

OCC President Addresses Ontario's Prosperity and Border Delays on OES Summer Tour

OCC President and CEO Len Crispino continued his summer road show in Ontario yesterday in Hamilton, which has been one of many stops on the Ontario Economic Summit (OES) tour. Last week Mr. Crispino addressed business executives in Halton Hills and in Kitchener Waterloo where coverage of the luncheon address appeared in the Record and The London Free Press.

Yesterday he addressed a group of approximately 80 local business executives to discuss Ontario's economy and its competitiveness. He outlined the OCC's plan to move Ontario to the next stage of economic leadership through the summit, which is fostering relations between business, labour, government and academic groups to build prosperity for the province. Leadership is needed to make Ontario the most competitive jurisdiction in North American, which has been the over-arching goal of the OCC.

The Summit will be about what all members can and will do to build a more prosperous province and will focus on three key areas including Ontario's economy, Ontario-US relations and Ontario-global relations. OCC members will drive the agenda by shaping it through a brief questionnaire. Thank you to all the chambers and boards who have already taken a few moments to complete the online survey. We continue to encourage members, whether registered for the summit or not, to **please** take a few moments to complete the survey which can be found at the OES website, www.occ-oes.com. Your response and feedback is critical to the success of the OES and in determining its agenda.

Mr. Crispino focused primarily on the need to address Ontario's mounting border delays and the effect it will, and is having on all businesses across the province, from your local supermarket to gas station. If the province does not have efficient and reliable border crossings, the Ontario's economy will be at a disadvantage. "I have said this before – but I'll repeat myself to drive home this point...borders are the choke points of our economy – and delays – any delays – act like a hidden tax – sucking money out of the pockets of each individual – each business – and robbing us of jobs, investments and prosperity," said Mr. Crispino.

The OCC President also remarked on the need for extra capacity for Ontario's borders. Coincidentally, today the Detroit International Bridge Co., which owns and operates the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit, announced plans to build a new bridge. The Globe and Mail reported that the company has filed permit applications in Canada and the US to build a parallel bridge to expand traffic capacity. This is one of several competing proposals for adding an additional crossing point between Windsor and Detroit, which has about 10,000 trucks crossing it on a daily basis. Another talked about proposal is from the Detroit River Tunnel Partnership (DRTP) whose response to the new proposal said that this will not derail its plans to expand the existing railway tunnel under the Detroit River to create a truck-only transportation corridor. David Bradley, president of the Ontario Trucking Association and member of the OCC's Border and Trade Development Committee, said though he is not supporting any particular proposal, he is happy to see that perhaps more than one project will be completed and that it is important to have this competition. He cited border crossings as Canada's number one issue.

Following his address, Mr. Crispino appeared on the Roy Green Show, a Hamilton talk radio program on CHMC Radio. His appearance was also covered by the Hamilton Spectator. A copy of Mr. Crispino's speech can be found on the OCC website at <http://www.occ.on.ca/2oeot.asp>

Does the Big Pipe Equal a Big Boom?

Last Friday, the Ontario government gave its approval to York Region for the York Durham Sewer System or 'Big Pipe' link to King City, denying requests for a full environmental assessment. This sewage link, which is set to be completed in 2008, aims to meet the demands of the population which is expected to grow from 5,000 to 12,000 people by 2021. Critics suggest that the link will promote urban sprawl into prime farmland on the sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine at a time when the Government has announced its campaign to curb growth in the 905 area. Supporters on the other hand, believe that the link is a necessary piece of infrastructure needed to meet future demand and replace decrepit and polluting septic systems in King City.

The Premier denied reports that the government was trying to quietly hide the approval and tried to quell fears that it would result in massive urban expansion. "We didn't say that there is not going to be any growth," McGuinty stated, adding "The issue is how do we best manage the growth that's coming here."

In addition to the link, the York Region will see the construction of a new pipe to twin the existing one which is currently nearing capacity. This project will cost at least \$800 million and is expected to accommodate the region's population which is projected to be roughly 1.3 million by 2026.

Apprenticeship Announcement

On August 5, 2004, the McGuinty government announced three new programs to improve access to apprenticeship training in Ontario. The Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training Colleges and Universities, was present at the news conference and remarked on the importance of apprenticeship training and the need to be able to respond to the demand for skilled trades workers in Ontario, which keeps the province's economy strong and competitive. The news release from the Ministry also cited the OCC's 2003 Skilled Trades Survey, which reported that within the next 15 years, 52 per cent of skilled trades people are expected to retire. The complete news release and related backgrounders and can be found at http://ogov.newswire.ca/ontario/GPOE/2004/08/05/c8728.html?lmatch=&lang=_e.html.

In its announcement the government outlined the proposed apprenticeship training tax credit, that if passed by the legislature, will provide refundable tax credits for employers on a portion of the salaries/wages paid to apprentices. Specifically, the proposed credit would refund 25% to an eligible apprentice in a qualified skilled trade. The credit would increase to 30% for small businesses (i.e. with payrolls less than or equal to \$400,000) and employers would qualify for up to \$5,000 per year per eligible apprentice, with a maximum credit of \$15,000 over the first 36 months of an apprenticeship. The full list qualifying trades (including construction, industrial, auto and service) is listed on the Ministry of Finance website at <http://www.gov.on.ca/FIN/english/tax/2004/tb04e2.htm>, in its #04-2, July 2004 Tax Bulletin. The government will conduct stakeholder consultations to review the effectiveness of the credit prior to December 31, 2007. The OCC has made numerous recommendations to the government on this issue and is pleased to see that it is creating a training tax credit as outlined in its election platform.

Other highlights of the announcement include creating 1,500 scholarships of \$1,000 each to high school students and a \$2,000 bonus to employers to encourage them to hire high school students who quit school and then returned to school and entered apprenticeships. As well, the Ministry announced up to \$6M in 2004-'05 for a Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program, which, this year, will help 194 young people train towards careers in skilled trades. It is a program to create a new pathway to obtain apprenticeship certification and a college diploma.

The OCC will be meeting with Minister Chambers in early September to discuss this and other education and training issues.

OCC Recommends Greater Business Involvement in MTO's Niagara Transportation Strategy

In response to a Ministry of Transportation draft discussion paper, *Bi-National Transportation Strategy for the Niagara Frontier*, the OCC prepared a submission to the Ministry on July 28, 2004. The submission highlighted key recommendations from the *Borders Task Force Report* and the OCC's recently released study on the *Cost of Border Delays to Ontario*. The OCC strongly believes that it is essential for the government to make border crossings a high priority issue. The Bi-National Transportation Strategy, which is not yet available to the public, is an encouraging step in the right direction, but the OCC feels that the government's proposed strategy requires greater communication with the business community. The full submission can be viewed at http://occ.on.ca/2policysubmissions/07282004_BiNationalTransportation.pdf.

Marine Transportation Needs to be Fostered And Is Key to a Strong Transportation Network

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce was asked to provide its feedback for the stakeholder consultations being conducted by the St. Lawrence Economic Development Council (SODES). SODES is a non-profit organization with a mandate to protect and promote the economic interests of the St. Lawrence Seaway. For more information on SODES, please visit their website at www.st-laurent.org.

Marine transportation is vital to Canada and Ontario's trade and economic competitiveness, however it continues to be one of the most underutilized modes of transportation in the province as investment remains focused primarily on highway infrastructure. The OCC also sent a separate submission to the Honourable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation, outlining the OCC's policy position on marine transportation, specifically regarding the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The OCC strongly believes that the St. Lawrence Seaway should be fostered and used to its full potential to be part of a strong, coordinated transportation network in the province. To ensure that resources are allocated fairly, the OCC continues to urge the Government of Ontario to ensure that appropriate funding is allocated to Ontario's infrastructure and trade corridors, and also strongly recommends that the province work with the federal government to promote the use of, and maintain and improve operation of the St. Lawrence Seaway. It is for these reasons that members of the OCC unanimously approved a policy resolution outlining the importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway at the 2003 Governing Council.

The key recommendation made to SODES by the chamber was to engage in greater stakeholder consultations with subject matter experts in Ontario. The OCC suggested that the group contact the Hamilton and Thunder Bay Port Authorities to provide further detail on the Study's objectives.

Both submissions are available on the OCC website.

Advocacy Plan

The latest edition of the OCC Advocacy Plan can be viewed on the OCC website at <http://www.occ.on.ca/2publications/20042005AdvocacyPlan.pdf>. The Plan includes our member resolutions approved at the May AGM & Convention as well as other advocacy activities of the OCC. The Plan includes a description of each of the resolutions, the current OCC and government status, and the next steps.

The OCC is always seeking ways to improve its processes, if you have any comments or suggestions on the Advocacy Plan please contact Rachel Kagan at rachelkagan@occ.on.ca.

OCC Panelist on Border Congestion at Canadian Urban Institute; FT Cites Borders Cost Study

On July 23, 2004, OCC President and CEO Len Crispino, was part of a panel for the Canadian Urban Institute's Urban Leadership Series entitled *Relieving Border Gridlock*. The purpose of the session was to bring together leading government and private sector decision makers to address how to unlock border gridlock and ensure the smooth and secure flow of goods and people to and from Ontario. The keynote speaker was the Honourable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation.

In his remarks Mr. Crispino stated that the OCC has called on the government to provide short, medium and long-term solutions providing for investments in infrastructure, investments in time-saving, and security enhancing technology and, investments in education for drivers, transportation companies and shippers so they know what programs can help them conduct cross-border trade in the most efficient way possible. By the year 2030, delays in the Detroit-Windsor corridor alone will result in direct costs to Canada and the US of more than \$17.8B a year, which will result in over 70,000 jobs lost in Canada. The OCC President highlighted the cost study prepared by the OCC in June which estimates the cost of border delays to Ontario is \$5.25 billion per year, or a cost of \$1,000 for each Ontarian.

That study is available on the OCC website and was recently referenced in the United Kingdom's major business daily, The Financial Times. The article, *Wheels of trade seize up at busiest border*, appeared in the August 3 edition of the paper. It offered references from John Carroll, senior Vice President of the Detroit regional chamber; Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario; OCC President Len Crispino; and Harold Heffernan, General Manager of Celadon Canada, a trucking company - Mr. Heffernan also made remarks at the OCC's launch of its cost of border delays study in early June;

Economic Opportunity Tours Gear Up for Fall

The OCC is pleased to announce the next in our series of Ontario Economic Opportunities Tours. The Chamber invites you to **Cleveland, Ohio** from **September 8-9, 2004**. The theme of the trip is urban infrastructure and economic development, and will include a reception with local business leaders at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, as well as a luncheon featuring keynote speaker **Steve Forbes**, Editor-in-Chief of Forbes Magazine.

The complete agenda is currently being finalized, and further information will be available soon. In the meantime, for more information, please contact the tour coordinator, Ryan Clarke at ryan@advocacysolutions.ca.

OBAA Awards Nominations Deadline Quickly Approaching

Thank you to all the chambers and boards who have already submitted their nominations for this year's Outstanding Business Achievement Awards (OBAA) Gala Dinner recognizing business excellence in Ontario. The dinner will take place on November 10, 2004 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. In order to continue to publicly recognize the excellent businesses and entrepreneurial spirit in Ontario, local chambers of commerce and boards of trade are requested to send in their nominations by **August 31, 2004**.

Four OBAA awards will be presented to those businesses whose achievements in sales, innovation, entrepreneurship, and overall business excellence and acumen, will be recognized at the gala dinner.

The Community Export Development Award recognizes a community – as represented by a chamber of commerce, board of trade, or business development organization – that has successfully created an environment which fosters business and export development.

The Bell Innovation Technology Award recognizes Ontario businesses that have demonstrated excellence in innovation, adaptability, and the successful application of new technology to the development & growth of their products and/or services.

Additionally, the OCC is very excited to present two new awards at this year's OBAA. The Skills Development Award will recognize business excellence in the area of skills development and training, and the Corporate Governance Award will honour an Ontario business that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment in the area of corporate governance.

To view the complete nominations guideline please visit our website at <http://occ.on.ca/2obaa.asp>. For information about the nominations process or about reservations for the OBAA Awards Dinner Presentation, please contact Colleen MacIntyre via email at colleenmacintyre@occ.on.ca or by telephone at (416) 482-5222, extension 222.

Upcoming Events

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

- OCC Health Policy Committee Meeting, August 10
- OCC Energy Task Force Meeting, August 11
- Team Ontario Conference Call, August 12
- OCC Borders and Trade Development Committee, August 24
- OCC Finance and Taxation Committee, August 26
- OCC Education Committee Meeting, August 31
- OBAA Nominations Deadline, August 31
- OCC Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, September 1
- Ontario Economic Summit (OES), Niagara-on-the-Lake, October 6-7
- Outstanding Business Achievement Awards (OBAA) Gala Dinner, November 10