

Legislative Watch

Volume 8, Issue 22

June 11, 2004

OCC Keeps a Close Eye on Campaign 2004 and Requests Your Feedback

In a new survey launched today, the OCC hopes to capture the views of its members on the upcoming federal election. The purpose of the survey is to identify your key federal election issues, from an Ontario standpoint. The survey can be found at the following link:

http://www.occ.on.ca/cgi-bin/2_2004FederalElection/index.asp.

The survey will end on **Thursday, June 17 at 12:00pm**. **Please** take a few moments to complete the survey and send the link to your members. The results will be used to advise the candidates/elected government on issues that Ontario businesses feel should be addressed to enhance the province's economic and business competitiveness.

In today's SES Daily Election Update, the Conservative Party and the Liberals are neck-in-neck, with 34% (+6) and 33% (-8), respectively, of the popular vote.

OCC Releases Study on Cost of Border Delays Attracting Attention from Prime Minister Martin to President Bush

The OCC released its study on the cost of border delays to Ontario at Queen's Park on Monday, June 7, 2004. The study and accompanying news release can be found on the OCC website at www.occ.on.ca.

The media launch attracted political attention and media exposure from across North America. It appeared on CTV, Global Television, CP24, and CBC; online and in print in each of the top Toronto dailies, including the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the Globe and Mail, the National Post and Financial Post. In the US it appeared in USA Today, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and in media in California, Florida, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Texas and Ohio, to name a few.

In information received late yesterday afternoon, the OCC was informed that Prime Minister **Paul Martin** has made US President **George W. Bush** and Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge aware of the concerns raised in the study. Ontario Finance Minister **Greg Sorbara** also responded to the study saying the problem is a combination of tighter security and a physical infrastructure that cannot handle the volume [of trade]. He added that the provincial and federal governments need to work together with border state governments and US officials to make Canada-US border issues a 'top priority', something that the OCC Borders and Trade Development Committee have long lobbied for.

Remarks were made by OCC President and CEO, Len Crispino, OCC Chair and Chair of the Borders and Trade Development Committee, David Gavsie, and by Harold Heffernan, General Manager of Celadon Canada Inc., a trucking company based in Kitchener, Ontario. In his

comments, Mr. Heffernan stated that “despite plenty of encouraging rhetoric, no one seems willing to actually tackle the problem.”

Over \$600 million in trade crosses between Ontario and the United States every day, comprising over 90% of Ontario’s total trade. Businesses in Ontario must be able to rely on border crossings that are accessible, reliable, efficient and safe. Delays at the borders are currently costing Ontario’s economy approximately \$5.25 billion a year in lost production, revenue, investment and tourism. The OCC firmly believes the issue of border delays at Ontario’s border crossings is a major concern, that unless addressed, will continue to adversely affect Ontario businesses, its competitiveness and its quality of life.

The *Cost of Border Delays to Ontario* report is a thorough review of the issues related to delays at Ontario-US border crossings. It reviews the effects of these delays on families, businesses and the Ontario economy as a whole. Section seven of the report breaks new ground by quantifying the costs of these delays on businesses and the economy. The report has been delivered to members of both federal and provincial levels of government, key stakeholders, and OCC members. The OCC met with Premier McGuinty and Ministers Caplan, Takhar and Cordiano, on June 10 for well over an hour, to discuss these and other advocacy issues in greater detail.

Become Part of Team Ontario 2004 Today!

Thank you to those chamber and board executives who have already confirmed their participation in this year’s Team Ontario. Team Ontario is made up of executive directors and managers from chambers and boards across the province. Working together we coordinate responses and evaluate resolutions for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce’s Annual General Meeting, to be held September 18 – 20, 2004, in Calgary, Alberta. The proposed resolutions should be on the CCC website by August 6, 2004.

The first Team Ontario conference call will take place on **Tuesday, June 29, 2004 at 10:00am**. The agenda for this call will be to set up the August conference call schedule, discuss the format and expectations of the process, and to identify a third co-chair for the Team. Once again, we are pleased to have Mr. Todd Letts, President of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, join us for a second consecutive year as co-chair.

Local chambers of commerce and boards of trade are encouraged to participate in Team Ontario. Please contact Rachel Kagan via email at rachelkagan@occ.on.ca to join Team Ontario and to RSVP for the June 29 call.

OCC Requests Your Feedback on Planning Issues

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced on June 1 that it is taking the next steps towards proposed reforms to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and the land-use planning system. The government has proposed reforms to the Planning Act through Bill 26, the proposed Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act, 2004. The Ministry has produced three discussion papers addressing issues related to the planning reform initiatives and is requesting that stakeholders provide their input no later than August 31. In order for the OCC to

provide a comprehensive response to the Ministry we are asking that member chamber's policy committees review the discussion papers and provide their responses to the OCC as soon as possible. The discussion papers can be found at http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_17395_1.html. The OCC is also drafting a survey that will be sent shortly. The OCC encourages chambers and boards of trade to distribute this survey to their members.

OCC Responds to Greenbelt Task Force

In a recent submission to the Greenbelt Task Force, the OCC has offered its initial response to several issues raised by local chambers on the development of a Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. The submission can be viewed online at www.occ.on.ca.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce believes that good planning for environmental protection and sustainable development is critical to the economic growth and that urban sprawl in Ontario is a critical issue that must be addressed. In reviewing the Task Force's Discussion Paper, *Toward a Golden Horseshoe*, the Chamber felt there were several concerns that were not addressed. The OCC will be meeting with the Greenbelt Task Force Chair, and Burlington Mayor, Robert MacIsaac, on Monday, June 14, 2004, to discuss these issues in greater detail.

Wondering If You Have to Work on Canada Day?

A recent news release from the Ministry of Labour gives you the facts, along with your rights as an employee, on Canada Day. Below are some highlights, but the complete release can be found at the following site: <http://www.gov.on.ca/LAB/english/news/2004/04-67f.html>.

- Many workers will get the day off with public holiday pay on Canada Day on Thursday, July 1, 2004. Canada Day is one of eight public holidays under Ontario's Employment Standards Act, 2000.
- Generally, employees qualify for Canada Day entitlements unless they fail, without reasonable cause, to work: Their entire regularly-scheduled shift before or after Canada Day; or, their entire shift on Canada Day if they agreed or were required to work that day.
- Qualified employees are entitled to take off Canada Day with public holiday pay.
- If Canada Day falls on a non-working or vacation day, qualified employees can either take a substitute work day off with public holiday pay or, if they agree in writing, they can receive public holiday pay for Canada Day with no substitute day off.
- Generally, employees who don't qualify for public holiday entitlements must work on Canada Day if asked by their employer. Most non-qualified employees are entitled to be paid one-and-a-half times their regular rate of pay for each hour worked on Canada Day. There is no substitute day off. If a non-qualified employee is not asked to work on Canada Day, he or she gets the day off with no pay.
- Under the Retail Business Holidays Act, most retail outlets must close on Canada Day.
- Not all employees are eligible for Canada Day entitlements because public holiday provisions under the Employment Standards Act, 2000 do not apply to certain jobs. Please see the full release for a list of these employees.

For more information, employees and employers may call the Ontario Ministry of Labour's Employment Standards General Inquiry Line at (416) 326-7160, or call toll free at 1-800-531-5551. Helpful information can also be accessed via the Ministry's website at www.gov.on.ca/lab/.

Learn About the Benefits of AIESEC....

A global, student-run organization with over 50 years of experience, AIESEC works to meet the needs of business through traineeship exchange. What does this mean? AIESEC provides Canadian business with an international edge by providing talented international students. They have a global network of 740 universities in over 85 countries. Here in Canada, AIESEC is active on 26 campuses with 1,500 student members. In fact, many Canadian businesses use this program to send students to fill positions in their foreign operations. To learn more, visit www.ca.aiesec.org

McGuinty Government Moving Quickly on Employment Standards Issues

On June 10 the Ministry of Labour issued a news release outlining the government's plans to go ahead with Minister Bentley's Employment Standards Action Group. The full release and backgrounder can be found at <http://www.gov.on.ca/LAB/english/news/2004/04-68.html>.

The action group will identify gaps in current operations, encourage innovative ideas, maintain fair workplaces, and foster compliance with employment standards legislation. The Chair of the group is Kevin Flynn, MPP, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour.

The group is part of a employment standards strategy announced April 26, 2004 by the Minister. It includes such measures as eliminating the 60-hour work week, developing a web-based portal to allow business to easily obtain employment standards information, improved processes for quicker file resolution and multilingual information.

The OCC responded to the issue of ending the 60-hour work week earlier this year and also participated in the Ministry's consultations.

Upcoming Events

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest:

- Ontario Business Advisory Council (OBAC) with The Honourable David Caplan, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, June 14, 2004
- OCC Borders and Trade Development Committee, June 16, 2004
- OCC Board of Directors Meeting, June 17, 2004
- Queen's Park Liaison Forum (QPLF), London, Ontario, June 18, 2004
- OCC Energy Task Force Meeting, June 23, 2004
- Federal Election, June 28, 2004
- Ontario Economic Summit (OES), Niagara-on-the-Lake, October 6-7, 2004
- Outstanding Business Achievement Awards (OBAA) Gala Dinner, November 10, 2004