



February 08, 2022

VIA EMAIL

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

RE: Durham Business Alliance Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

The Durham Business Alliance would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the 2022 pre-budget consultation process. We represent the eight chambers of commerce and boards of trade of Durham Region and a combined membership of approximately 2,500 local businesses and organizations. Below we have outlined several investments that will help encourage continued economic growth for the businesses and people of Durham Region.

Pandemic Recovery

- **Rapid tests for businesses** – Thanks to leadership from the Province of Ontario and federal government, chambers of commerce and boards of trade in Durham Region have supplied over 170,000 free rapid tests to small and medium-sized businesses. This service helps slow the spread of COVID-19 in local workplaces and supports customer and employee confidence. We ask the province to continue support of this valuable program and ensure the predictable delivery of rapid test kits.
- **Ensure pandemic funding provides immediate and targeted support** – Supports by the Ontario government to help businesses through the Omicron wave are welcome, but we are deeply concerned about those that will be left behind. Grants that only apply to businesses required to fully close misses those that are at limited capacity or those losing revenue as a result of restrictions affecting their clients (such as food service suppliers). Additionally, the flow of funds may come too late for some. We ask the province to ensure supports to be made available at the time restrictions are announced and allow for a fulsome appeal and review process.
- **Offer businesses and organizations a clear path through the pandemic** – We implore the government to immediately introduce a transparent and metrics-based plan guiding the imposition or removal of public health restrictions.



- **Futureproof Ontario's economy** – Temporary supports have helped Ontario businesses survive the closures and restrictions resulting from the pandemic. Investments to increase Ontario's hospital capacity, ensure clean air supply in schools, and provide sufficient staffing in critical areas of operation are necessary to ensure businesses will not be forced to close due to a public health crisis.

Transportation

- **Create an equitable tolling plan for the GTHA** – Durham Region's Highways 412 and 418 are the only tolled north/south routes in the GTHA. This creates a distinct economic disadvantage for Durham businesses, discourages future growth along Durham's Highway 407 corridor, and drives traffic onto local and regional roads. We ask the province to announce a tolling plan that is fair and equitable for all people and regions.
- **Give approval to the Lakeshore East GO extension** – Moving forward with the Lakeshore East GO extension will create jobs, stimulate the economy, and help to connect people to work, education, and entertainment opportunities. We ask the province to formally announce funding for this project in the Spring budget.
- **Help Durham become a leader in frequent transit service** – The province's Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation discussion paper calls for transit service every 10-minutes. Durham Region Transit has proven itself to be an innovator in service delivery with projects like 'On Demand'. We ask the province to support a pilot project in Durham to improve transit service to every ten minutes from 6am until 10pm on selected routes.

Labour Support

- **Accelerate post-pandemic reskilling** - Post-pandemic reskilling will be essential to the rapid re-employment of workers that have been displaced, particularly given the permanent restructuring expected in hard-hit sectors such as retail, hospitality, and tourism. We celebrate investments through the redesigned Second Career grant program and focus on micro-credentials and hope to see more promotion and investments in support of displaced workers.

We thank you for the opportunity to represent the voice and needs of our members and stakeholders and look forward to working with all levels of government to support the growth and success of businesses and organizations of Durham Region and beyond.



Sincerely,

Talia Lane
President

Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade

Elizabeth Burley
President

Brock Board of Trade

Sheila Hall
Executive Director
Clarington Board of Trade

Jason King
Chief Executive Officer
Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce

Jane Black
President

Newcastle & District Chamber of Commerce

Karey Anne Large
Executive Director

Scugog Chamber of Commerce

Rick Nihda
Executive Director

Uxbridge Chamber of Commerce

Matt Parish
President of the Board

Whitby Chamber of Commerce