

## Contribute to the OCC's 2004-05 Policy Development: Register for the AGM Today

Friday, March 19, 2004 is the deadline for submitting resolutions for this year's Annual General Meeting & Convention. This year's AGM will be held from April 30 to May 2, 2004 with the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce as our host.

We have already begun reviewing topical resolutions on important provincial business issues and look forward to receiving resolutions from the OCC policy committees, chambers of commerce, and boards of trade, which will ensure for interesting and active policy sessions at the AGM.

This is a great opportunity for members to directly provide their input to OCC policy positions. Policy resolutions should be emailed to Stuart Johnston at [stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca](mailto:stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca). Areas of focus

for the resolutions should be related to Finance & Taxation, Health Policy, Transportation & Infrastructure, Education, Energy and Borders and Trade Development issues.

Once the resolutions deadline has passed and the appropriate committee has reviewed them, a compendium of the resolutions will be made available on the OCC website. Prior to the AGM, a final hard copy will be distributed. More information on submitting resolutions is available online at [www.occ.on.ca](http://www.occ.on.ca).

If you have not already done so please register before March 29 to save on registration fees. Registration forms and information on hotel accommodations can all be found on our website at [www.occ.on.ca](http://www.occ.on.ca).

## Media Embraces OCC Pre-Budget Report

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, earlier this week, delivered your pre-budget message to the media. The result has been incredible with our story picked up by numerous media, including the National Post, Ottawa Citizen, London Free Press and Toronto Star. The Star called us, "Ontario's biggest business lobby".

One of the best rewards in this week's coverage is having the OCC portrayed as the leader on this issue. Others have either had to react to our position or have altered their own messages. A national public policy organization even released some of its pre-budget messages earlier than planned to react to the OCC's media coverage.

While we were pleased to have the Toronto Star comment on our release, we believe they misinterpreted our message. Their headline, "Contradictory Advice" and editorial indicated a short-term tolerance of deficits combined with a call for reduced personal taxes and no sale of public assets was at odds. We disagree. Our new Media Relations Manager, Brad Dugard fought hard to be granted space for a rebuttal. That is expected to run tomorrow (Saturday).

Our key message is that balanced budgets will always be a key priority but given the current fiscal situation, it is important for government to quickly take steps to manage the books in a way that may require a tolerance for a modest deficit for a year or two so as to get on the path of sound management and longer term priority setting. Members have demonstrated a capacity for a reasoned and informed approach, rather than denying the current hard realities. Members have also told us that health, energy prices & supply, infrastructure development and skills development are competitive advantages that will require immediate attention, which is not just about "throwing" money at the issues.

In the weeks to come, watch for further surveys as we explore aspects of our pre-budget position in more detail. We will continue to monitor this issue and the reactions throughout the media and the province.

Please let us know your thoughts and of any media coverage in your area.

## OCC Government Meetings

Earlier this month the OCC met with **David Caplan**, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and later met with **Don Guy**, Principal Secretary at the Office of the Premier.

The OCC spoke to Mr. Caplan about a number of issues currently being actively reviewed by its Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, including developing a Transportation Authority, the status of the Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor, as well as Ontario-U.S. Border Crossing issues. Recommendations for these items can be found in the OCC's 2004 Pre-Budget Submission online at [www.occ.on.ca](http://www.occ.on.ca).

In its meeting with Don Guy, the OCC provided an update on many of its key policy activities as well as discussed the Premier's role at the Ontario Economic Forum, now scheduled to take place on October 6 and 7.

### Upcoming Events

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

- **60-Hour Work Week Submission Deadline**, February 27, 2004
- **Health Committee Meeting**, March 2, 2004
- **Transportation Committee Meeting**, March 3, 2004
- **OBAC with Minister of Finance**, March 9, 2004
- **Finance Committee Meeting**, March 11, 2004

For more information on all committees, please contact [Rachel Kagan](mailto:Rachel.Kagan@occ.on.ca) at (416) 482-5222, ext. 233.