

## Legislative Watch

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### **Budget Day Tomorrow....**

FINANCE MINISTER Greg Sorbara will deliver this Provincial government's first budget tomorrow (Tuesday, May 18) starting at 4:10 p.m. The Minister is himself describing it as a "watershed" budget for Ontario. Time will tell whether the water shed is tears of joy or sorrow. Expectation, though, is there will be very little joy.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is fully prepared to do an analysis of the budget and provide members with details and opinions. Last week, we started this process by sending out a media release template, as well as our listing of key budget messages.

Len Crispino, Stuart Johnston and Brad Dugard are all attending the budget 'lock-up' at Queen's Park. This will allow them to fully analyze the budget prior to the Minister rising in the House to deliver the budget. What this also means is that we will have our analysis to you via email as quickly as we possibly can. This will assist you in quickly responding to your local media.

If you are interested in a webcast of the Ontario Provincial 2004 Budget Speech, you can go to <http://webevents.broadcast.com/cnw/OMF20040518>.

### **Economic Opportunity Tours Have Begun....**

The first tour of the U.S. is underway. Earlier this morning a busload of delegates from Ontario, including OCC Chair David Gavsie and President & CEO Len Crispino, made the trek to Detroit. Joining them were representatives from the Ministry of Economic Development & Trade and from local Chambers and Boards from around the province.

Following roundtable discussions with Michigan business leaders, the tour delegates attended a Detroit Economic Club Luncheon, featuring Premier Dalton McGuinty as their keynote speaker. It was expected that the Premier would reemphasize the strong economic ties between Ontario and Michigan and also reinforce his commitment to seek solutions to the border crossing woes.

In that regard, an information briefing and tour of Customs Clearance Facility at Ambassador Bridge was part of delegates' agendas. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce also planned to release some of the preliminary findings from its **Cost of Border Delays to Ontario Report**. Expect the final report to be released later this month.

Since tour goals included a renewal of friendships, strengthen of existing ties and initiation of future opportunities, networking was key. Tours and functions were hosted by both the Canadian Consulate and the Detroit Chamber of Commerce.

The OCC is working to demonstrate that Ontario is open for business.

**...and, then to Buffalo....**

On Wednesday, the OCC assembles a new group of delegates for the second Economic Recovery Tour...this time, in Buffalo. Tours, networking and opportunities to discuss border issues are all part of this tour's agenda with involvement by the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership and World Trade Centre of Buffalo-Niagara.

We are also thrilled that many Chamber representatives from the Niagara region will be joining us for a breakfast function on Thursday. The Hon. Jim Bradley, Minister of Tourism and Recreation and the Deputy Commissioner of Empire State Development are the keynote speakers.

Between August and October 2004, the OCC plans to lead delegations to Albany, Rochester, Dayton/Columbus, Cleveland and Lansing/Ann Arbor. As details become available, they will be forwarded. In the meantime, though, you can contact Stuart Johnston, Ontario Chamber of Commerce at 416-482-5222 ext. 232 or by email at [stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca](mailto:stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca) for further information.

**Don't Forget Your AGM & Convention Evaluations!**

From all indications, the OCC's 92<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting & Convention in Thunder Bay was a resounding success. At least, that's what the surveys so far have told us.

If you have yet to complete a survey, we still have an electronic version posted on the OCC website at [http://www.occ.on.ca/cgi-bin/2\\_2004AGMEventEvaluation/index.asp](http://www.occ.on.ca/cgi-bin/2_2004AGMEventEvaluation/index.asp). Hurry, though. We would like to complete our analysis so we need your feedback by this Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at Noon.

Not only will the survey help tell us how we did, it will also help us plan next year's Sarnia convention. And, believe it or not, we are already making plans for the 2006 convention!!

We can never thank sponsors enough. So, many thanks again to all the sponsors who made the AGM possible: *Chartered Accountants of Ontario, Ontario Exports Inc., Union Gas, GlaxoSmithKline, Ogilvy Renault, Certified General Accountants of Ontario, The Johnston Group, Edward Insurance Group, Sharp Electronics, and RBC Royal Bank*. And of course, we could not have done it without the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

**Upcoming Events**

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to Chambers and Boards:

- Tabling of the 2004 Ontario Budget, May 18, 2004
- Borders & Trade Development Committee, Buffalo, May 19, 2004
- OCC Economic Recovery Tour in Buffalo, May 19 – May 20, 2004

- Victoria Day, OCC Offices Closed, May 24, 2004
- Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, May 26, 2004
- Ontario Business Advisory Council with New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord, June 1, 2004
- Ontario Business Advisory Council with Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, The Hon. David Caplan, June 14, 2004