

Empire Club of Canada Hosts OCC President and CEO

On **Tuesday, September 28, 2004**, the Empire Club of Canada is hosting OCC President and CEO, **Len Crispino**, as its keynote luncheon speaker. The event is being sponsored by Canada NewsWire and is taking place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Toronto.

We encourage all chambers and boards to attend this event.

[Download the flyer with information on how to purchase tickets and tables for the luncheon.](#)

Mr. Crispino's address is entitled "Together – Building Prosperity for Ontario" and will focus on the OCC's plan to move Ontario to the next stage of economic leadership - forging alliances between business, labour, government and academia to build prosperity for Ontario.

Premier McGuinty Keynote for OBAA Gala Dinner

This year's Outstanding Business Achievement Awards (OBAA) should be the best ever. It will take place on **November 10, 2004** at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Toronto. The Honourable **Dalton McGuinty**, MPP, Premier of Ontario, will be the keynote speaker at this year's Gala Dinner.

Tables of ten are available to corporate members for \$3,500. Visit the OBAA page of the website at <http://occ.on.ca/2obaa.asp> and submit your registration today...tables are selling quickly!

For information on the OBAA Awards Dinner, please contact Colleen MacIntyre, Events Coordinator, via email at colleenmacintyre@occ.on.ca or by telephone at (416) 482-5222, extension 222.

Ontario's Property Tax System: Is the Government Listening?

Maple syrup producers get a quick fix from the government, but what about the rest of the system?

On September 21, 2004, the Ministry of Finance announced that the Ontario Government is lowering property taxes for maple syrup producers by reversing the industrial property classification applied to some facilities.

According to the Ministry of Finance news release issued the same day, the government says they are "committed to finding ways to improve the quality and consistency of property assessments in Ontario," the OCC believes that more needs to be done. The OCC supports the government's announcement but believes it is only continuing to recognize symptoms of a

greater issue – Ontario’s property tax system is flawed and needs to be completely reviewed to address the systemic problems and inequities in the system.

Beginning on January 1, 2004, maple syrup producers will be taxed at the lower farm rate for property tax purposes. This move reverses the industrial property tax classification that was applied to some maple syrup production facilities by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) for the 2004 taxation year. To distinguish between farm property and industrial property classifications, MPAC considers the primary agricultural product and the process involved in getting that commodity to market.

MPAC provides municipalities with a wide range of assessment services, which includes preparing an annual assessment roll for use by a municipality in calculating property taxes. Each year MPAC prepares an assessment roll for every Ontario municipality. The roll provides the assessed value of all the properties in a municipality or in the jurisdiction of a school board with taxing authority. MPAC also prepares supplementary assessment lists, which municipalities use to add in-year tax revenue from new construction or major alterations to properties.

Several resolutions have been unanimously adopted by OCC members on property tax reform. Most recently at the 2004 May AGM & Convention in Thunder Bay, delegates approved a resolution calling on the government to eliminate the capping of property tax. The capping of assessment related property tax increases for some property taxpayers, and the corresponding clawback of tax decreases for other property taxpayers, results in an inequitable distribution of the tax burden within municipalities, and across the province as a whole. And in 2003, delegates strongly supported a resolution urging the Government of Ontario to establish a Property Tax Review Panel. Ontario’s property tax system should be fair and consistent. Solid analysis is required to assess the financial impact of property tax reform.

To view these resolutions and the OCC’s news release that was released shortly after the Ministry of Finance’s announcement, please visit www.occ.on.ca.

OCC Responds to Government’s Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Earlier in the summer, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (MPIR) released its Discussion Paper entitled *Places to Grow: Better Choices. Brighter Future*, available at www.placestogrow.pir.gov.on.ca. The paper sets out a vision for managing growth and infrastructure investment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region of the province. Over the next 30 years it is estimated that the number of people living in Ontario will grow substantially; more than four million people are expected to settle in Ontario by 2030, with a majority of them expected to settle in the Horseshoe --- one of the fastest growing areas of North America. The government released the paper and has been conducting public consultations in order to gain input on its plan to accommodate this growth.

Today the OCC presented its written submission to the Smart Growth Secretariat. The OCC commends the government on its plan to develop a comprehensive strategy to accommodate growth in the Golden Horseshoe Region as laid out in the Discussion Plan. The paper addresses several issues in which the OCC’s Transportation and Infrastructure, and Borders and Trade

Development Committees have reviewed and developed policy positions on, including the creation of a Greater Toronto Area Transportation Authority, the construction of the Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor and long range planning, to name a few. The complete submission can be found online at www.occ.on.ca.

Canadian Chamber Convention a success....

Ontario was well represented at the recent Calgary convention with 81 delegates or proxies; that was almost 40 per cent of the votes at the policy debates!

Several resolutions were debated and approved at the convention that call for the federal government to:

- Put in place a three per cent cap on year-over-year program spending increases
- Pay down the debt to a level where it is 25 per cent of GDP in ten years
- Make Canada's tax rates as competitive as possible
- Reduce the regulatory burden and streamline regulatory processes in many industries and between levels of government and with the United States
- Make improved relations with the United States a priority
- Harmonize and modernize federal-provincial commercial legislation
- Fully implement the Agreement on Internal Trade
- Put in place a single securities regulator;

A complete list of the adopted resolutions can be found on the CCC website at www.chamber.ca. A big thank you goes out to all the chambers and boards that participated in this year's Team Ontario process. The Team has grown to be, in many ways, the most effective policy caucus at the Canadian Chamber convention due to the efforts of numerous Chamber/ Board staff members. They spent considerable time this summer reviewing and researching each of the 49 resolutions to be voted on at the convention.

Congratulations go to the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce.

Sarnia-Lambton was the winner of the very first Canadian Chambers Competition under the theme, "Members Recruiting & Retention". After presentations from each of the three finalists (Calgary and Greater Nanaimo Chambers being the others), convention delegates voted on the winner. The award, a painting created by Kamala the artist elephant from the Calgary Zoo, was given at the AGM Gala Dinner.

The Bancroft, Kitchener-Waterloo and Oshawa Chambers were the first in Ontario to become "Accredited". This new program recognizes Chambers and Boards of Trade that demonstrate "a high standard of excellence in service to its members through strict adherence to a prescribed set of programs, services, management and governance principles, and policy and advocacy initiatives". Each of these Chambers had agreed to participate in a beta-test of a new program. The full program will now roll out in 2005. In the accreditation process, applicant could apply

under 3 or all 5 of areas of accomplishment. Those that achieved all five, including the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, were given Accreditation *with Distinction*.

Using ITS To Make Border Crossings More Efficient

The governments of Canada and Ontario have jointly selected a team to research and develop strategies for using technology to improve the flow of traffic and information at all Ontario-US border crossings. The complete news release from September 21, can be found on the Ministry of Transportation's website at www.mto.gov.on.ca.

This announcement is part of the Let's Get Windsor-Essex Moving strategy, announced last March, which involves the use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to help manage traffic flow. ITS uses technology to improve to improve the flow of people and goods along roadways and borders. ITS technologies include cameras to monitor traffic, weather and road conditions. The system also includes electronic sensors and detectors embedded in the roadway to gauge the speed of traffic. All of this information is passed along to drivers through real-time changeable message signs.

This initiative stems from the Let's Get Windsor-Essex Moving strategy, but the technology developed will be applicable at other border crossings in Ontario. The 18-month project will cost approximately \$1.3 million, to be shared equally by the federal and provincial governments. Federal funding for the project comes from the Border Infrastructure Fund. Regularly updated project information will be available to the public at: www.intelligentborder.ca.

Fears of Rate Hike Subside as MTO Announces Support for Public Transit

On September 20, the Honourable Harinder Takhar, MPP, Minister of Transportation (MTO), announced a \$70 million investment to the City of Toronto for the maintenance of TTC subways and streetcars. This investment will allow TTC fares to remain at their current level.

The MTO's press release can be found on its website at www.mto.gov.on.ca. This announcement supports the government's commitment to public transit as stated in the 2004 Ontario Budget. The government is undertaking initiatives to improve public transit and increase ridership in Ontario, in particular, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The next step to address transit needs is to follow up on the government's commitment to dedicate two cents of the existing provincial gas tax to public transit, which was also announced in the Budget. In yesterday's press release the Minister of Municipal Affairs John Gerretsen stated that: "Next month, we will also be delivering on our commitment to provide a portion of the gas tax to municipalities to help fund public transit."

This funding is in addition to a joint five-year funding commitment of \$1.05 billion for the TTC announced by the governments of Canada and Ontario and the City of Toronto in March, 2004.

IE Convention Focuses on Strengthening Your Businesses Supply Chain

The Canadian Association of Importers and Exporters (I.E. Canada) is the recognized voice for Canada's trade community. It's 73rd Annual Conference, Trade Show & Gala will be taking place on October 25-27, 2004 at the Toronto Airport. This year's theme is *Strengthening Your Supply Chain for the Secure Transit of Products Across Borders*.

Top industry and government experts on trade and customs, from Canada, the United States and Mexico, will share their perspectives on the ever-changing trade and customs environment and their vision for the future. This three-day program is packed with workshops and concurrent sessions ideal for any customs/trade and logistics professionals all seeking ways to increase compliance and to ensure an efficient supply chain. This year's agenda also includes ideal sessions for entrepreneurs and SMEs.

For a copy of the conference brochure, please visit <http://www.iecanada.com/events.html> or contact Shaun Rainey at (416) 595-5333, #37, or by email at srainey@iecanada.com.

Upcoming Events

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

- Empire Club Keynote Luncheon with Len Crispino, September 28
- Ontario Economic Summit (OES), Niagara-on-the-Lake, October 6-7
- Thanksgiving, OCC Offices Closed, October 11
- OCC Energy Task Force Meeting, October 13
- OCC Education Committee Meeting, October 13
- OCC Finance & Taxation Meeting, October 14
- OCC Borders & Trade Development Committee Meeting, October 20
- OCC Transportation & Infrastructure Meeting, October 27
- Queen's Park Liaison Forum (QPLF) – Border Issues, October 29
- Outstanding Business Achievement Awards (OBAA) Gala Dinner, November 10
- Governing Council, November 19