



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

February 4, 2020

Dear Minister Phillips:

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce is pleased to submit to you our 2020 Provincial Pre-Budget submission. Along with advocating for tax initiatives to support business and organizations across Ontario, we are also urging equity when it comes to government investments in this region that will support existing businesses and generate new growth.

We have presented three areas of focus for the Province to invest in: Tax Incentives for Job Growth; Improving Transportation within Durham Region, and Economic Development.

Economic Development:

While the Chamber lauds the creation of the Regional Development Program announced Nov. 4, we urge the Province to expand that program beyond the Eastern and Southwestern regions to include Durham Region. The closure of the General Motors plant has had a substantial impact on residents and local business well beyond feeder industries.

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce recommends: This program immediately extend to include the Durham Region, and provide financial support to businesses in the area.

There are many areas in Durham where service levels do not meet the CRTC baseline broadband target. We are advocating for support for broadband across the Region.

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce recommends: The Province consider municipalities as recipients of funding under the 'Up to Speed' fund, which will be announced later in 2020. In addition, we ask that they consider internet service providers serving Durham Region as additional target recipients.



Tax Incentives for Job Growth:

Firstly, on behalf of our members, we want to thank your government for the reduction of the Ontario Small Business Tax rate. This is welcome support for our small business community.

Moving forward, the Government of Ontario should explore options to incentivize programs to support businesses in hiring young people, those in the Ontario Disability Support Program and to support and expand experiential learning opportunities through post-secondary institutions. Where programming already exists, priority should be placed on communicating those opportunities to businesses through existing or new channels. What we are hearing is that awareness is low among the business community and better marketing could increase uptake in current programs. Through expanding the Co-operative Education Tax Credit and developing new job growth tax credits, Ontario will not only increase the skillset of young people entering the workforce, but it can reduce the social costs to Ontario by supporting citizens that face greater challenges in finding work.

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce recommends: The Government invests, communicates and educates businesses on the opportunities and incentives for hiring citizens facing greater challenges in finding work.

Transportation:

As you are aware, one of Ontario's four strategic pillars is Moving Goods and People. We urge government to apply that vision equitably to support Whitby and Durham residents. The Highway 401 daily gridlock through Whitby/Ajax has a huge impact on emissions, productivity and quality of life for our residents. The 412/418 tolls, which are not applied to other 400 series north/south roads, are significantly under-utilized and put an increasing strain on our regional and municipal arterial roads, as people are specifically rerouting to avoid the toll roads. For instance, traffic volume counts in 2017 show upwards of 60,000 north/south trips each day on Thicketson, Brock and Lakeridge Roads, while the count was just 13,000 on the 412.

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce recommends: The Province look at creative ways to increase use of the 412/418 while not adding excessive economic burden on our citizens. For example, the Region has proposed that the Province use incentives to get goods haulers (transports) to use the tolled roads (412,418 and 407) Finding a solution to this issue will encourage local economic growth and in turn increase revenue to the Province.

The Whitby GO is the second busiest station in the Province, and both Whitby and Oshawa stations are experiencing significant pressure of ridership from the East. Not only is the burden now on ridership, but also parking. The Bowmanville GO Train expansion project continues to be delayed and a final solution has not been confirmed by Metrolinx.



The Whitby Chamber of Commerce recommends: The Bowmanville GO Train expansion decision be made expeditiously, taking into account the Region of Durham's feedback; addressing ridership needs and focused on decreasing the volume of commuters travelling on our highways to and from the GTA.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Paterson".

Dave Paterson
President, Whitby Chamber of Commerce