage companies in metro Atlanta a \$3,500 bonus to clear truck accidents in 90 minutes or less. Since the Towing, Recovery and Incentive Program (TRIP) was launched, the average time to clear an accident plummeted from 4.5 hours to less than two, prompting GDOT to consider expanding the program across the state of Georgia.¹⁰⁵

The agency also works to keep traffic moving by using cameras to monitor highway conditions, and dispatches Highway Emergency Response Operators (HERO) units to help drivers, clear debris, and direct traffic after accidents occur. These efforts have a measurable impact because a least 50 percent of traffic congestion in the Atlanta region is caused by accidents.¹⁰⁶

Florida has similar programs in place under its Open Roads Policy, which sets the goal of clearing major highway incidents and truck crashes across the state in 90 minutes or less. The Rapid Scene Clearance (RISC) is a program put in place under this policy which, like Georgia's, provides financial incentives to qualified and participating heavy duty towing service providers. In addition to financial incentives of a \$600 to \$3500 bonus for meeting response and clearance deadlines, the program is successful because its tow operators must meet equipment and training standards to be eligible to participate. This is in contrast to systems in use elsewhere, where heavy-duty tow operators are called without consideration of their capabilities. The operators do not participate in a RISC-type program and so are not contractually obligated to meet training and equipment standards.¹⁰⁷

Such efforts are part of Traffic Incident Management (TIM) quick clearance programs, which is the practice of rapidly and safely removing temporary obstructions from roadways in order to increase the safety of incident responders by minimizing their exposure to adjacent passing traffic, reduce the probability of secondary incidents, and relieve overall congestion. Quick clearance practices can result in many benefits for drivers, responders, and the environment, including decreases in:

- non-recurrent congestion delay;
- secondary incidents, including those involving responders;

¹⁰⁵ David Wickert, 2019, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/gdot-tackles-truck-accidents-metro-atlanta-highways/ZXuWYCvFpBb9aaJihOixjL/>.

¹⁰⁶ Wickert, 2019.

¹⁰⁷ CAA, 2018; Traffic Incident Management, Florida Department of Transportation, <http://www.floridatim.com/Overview.htm>.

- response time to traffic incidents and other emergencies;
- vehicle fuel consumption;
- vehicle emissions;
- motorist stress levels;
- aggressive driving behavior;
- freight movement impacts in the region;
- regional economy impacts;
- local tourism impacts; and
- future potential land use impacts.¹⁰⁸

While major urban areas in Canada typically have TIM practices in place, such as Ontario's COMPASS Transportation Management Centre, they are often not used to their full potential. A 2018 [CAA report](#) highlights additional solutions for non-recurrent traffic congestion based on examples of TIM programs in other jurisdictions. A key example is:

- **Freeway service patrol**, such as Florida's Road Rangers program and Maryland's Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART). Freeways are routinely patrolled by personnel who are trained and equipped to perform minor repairs, assist motorists, remove debris, provide fuel, provide first aid, push vehicles out of travel lanes and assist emergency services. Such programs reduce incident duration and prevent secondary crashes, thus decreasing congestion. For every dollar spent, freeway patrol systems bring in \$6 to \$28. A similar program, the Highway 407 ETR Highway Safety Patrol, is in place in Ontario on a smaller scale.¹⁰⁹

Ontario could therefore benefit from similar practices given the high traffic volume on its highways, especially in the Oxford County area. Approximately 60,000 trucks pass the 401/403 junction in Woodstock each day. Additionally, Drumbo/Innerkip Exit 250 is among the worst stretches on the 401 for accidents. Inspector Tony Hymers, Oxford OPP Detachment Commander, has articulated a need for an accident reporting centre in Oxford County, similar to those in the City of London, Chatham-Kent, and the Collision Reporting Centres of Toronto, which are used to report property damage-only accidents. This gets cars off the road quickly.¹¹⁰

Recommendations

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

1. Implement a proof of concept vetting program to create a pool of qualified towing companies that can be called to accidents, as well as an incentive program for contractors to clear accidents in 90 minutes or less. Test this program along the 401 from Oxford County to the westerly

¹⁰⁸ Traffic Incident Management Quick Clearance Laws, 2008, US Department of Transportation, https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop09005/role_relevance.htm; Traffic Incident Management. FHWA, https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/eto_tim_pse/about/tim.htm.

¹⁰⁹ Traffic Incident Management: Volume 1, 2018, CAA, <https://www.caa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/18-CAA-Infrastructure-Papers-TrafficIncidentMgmt-ENG-pdf>.

¹¹⁰ Traffic Services Collision Reporting Centres, Toronto Police Service, <https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/traffic/crc.php>; Collision Reporting, Chatham-Kent Police Service, <https://ckpolice.com/collision-reporting/>.

termination of the 401 in Windsor for 18 months and report on its effectiveness. If it proves to greatly reduce congestion, implement the program for all 400 series highways.

2. Create a proof of concept accident reporting centre in Oxford County covering the areas in Oxford along the 401 and 403. After 18 months report on its effectiveness. If it proves to be effective, establish reporting centres in jurisdictions along the 400 series highways.
3. Implement a temporary highway patrol service, through which roving vehicles patrol congested and high incident areas and provide direct service to motorists in distress, from Toronto to Waterloo Region along the 401 for 18 months and report on its effectiveness. If it proves to reduce congestion, implement the program permanently.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

K. Developing Infrastructure for the Expansion of Electric Vehicle Market in Ontario

Submitted by: Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's current infrastructure and rate-base classification is ill-equipped to manage the growth of the Electric Vehicle (EV) market. The lack of Local Distribution Company (LDC) involvement in any electrification strategy may cause unintended system consequences and delays in meeting the provinces' electrification goals.

Background

While EVs currently consist of a limited portion of vehicles sold in Ontario, their worldwide share grew by 40% between 2018 and 2020.¹¹¹ The Government of Ontario has already signaled its intentions to support the growing EV market by agreeing to work with the Federal Government to co-fund the production of these vehicles at the Ford and GM plants in Oakville and Oshawa¹¹² respectively.

Ontario will need to increase its public charging network to support the growth of this market. While private charging would be ideal for EV ownership, this is likely more difficult in densely populated areas including the GTHA¹¹³.

Currently, there are just 1300¹¹⁴ publicly available charging stations available across Ontario. Comparatively, BC has almost 1000 charging stations despite purchasing half as many EVs; as demonstrated in figure 1¹¹⁵.

The Government will need to engage electrified infrastructure cost-effectively, reliably, and expediently to support the industry's growth. By allowing LDCs to manage the charging infrastructure, it enables the local grid to be more responsive and nimbler to the significant growth in demand that will undoubtedly result in electrification and an increased uptake of EVs.

Further consideration should be given towards the rate-base classification for charging EVs, with at least one alternative rate needed for EV charging. This is also technical advice that LDCs can provide through an understanding of the kW requirements for different charging classes. Failure to effectively plan for the expanding EV market will result in the Province having to play catch-up, to the detriment of both the Government and customers.



Fig 1: Canadian EV sales

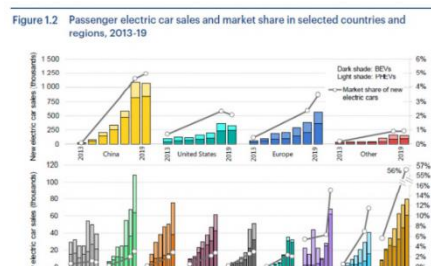


Fig 2: Global Sales of EV

¹¹¹ International Energy Agency Global EV Outlook 2020 - <https://www.iea.org/reports/global-ev-outlook-2020>

¹¹² <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58736/historic-ford-canada-investment-transforming-ontario-into-global-electric-vehicle-manufacturing-hub>

¹¹³ <file:///C:/Users/adamsoppelsa/Downloads/EV-Charging-Infrastructure-Guidelines-for-Cities.pdf>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-transportation-and-alternative-fuels/electric-charging-alternative-fuelling-stationslocator-map/20487#/find/nearest?country=CA&fuel=ELEC>

¹¹⁵ file:///C:/Users/adamsoppelsa/Downloads/Charging%20Ahead_%20EDA%20Position%20Paper%20on%20Electrified%20Transportation.pdf

Recommendations

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

1. Enable and encourage LDCs to support electrified transportation through infrastructure developments. While the contracts for these individual stations can be optioned out to private companies, LDCs should be consulted regarding the locations of these proposed EV charging stations to ensure they are compatible with the current grid.
2. Give LDCs the ability to rate-base strategic investments in electrification technologies, such as EV and transit-oriented charging stations, where the LDC business case balances customers' needs, government policy objectives, and supports the Province's robust electricity systems.
3. In coordination with the OEB, allow LDCs to review existing customer rate classes and establish a specific rate class for public fast charging.

Effective Date: May 5, 2021

Sunset Date: May 5, 2024

L. Enbridge Line 5 and Ontario Energy Supplies

Submitted by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Leamington District Chamber of Commerce, London Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce, and Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Interventions by the Governor of Michigan are seriously threatening energy supplies and economic activity across Ontario.

Background

Enbridge Line 5 transports western Canada oil and natural gas liquids from Superior, Wisconsin through Michigan into Sarnia.

In November of 2020 Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer (D) commenced proceedings to revoke a 1953 permit that allows a crossing under the Straits of Mackinac, providing notice to Enbridge for terminating Line 5 by May 2021. Enbridge has challenged that order and indicated they will continue with current operations while seeking permits and approvals to replace the crossing with a tunnel at a cost of approximately \$500 million.

Opposition to Michigan's intervention is relatively extensive across Canada however is heavily focused in Sarnia and Lambton County, the location for three of Ontario's four major refineries as well as several chemical plants. Farmers across southwestern Ontario have cited significant concerns with the impact of a pipeline shutdown on local propane supplies manufactured from feedstock transported through Line 5.

Many farmers and agricultural-related business operations cannot access alternatives such as natural gas. Another major component of the current frustration was the impact of a CN Rail strike in November 2019 on provincial propane supplies. The Michigan Line 5 decision and a subsequent closure will be exponentially worse.

Plains Midstream Canada indicates Line 5 supplies all the feedstock for its plant in Sarnia, which produces about 1,200-million gallons of propane and butane annually with approximately 200-million gallons shipped to Michigan. The company has warned Governor Whitmer that closing the pipeline will terminate all Sarnia operations.

Conservative Party of Canada Leader Erin O'Toole has asked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to attempt some form of resolution with President Biden. O'Toole has claimed that Line 5 is the safest option for meeting energy requirements on both sides of the border. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has warned there will be significant disruption to fuel supplies across Ontario and Quebec if Line 5 shuts down.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford has written to Governor Whitmer indicating the potential disruption will threaten 1,000 unionized jobs in the United States and will result in a major fuel shortage, along with nearly 5,000 direct jobs at risk in Sarnia-Lambton. Ontario Energy Minister Greg Rickford has indicated Line 5 is a key artery supplying the province with oil and warned of the economic disaster that will result if the system is turned off.

The State of Michigan has approved Enbridge's application for permits to build a tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac. A review concluded the proposed construction can be completed in compliance with state environmental laws and regulations.

Recommendation

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

2. Continue constructive advocacy through all relevant channels including:
 - a) to the State of Michigan for ensuring Enbridge Line 5 continues to operate without interruption; and
 - b) to the Government of Canada for ensuring Line 5 is resolved as a top Canada/United States priority for Prime Minister Trudeau and President Biden.
3. Maintain current stated position, supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders across Canada, to protect jobs and Canadian energy supplies.

Effective Date: May 5, 2021

Sunset Date: May 5, 2024

M. Leveraging digital infrastructure to spur economic recovery

Submitted by: Oakville Chamber of Commerce and co-sponsored by Burlington Chamber of Commerce

Issue

As part of the plan for recovery, the Oakville Chamber believes that governments at all levels will need to enhance digital connections and e-services amongst business, employees, citizens and government to create an attractive climate for business investment and job creation for economic growth. The ability for us to adapt so quickly under these unprecedented conditions only underscores the critical need for governments to continue to invest in digital technology, robust, high-speed communication networks, innovation, and a connected infrastructure.

Background

For the better part of a decade, Digital Transformation has been the core driver of organizational change. The transition from legacy IT to cloud computing; the expansion of retail and banking into the mobile space; the rise of machine learning, artificial intelligence, and smart automation; improving safety and reliability of public transit through predictive maintenance; and the growth of the Internet of Things (IoT) were, among other massively transformative technologies, at the heart of a generational forward evolutionary leap. And it is therefore not surprising that these very technologies have enabled businesses, governments, healthcare systems, tech companies, students, and workers to adapt to the turmoil of disruption caused by the pandemic.¹¹⁶

Digital and Data Infrastructure are an important pillar to create an engine of innovation and wealth creation. COVID19 has accelerated the transformation to Digitalization and highlighted the many benefits in a short period.

To build a stronger position in the near term, we can build on the COVID lessons turning around the negative impacts from the pandemic to fast track the use of technology and communication networks. We have seen how fast people can adapt and how productive hundreds of millions of people ramped up the use of digital tools to remain connected, productive and healthy.

Digital infrastructure allows us to connect people and places, improve productivity, increase economic growth, create healthy and safer communities through valuable insights gained from data analytics and new technologies.

This will result in our ability to solve complex problems, improve the sustainability of our cities, build new businesses create new jobs and create a step-change for competitiveness for our region.

An increasingly digital economy will require major investments in sophisticated networks, cybersecurity and electronics. It will also force business to adopt new technologies and business models to interact with customers, clients and employees.

About 2.5 billion people are connected to the internet today, a third of the world's population; there are projected to be about 4 billion users by 2020, or more than half the global population.

Continuous access to information, commerce and communication has become a daily fact of life for billions and will soon become a reality for billions more. As the internet makes its full weight felt in more high-impact

¹¹⁶ World Economic Forum

areas such as healthcare, education and government services, access to digital services will only become more essential for everyone in the years to come.

The digital economy is growing at more than 10% a year, significantly faster than the economy as a whole. In emerging markets, the internet economy is growing at 12-25% per year, and it is having a far-reaching social and political, as well as economic, impact. Around the world, it is an increasingly important source of growth and, frequently, jobs.¹¹⁷

Governments, businesses, and other stakeholders including post secondary institutions should commit to near, mid and long-term actions that promote growth of digital services and the digital economy.

All stakeholders can establish comprehensive, aspirational plans that lay out a path to broadband connectivity for all. Making expanded connectivity a reality requires a continuing commitment to investment and innovation by the private and public sectors – and an understanding of the importance of keeping digital traffic flowing. Governments in particular need to recognize the broader role that digital services can play in economic development and growth; the digital economy is much more than a potential source of tax revenues.¹¹⁸

The COVID19 Pandemic has also accelerated businesses' digital transformation. It also showed us how quickly work itself can change. Adaptability, flexibility, and a commitment to lifelong learning will be vital, especially as companies and entire industries reposition themselves in a highly digital, data-driven world and search for the talent that will help them succeed.

For business and government, the way to remain competitive lies in upskilling to enable them building a future-ready workforce; for individuals, it's a way to keep their skills relevant and stay future-ready. Making deliberate, significant investments in learning will ensure organizations and employees alike have the knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to work effectively in a digitized, automated world.¹¹⁹

Oakville's Sheridan College's Centre for Mobile Innovation (CMI) is a technology research, commercialization, and knowledge dissemination hub focussed on mobile computing, with a strong emphasis on mobile health (mHealth). CMI was established to respond to industry and community needs, while fostering technical and entrepreneurial training of the next generation.

Recommendations

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

1. Provide targeted support to help businesses become more adaptable, productive and responsive through the increased use of digital technologies.
2. Commit to actions that promote the long-term growth of the digital economy including removing impediments to the expansion of digital infrastructure and modernize policies to encourage investment and innovation throughout the internet ecosystem.
3. Encourage municipalities to use stimulus funds for digitization efforts in line with the digital needs of their communities.
4. Create funding mechanisms for public post secondary institutions to establish digital literacy programs to ensure workforce is future ready, as well as investing in research and digital skills training to meet the future labour demands.

¹¹⁷ [World Economic Forum](#)

¹¹⁸ [World Economic Forum](#)

¹¹⁹ [COVID-19 The upskilling imperative - Building a Future Ready Workforce for the AI Age](#)

Effective Date: May 5, 2021
Sunset Date: May 5, 2024

N. Lowering our Carbon Footprint through Energy-Smart Building

Submitted by: Guelph Chamber of Commerce Co-sponsored by: Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Brantford-Brant Chamber of Commerce, and London Chambers of Commerce

Issue

Ontario homebuilders face barriers leveraging their innovative capacity to maximize their business and economic output towards a reduced carbon footprint.

While opportunities to mitigate the costs of energy efficient programs for retrofits exists, there is no comprehensive approach for new builds. A new build is far more likely to achieve 'Net-Zero' status if it starts out that way and will be far less expensive to achieve as an afterthought. A retrofit is nearly impossible to achieve that 'Net-Zero' status without spending a large fortune to do so, and yet, it is here that Ontario has decided to focus its energy efficiency program spending.

Given the massive number of new built homes we have seen constructed and planned for in communities across the province, Ontario is missing a huge opportunity to reduce our carbon footprint.

Background

There exists considerable debate about the term Net-Zero and the feasibility of achieving it. Commonly used by governments and the private sector alike, the term Net-Zero does present problems. Prevailing wisdom defines a net-zero energy home as one that produces as much energy as it uses on an annual basis. However, there are numerous variables depending on the occupants' behavior and issues like orientation of house (south facing roof, ensuring the property next door (or trees) don't shade the roof), having 4 exterior walls rather than 2 or 3, the fact that the average home's roof top is likely not big enough/strong enough for all the solar panels, etcetera. These considerations are above and beyond the work that is done with the house construction to make it more "energy" tight.

In terms of technology, materials and efficiency standards, net-zero homes are built at least a decade ahead of where the building industry is today. They include features such as advanced heating, cooling, ventilation, high-efficiency windows, superior levels of insulation and air tightness and solar panels that should feed the electrical grid. Net-zero homes have been around for many years, but they have typically been custom-built and at an enormously higher expense than regular homes.

The build expense impacts the price of net-zero homes and they are therefore not affordable options for most Ontarians. Furthermore, most Ontarians are not familiar with the benefits (long-term savings) of purchasing net-zero homes.

Net-zero homes offer the potential to save money on energy costs year-round as well as protect homeowners from future energy price increases. Most importantly, they lower greenhouse gas emissions, conserve resources, reduce pollution, and minimize the household's ecological footprint.

With well over 100,000 new home starts in Ontario in recent years, it makes it increasingly crucial that builders of net-zero homes receive the support needed to build these homes on a larger scale in a cost-effective manner.

For its part Canada's Climate Plan (the CCP) has very little to offer by way of help for the construction of new Net-Zero home builds:

"Accelerating action on home retrofits will create new demand for jobs". Provides \$2.6 billion over 7 years for homeowners. Provides \$700,000 in grants of up to \$5,000 to help homeowners make energy efficient improvements to their homes. And

working with provinces and territories on low income retrofit programs to increase the number of low-income households that benefit from energy retrofits. (CCP - Page 11 Home Retrofits).

The CCP never mentions how to address supporting builders of new homes.

To have a meaningful impact in reducing our carbon footprint, Ontario needs a critical mass to make Net-Zero work. Presently, the market does not have that mass as it is just too expensive to get there. The province requires a comprehensive a something far less daunting and more likely to succeed over the short to medium term.

Recommendations

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

1. Incentivize homebuilders to use energy efficient technology and materials for the first 3-5 years, gradually reducing those incentives until they terminate in 2030. This allows time for builders to adjust their business plans while at the same time incrementally improving our carbon footprint. Incentives can take the form of, but not limited to, grants, subsidies, tax breaks or a reduction in municipal DCs (development charges).
2. Increase the HST rebates for primary residence purchasers of homes greater than \$450,000 (current only applies for homes less than this figure) – if homes can meet certain criteria for sustainability in the OBC and be verified by a simple checklist from existing inspection program (minimizing increase in red tape). The onus is placed on the developer to demonstrate compliance, and the margins remain the same for the developer.
3. The Province should encourage municipalities to encourage net-zero home building by offering PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) financing that are connected to the units built not the homeowner.
4. Develop Energy Smart Building education campaigns/programs for builders (trades), and buyers using local distribution companies and organizations like IESO (Independent Electricity System Operator) and CHPA (Corporate Housing Providers Association) to disseminate and distribute materials.
5. To further reduce Ontario's carbon footprint, establish regional pilot programs where a district-based energy system is established as the central plant for a specific building or an entire subdivision such as the Telus Tower in Toronto.

Effective Date: May 5, 2021

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