



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

October 14, 2020

Dear Minister Phillips:

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce is pleased to present our 2020 Provincial Budget submission.

Ontario, as the rest of the globe, is in the midst of unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world and has left devastating health and economic impacts in its wake. We appreciate the challenge government has faced to flatten the curve and keep Ontarians safe. It is no easy task. But at the same time, through no fault of their own, our business community are going into debt and losing their livelihoods. Help is needed now more than ever.

We implore the Ontario government to ensure it is doing whatever it can to support our business community to survive this wave and ensure they have a future. Our submission is focused on support needed now that will not only support business but also help reduce health risks related to this pandemic.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Support

We want to thank the Ontario government for providing grants to support the main street, tourism and hospitality sectors to purchase essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and help them manage their businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. We ask the government support other business sectors, not eligible for this grant, through a provincial tax credit. Many have struggled with the additional costs and service restrictions, yet are committed to the health and safety requirements to keep Ontarians safe.

Provide broadband infrastructure for employees and the business community

Many businesses are moving to delivering their products and services online to ensure the safety of their employees and customers. We ask the Province to provide funding to help businesses pivot wherever possible through infrastructure needs to support product or service model changes. We know that the future of business post-pandemic will include more virtual and remote staffing with infrastructure investments to support those transitions.

To that end, it is imperative that the Province support this Region's application to the Improving Connectivity in Ontario program to establish a Regional Broadband Network. Durham has many citizens



who normally commute to Toronto that are being asked to work from home. We have many rural communities that have poor internet service. There have been inadequate investments by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and the Regional Broadband Network would extend high-speed fiber optics into these under-served areas. For the Durham residents who must continue to commute to Toronto because of inadequate infrastructure to work from home, they are at an elevated risk of exposure to the high number of COVID-19 cases in Toronto. This also puts our communities at risk of increased spread of the virus.

Skilled Trades

As identified by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, we support reskilling of unemployed and underemployed Ontarians. Economic recovery from COVID-19 will require a rapid return to work for many Ontarians. Given the urgency, provincial and federal funds could be flowed through Employment Ontario to support short-term micro-credential programs that meet local and sectoral needs. Employment Ontario has specific, pre-existing programs at its disposal which could be helpful, such as Second Career, which is designed for displaced workers and delivered by public and private colleges. Colleges, including Durham College with a campus in Whitby, have many Program Advisory Committees composed of employers that could help identify relevant skills.

We know there is a demand in the skilled trades sector and colleges are trying to expand capacity to meet the need. Investments to support that expansion and grant funding for expanded enrollment are essential to ensure we have the workforce to meet current and future demands to re-open our economy.

On behalf of our members in Whitby/Durham Region we specifically thank you for your efforts to date in endeavouring to allow businesses to stay open and operating, outside of the COVID "hotspot" areas. We appreciate the opportunity to represent our business community.

Regards,

Corette Miller

Corette Miller
President, Board of Directors
Whitby Chamber of Commerce
c.c.
Mr. Lorne Coe, MPP Whitby