

## **Legislative Watch**

Volume 8, Issue 13

April 2, 2004

---

### **OCC Revamps Legislative Watch Design**

We are proud to launch this new html version of the OCC's weekly Legislative Watch publication. In making the switch from our Word/pdf versions, our goal is to make the newsletter easier to download/ forward and to also allow greater flexibility and interactivity with hyperlinks.

This new format will be a work in progress so watch for enhancements as the weeks go by. As always, your feedback and suggestions for improvements are welcome.

Should you prefer a Word version of this week's Legislative Watch, simply email Elizabeth at the OCC office.

### **OCC Urges Members to Provide Their Input on Border Delays in Ontario**

On March 25 the OCC launched its survey on border delays which can be found at [http://www.occ.on.ca/cgi-bin/2\\_2004CostofBorderDelays/](http://www.occ.on.ca/cgi-bin/2_2004CostofBorderDelays/). The purpose of this survey is to gather information on your views of the delays at Ontario border crossings to and from the U.S. and the cost of these delays on your company.

If your business, or your member's business, is involved with trade, please be sure to take a few moments to complete this survey to ensure that you have the opportunity to provide your input on border delays in Ontario. The survey will end on Tuesday, April 13, 2004.

Border delays have a negative Ontario-wide impact on the ability of businesses to compete and attract investment, on the cost of goods and services to consumers, as well as on tourism, and must therefore be minimized.

At the November 2003 Governing Council Meeting members received the final report from the Borders Task Force which has since developed into a standing OCC Committee focusing on Borders and Trade Development in Ontario. One of the action items in the report, available on the OCC website, is to quantify the effects of border delays between Ontario and the United States.

If you have any technical questions, please contact our Webmaster, Elizabeth Lopez at [webmaster@occ.on.ca](mailto:webmaster@occ.on.ca).

Your feedback is appreciated.

## **OCC Says Keep Ontario Coal Plants Running**

In an opinion piece published Friday, April 2, in the Financial Post (FP11), the Ontario Chamber of Commerce suggests that the recent announcements in the province's energy market are pointing to the next set of challenges. The first announcement was lifting the 4.3 cent price cap on electricity, second was the report from the Independent Electricity Market Operator on supply of electricity in Ontario, and the third announcement was the recent release of the Ontario Power Generation review by John Manley. The OCC believes that each of these three items illustrate the need for a comprehensive strategy, which the McGuinty government is expecting to deliver in the next few months.

A recent commentary by National Post journalist Terence Corcoran questions the OCC's position that allowing private investment in Ontario's energy market to increase supply will be good for business and provincial competitiveness. He states that if the province were to launch a power investment campaign it will generate increases in the price of electricity.

Mr. Corcoran questions why a private sector operator would invest in Ontario when the Manley report calls for regulated prices and continued government ownership in its recommendations.

The OCC has long been advocating for an open energy market in Ontario and believes that in order for this market to work effectively there must first be adequate supply. We continue to reiterate our message that the cost of power should appear on the electricity bill and not on the tax bill.

Removing the rate cap is an important step towards encouraging more energy supply as the OCC strongly supports any measures that will encourage the development of more supply within Ontario. No supply option should be discounted until such time as we have appropriate levels of reserve power.

The OCC believes that it would be helpful for the province to clarify and recognize the role of the private sector in the power market. The power market industry can and will respond to market demands and conditions given adequate timing, clear market rules and fair rates of return. The private sector will need to know that there will be a healthy and vibrant market before they make an investment decision.

Furthermore, we believe that the removal of the rate cap will provide a greater incentive to conserve energy usage and continue to promote energy savings through our *Power Out? Energy Savings Kit Brochure*. If you have not already done so please visit our website to download a copy of the brochure which can be found at <http://www.occ.on.ca/2poweroutenergysavingskit.asp>.

For the complete copy of the op-ed piece please visit our website.

## **Upcoming QPLF on Energy Issues is Sold Out**

The next Queen's Park Liaison Forum (QPLF) is sold out. Thank you to all the members that have registered for the April 16 session on the timely topic of energy issues in Ontario. This QPLF comes on the heels of three recent news items including the first phase of the removal of the rate cap on electricity pricing, the IMO's report on supply in Ontario and the recent report from the OPG Review Committee, chaired by John Manley, former Minister of Finance Canada. Furthermore, the government is expected to release their energy strategy on the market structure in Ontario in the next month or two.

Join Shane Pospisil, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Office of Energy Supply and Conservation, who will provide an update on Ontario energy issues; David Sword, co-chair of the OCC Energy Task Force, and Paul Massara, President of the Canadian Operations of Direct Energy, will give presentations from the private sector perspective; for an update on energy issues in Ontario.

Chambers of commerce and boards of trade are encouraged to attend.

If you are interested in obtaining more information on the Queen's Park Liaison Forum, please visit our website at [www.occ.on.ca](http://www.occ.on.ca). For more information about this session, please contact our Events Coordinator, Colleen MacIntyre by email at [colleenmacintyre@occ.on.ca](mailto:colleenmacintyre@occ.on.ca) or by telephone at (416) 482-5222, extension 222.

## **2004 Submitted Policy Resolutions Posted**

The submitted resolutions for the 2004 Annual General Meeting & Convention have been posted on the OCC website and can be found on the AGM page at <http://www.occ.on.ca/members/2agm.asp>. Please note that as resolutions are added or revised the book will be update on a continual basis but they will be marked clearly to indicate that they are new or amended. A complete book of proposed resolutions for discussion and approval by the members of the OCC at the 92nd AGM will be made available to all delegates at the convention.

The core business of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is policy development and advocacy on behalf of the Ontario business community. As a grassroots organization, and Ontario's Business Advocate of Choice, the advocacy activities of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce are greatly enhanced by the participation of our members - Chambers, Boards of Trade and Corporate - on OCC policy. This enables the OCC to advocate policies that can help businesses prosper across Ontario.

The Compendium of Current OCC Policy has also been posted and please note that the *Rules for Discussion* during the plenary sessions are made available at the beginning of the policy book.

## **OCC Part of Ministry's Business Reference Group**

Stuart Johnston, Vice President of Policy and Government Relations at the OCC, is a member of the *Business Reference Group*, which is part of the Ministry of Finance. The group was formed to review property taxation and assessment issues in Ontario. The OCC participated in the first meeting which took place on March 23 and will attend the follow up meeting this Wednesday, April 7, 2004. Topics of discussion include capping and clawback provisions, graduated tax rates and whether or not to create a small business property tax class.

Please feel free to email Stuart at [stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca](mailto:stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca) with any input on these topics.

## **Upcoming Events**

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to chambers and boards:

- Health Committee Meeting, April 6, 2004
- Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Meeting, April 6, 2004
- Finance and Taxation Committee Meeting, April 8, 2004
- Energy Task Force Meeting, April 15, 2004
- Queen's Park Liaison Forum, April 16, 2004
- Borders and Trade Development Committee, April 21, 2004
- Annual General Meeting & Convention, April 30 – May 2, 2004

*Please note that the OCC offices will be closed for Good Friday, April 9 and Easter Monday, April 12, 2004.*