

## **OCC Policy Recommendations**

### **2002-2003**

- Highway 69

### **2003-2004**

- Funding for Colleges of Applied Arts & Technology

### **2004-2005**

- Focused Strategy for Mineral and Mining Excellence
- Ensuring Access to Post-Secondary Education

### **2005-2006**

- Integrating Immigrants into the Ontario Workforce

### **2008-2009**

- Provincial Support for Municipal Transit
- Integrating Skilled Immigrants into the Ontario Labour Workforce

## Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce Focused Strategy for Mineral and Mining Excellence

### Issue:

Ontario, committed to developing as a knowledge and technology supplier to the world and currently Canada's leading mining jurisdiction, lacks a comprehensive strategy to make mining and the mineral sector a key component of its continued growth on the world stage. Further, that provincial education and research related to mining is scattered in small programs largely in southern Ontario, so that no institution or region has the critical mass to attract the best students and researchers from around the world and hence to drive technical and economic development.

### Background:

Ontario, Canada's largest producer of metals and supplier of technology and services to the mining industry nationally and globally, exported approximately \$12.6 billion worth of metal, minerals and metal products in 2003.

The production of metals and metal products make up the second largest sector in Ontario's real gross domestic product for the major manufacturing sectors at 14.45%. Mining is second only to transportation equipment (22%), and almost as large as oil and petroleum products (9.52%) and plastic and rubber products (7.72%) combined. The sector accounts for 14% of Ontario's goods-producing labour force, employing 23,300 people in 2003. Approximately 80% of Ontario's metals and metals products production takes place in northeastern Ontario, according to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (Ontario Mineral and Exploration Statistics 2003, MNM 2004 publication).

The northern regions of the province, the prime producers of both mineral and mining products, supplies and services, contribute significantly to Ontario's ranking as the number one nickel and gold producer and number two copper producer in Canada. Globally, Ontario is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nickel and 9<sup>th</sup> in the gold production markets (Ontario Mineral and Exploration Statistics 2003).

The Ontario mining sector spends an average of more than \$900 million on goods and services helping other companies in other industries sustain their profitability and employment. Of this, about \$380 million is spent within an 80-kilometre radius of operating mines.

Northern Ontario, with its diverse and favourable geology including immense areas of high mineral potential, has a highly developed mining service and support sector. Those highly competitive businesses are already meeting the demands of today's international export-oriented climate. Many of the world's foremost authorities on geology and minerals are based within the region along with a strong network of expert government staff and a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

Currently, Ontario supports four centres of excellence: CITO, Material and Manufacturing Ontario, CRESTech, and Photonics Research Ontario. These centres serve the communication and information technology, material and manufacturing, photonics and research and development sectors. And, although mining contributes 12.6% of Canada's total export earnings, there is no centre of excellence for mining.

Rising to meet Ontario's goal of becoming North America's top performing jurisdiction for research and development, northern Ontario has laid the foundation for a world-class geoscience centre that would partner Ontario's publicly funded institutions with private companies, further enhance the province's industries and add considerably to the skilled workforce required for an innovative and dynamic economy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

1. Make a firm public commitment to making Ontario the world's leading jurisdiction in technology and knowledge production related to the discovery, production and use of metals by creating a single provincial cluster for mining research and education located in the main mining region of the province, by concentrating provincial resources, including education and innovation funding.
2. Commit to fully exploiting the potential of Ontario's mineral resources by undertaking an energetic program to expand the mining supply and services sector and the downstream value-added enterprises in Ontario's mineral industry through immediate and aggressive lobbying of the federal government to ensure that mining is included in the federal commercialization agenda.
3. Create a provincial centre for excellence in mining research and education, located in the main mining region of the province, by concentrating provincial resources, including education and innovation funding.

## Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce Integrating Immigrants into the Ontario Workforce

### Issue

Without the funding by the Province of Ontario in programs and supports that are offered by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology to assist the integration of immigrants into the Ontario Workforce, the economy of Ontario will not be able to prosper and meet global productivity levels.

### Background

The Ontario economy is facing very significant challenges: an aging population, fast-paced technological changes and globalization that has brought new competition to our doorstep. These challenges could have a profound impact on the health of our economy and the standard of living of all Ontarians.

The most direct effect of an aging population is a skills shortage. The problems created by skills shortages are already beginning to have an impact. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, about 52% of skilled trades people are expected to retire within the next 15 years. The same report also states that by 2020, if those workers are not replaced, Canada could be short one million workers.

At the same time, the knowledge-based global economy demands highly skilled workers. The accelerating pace of technological change means their training cannot stop at age twenty-two. It will be necessary to continuously educate and re-train workers throughout their lives to update or transform their skill set to use new technology and meet new needs.

Most of the new pool of labour must be drawn from immigration. Currently, immigrants represent 30% of all new labour market entrants and according to the Ontario Ministry of Finance, new Canadians may be the only source of net labour force growth within the next decade.

Eliminating barriers for internationally trained professionals and trades people is essential to enhancing Ontario's workforce. It is important that the Government of Ontario continue to support and expand programs that allow foreign trained professionals and trades people to be recertified quickly and integrate quickly into their field in the Ontario workforce.

The need for skilled employees exists across all industries and sectors across the province. Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario are well positioned to provide bridging programs, ESL instruction, employment and placement linkages to Ontario employers, and other resettlement supports in communities across the province.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Develop and fund a postsecondary education process model for the integration of immigrants that would encompass a comprehensive suite of programs and services including information access, assessment services, advising and counseling and education and training programs for immigrants, which each postsecondary institution can implement when facilitating the integration of immigrants within the communities they serve.
2. Work with municipalities across the province to develop incentives and supports to industries and municipal governments to enable the resettlement of immigrants throughout the province.

## **Submitted by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce Integrating Skilled Immigrants into the Ontario Labour Workforce**

### **Issue:**

Without a rapid and substantive allocation of funding by the Ontario Government for existing programs - both private and public - that support the re-training and integration of skilled immigrants into the Ontario workforce, the already dismal provincial economy will regress to a position in the national and global community that will be difficult to recover.

### **Background:**

In January 2008, Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said Ottawa needed to find ways to help Canada draw talented immigrants to the country to help avert an economic collapse.

Indeed, the minister was quoted as saying that labour shortages are one of the "most daunting economic challenges" Canada will face in coming years.

For years, researchers have been warning about potential labour shortages across Canada, yet governments have not responded. In 2008, Statistics Canada stated that a widespread shortage of workers impacting a broad range of occupations will occur and pointed out that by 2015, immigrant workers will be required to sustain the skilled labour workforce since there are too few naturalized Canadians graduating to meet the demands.

An alarming combination of factors is bearing down on Ontario: an aging population and low birth rate, coupled with a globalized and technologically progressive economy that has helped to generate competition from emerging countries. This dynamic, while not necessarily unique to Ontario, will be more acutely felt by Ontario employers and businesses since Ontario is the most densely populated province and has very large manufacturing and resource based sectors.

Moreover, since the labour market and economy are so tightly bound, a shortage of skilled trade and sector specific workers can severely damage an economy. When the ratio of workers arriving to the workplace dips below the number leaving it, it will create a drag on the economy and stagnate an already challenging economic climate.

While existing plans like the Red Seal Program allows skilled apprentices and qualified tradespersons to practice the trade in any province or territory in Canada where the trade is designated without having to write further examinations, it does not assist foreign trained apprentices and certified journeypersons. The Ontario government should look to adopt the core concepts of the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program and standardize apprenticeship training and certification programs and increase the types of trades included in the Red Seal Program.

Eliminating barriers for internationally trained professionals and trades people is essential to enhancing Ontario's workforce. It is important that the Government of Ontario continue to support and expand programs that allow foreign trained professionals and skilled trade persons to be re-certified and integrated quickly into streams of labour that are identified as being a priority area first.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

1. Engage directly with employers and colleges to identify which areas of the labour and professional sectors is a priority for skilled worker placement.
2. Develop and fund a postsecondary education process for the integration of immigrants that would encompass a comprehensive suite of programs and services including, but not limited to: accessible labour market information available in a variety of languages, counseling and advisory services in a variety of languages and 'bridge' training courses that improve an individual's existing foreign training and education should they not meet the standards under the Red Seal Program.
3. Consistent and inclusive consultation with municipalities, community settlement organizations and business groups to better attract, retain and develop immigrants into the community and sector.

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<sup>i</sup> This submission builds upon the May 2006 policy resolution that the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce submitted to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce ("Integrating Immigrants into the Ontario Workforce"). Despite the significant depression in the economy in the time since the first resolution, government intervention and action remains a key element in accelerating Ontario's economic renewal.

## **Submitted by the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce Provincial Support for Municipal Transit and Infrastructure**

### **Issue:**

As several key regions in Ontario expand and an increasingly large constituency of the public turns to public transit as a means of reducing their environmental impact, the provincial transit funding formula as it is currently subsidized, limits Ontario municipalities from developing and growing their systems to match and meet the demand of their populations.

Furthermore, since the principal funding source for most municipal transit authorities is obtained through ridership fares considerable deterioration has occurred among many transit systems. In certain jurisdictions, vehicle fleets have surpassed or are nearing the end of their lifespan, roadways are woefully structured, fuel costs are rising and the growing service area have compounded to strain the system.

### **Background:**

Traffic congestion negatively impacts economic activity and our quality of life. On a typical workday, it is estimated that drivers spend a total of 300,000 hours stuck in gridlock, while traffic congestion contributes about 30 per cent of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions. This level of congestion affects Ontario's ability to attract new investment, as access to efficient transportation infrastructure is a key factor in business location and expansion decisions.

Shifting commuters from car travel to transit will have the single greatest impact on the economy and environmental quality in congested areas. Achieving this transition will require making transit competitive with the automobile in terms of convenience, cost and comfort. Strengthening municipal transit systems through increased provincial investment would increase transit services and result in a jump in ridership.

In 2009, the Ontario government intends to share \$321 million in gas tax revenue with 111 municipalities (89 transit authorities). The province expects this money to assist in expanding routes, extending operating hours and upgrading infrastructure.

While this is a positive step, the formula by which transit funding is distributed to municipalities is unsound. At present, municipalities receive transit money by way of the 70/30 rule. This funding formula is based on a ratio of 70 per cent ridership and 30 per cent population. For many rural, older, mid-sized and sparsely populated municipalities like Greater Sudbury, this formula simply places too much burden on the municipality to be the majority subsidizer.

Additionally, public transit is crucial to improving the economic base of these communities because they assist individuals in obtaining and retaining employment. For those who have no access to a vehicle and must travel long distances to get to their place of employment, affordable and well founded transit is a necessity.

Consequently, the provincial government needs to recognize that public transit is central to enhancing the economic competitiveness of these communities and must rededicate itself to contributing funding that reflects the individual characteristics and shared challenges of municipalities across the province.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

1. Speed up the transfer of funding from the *Move Ontario Fund* with a priority for communities who are confronted with unique operational conditions.
2. Provide long-term scheduled funding for municipal and regional transit systems through a funding formula that acknowledges the realities of annual inflationary pressures and accepts that there are unique challenges facing many rural, sparsely populated municipalities.
3. Reexamine and engage Ontario municipalities on the effectiveness and fairness of the current funding formula. For example, perhaps funding could be distributed based on 50 percent of the annual ridership and 50 percent of a community's population. Ridership would be based on a 12 month total of the previous calendar year, while the population figure would adjust according to the federal census.

## **Highway 69 Resolution**

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1998 the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety identified that investments in highways can generate productivity growth, play a critical role in regional development and generate a more efficient economic structure including improvement to the nation's trade.

In particular, studies have determined that highways have at least two important impacts on the economy:

1. highway construction supports immediate on-site and off-site employment – such investment also lays the foundation for future job growth by making markets accessible;
2. highway investment increases national productivity by improving mobility and reducing transportation costs for businesses and families.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) research in the U.S. determined that one of the most tangible benefits of highway investment is the immediate employment generated by construction. The study reveals that on site highway construction jobs together with material purchases from supplying industries can translate \$1 billion of highway investment into 44,709 full-time jobs.

At least one study has shown that highway construction also has long-term employment impact to the extent that such highway investment improves market accessibility. Specifically, a U.S. study in the Appalachian region found the following:

- i) that a significant number of jobs were added to the region as a result of its improved access to the Atlantic and Midwestern markets;
- ii) that a significant population increase occurred in the Appalachian region since the highway construction as people moved to the area which was originally perceived as a depressed region.

It has been stated that one of the most important impacts of highway investment is its effect on national productivity to the extent that highways improve mobility for businesses, reducing the time it takes to transport materials or finished goods. Accordingly, it has been found that when businesses are more productive they can use savings on research, product development, firm expansion and other activities.

### **ISSUE:**

The immediate investment of funds by the provincial government to four-lane Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound as well as to immediately develop an accelerated plan to commence such highway construction as a universally recognized means of generating productivity growth, regional development and a more efficient economic structure for the North.

## RESOLUTION

**Whereas**, in 1998 the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety identified that investments in highways can generate productivity growth, play a critical role in regional development and generate a more efficient economic structure including improvement to the nation's (province's) trade;

**Whereas**, a recent census has shown that the Northern communities and the City of Greater Sudbury in particular have lost a significant population base and accordingly have or will potentially lose federal and provincial representation as a result of electoral boundary changes sensitive to population;

**Whereas**, studies have shown that highway investment can have positive immediate and long-term impact on creating employment through construction, market accessibility, supply industries and population growth;

**Whereas**, closed highways due to accident or inclement weather, can result in a significant adverse impact on the inter/intra-provincial trade, especially for companies which are dependent on "just in time" delivery to achieve maximum productivity efficiencies;

**Whereas**, the road (Highway 69) is routinely closed for several hours at a time due to accidents and that such accidents serve as an economic deterrent as well as a health and safety risk.

**Whereas**, infrastructure designation under a national/provincial highway policy would ensure levels of service, safety, and standards for all users and promote business, tourism and industry in Ontario/Canada;

**Whereas**, Highway 69 is a narrow, hilly, winding two-lane road which offers little maneuverability and the accident and death rate between Sudbury and Parry Sound is more than double that between Parry Sound and Toronto, which is four-laned and serves a significantly greater volume of traffic;

**Whereas**, the road acts as a funnel for Northern Commuters travelling south and for tourists, business people and relatives who travel north;

**Whereas**, the road was designed at a time when the majority of freight traffic was still being transported by the railways and cannot accommodate the heavy transport traffic that is now the major user and an integral part of commercial trade and industrial growth in the North;

**Therefore be it resolved** that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce do direct the provincial government to:

- Immediately allocate new or increased funding to invest in the four-laning of Highway 69 south between Sudbury and Parry Sound;

- Immediately announce an accelerated start date and completion date for the construction project;
- Specifically engage in proposing a construction schedule to commence immediately from or about the Richard Lake area of Sudbury where the two-lane roadway begins to Parry Sound;
- Urge the Province of Ontario to immediately enter into discussions with the Federal Government to negotiate an arrangement under the Canadian Strategic Infrastructure Fund for the four-laning of Highway 69 similar to the recently signed agreements with the Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick to equally share in the cost to four-lane sections of the Trans Canada Highway within their provinces;
- Consider that in determining the need to perform upgrades on Ontario roads, the government review not just traffic volumes but traffic volumes in relation to the rate of accidents, injury, death, economic advantage and regional and northern development as well as consider the potential for increased traffic volumes and the economic benefits of increased volumes;
- Acknowledge that citizens traveling in all areas of the province, including the North, are entitled to timely market accessibility, improved mobility, reduced transportation costs for businesses and families as well as a uniform and reasonable level of safety on Ontario roads.