

OCC Members Recognize Fiscal Challenges but Look Ahead to Fostering Competitiveness in Ontario

On March 4, 2004, the OCC participated in the Ministry of Finance's Pre-Budget Discussions. The three-hour session included opening remarks by Minister Sorbara, as well as plenary and group discussions. The OCC was present along with other key stakeholder groups including the APMA, CAW, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, and the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS).

The OCC presented the results of the its Supplementary Pre-Budget Survey which was launched on February 26 and ended on March 1.

Over 300 respondents from across the province assisted the OCC prepare for its consultations by providing further insight into some of the results coming out of its 2004 Pre-Budget Survey. Specifically details were given on how the government should proceed with reducing the projected deficit.

The OCC provided a Discussion Paper for the Minister addressing how the government

should tackle the deficit and at what pace.

The news release, survey results and discussion paper can be found at: http://www.occ.on.ca/NR_03042004.asp.

OCC members understand the fiscal challenges currently faced by the provincial government. They believe that a practical approach should be undertaken by targeting a balanced budget over the next one or two fiscal years, at the latest. The OCC also delivered the message to the government that members believe the government must invest responsibly in key priority areas, deliver value for taxation and limit the administrative burden on businesses by cutting red-tape.

Once the budget deficit is eliminated, OCC members will look to the government to provide the leadership needed to build the Ontario economy with policies designed to promote growth, investment and job creation.

The 2004 Ontario Budget is expected to be delivered in early spring.

Building a Better Tomorrow: PIR Stakeholders Outreach

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (PIR) has just released its discussion paper on Infrastructure Financing and Procurement which can be found at: http://www.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/page_attachments/Library/2/PIRdiscpaper_english.pdf

David Caplan, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, is conducting a Stakeholder Outreach in Toronto on Thursday, March 11, 2004. The Minister is seeking feedback on how Ontario can deliver positive change in public infrastructure financing and delivery. The outreach will be structured around the questions posed in the Discussion Paper.

Questions for discussion are meant to

identify infrastructure pressures and investment needs, fair planning practices, financing models, etc.

In addition to participating in the Stakeholder Outreach, you are encouraged to provide your own written submission in response to the discussion paper.

The deadline is March 31, 2004 and it can be submitted the day of the outreach, sent online to DiscussionPaper@pir.gov.on.ca, faxed to (416) 325-4920 or mailed to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal Infrastructure, Financing and Procurement Division.

Have you Registered for the 2004 AGM Yet?

This year's AGM & Convention is quickly approaching and is being hosted by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce at the Valhalla Inn from April 30 to May 2, 2004. Register before March 29 and take advantage of discounted registration fees. Registration forms can be downloaded from the OCC website at www.occ.on.ca. Please visit the website for important information on travel and accommodation details. We thank our friends at Bearskin Airlines who just announced discounted flights for OCC members.

The core business of the OCC is policy development and advocacy on behalf of Ontario's business community. Local chambers of commerce and boards of trade contribute by developing policy resolutions on issues of importance to the business community, and submitting them for debate and approval at the AGM. We thank all the chambers and boards who have already submitted their policy resolutions for this year's AGM and continue to encourage chambers and boards to submit their resolutions before the upcoming March 19 deadline. A resolutions template is available on the OCC website.

If you have any questions regarding policy resolutions please do not hesitate to contact Stuart Johnston at stuartjohnston@occ.on.ca or at (416) 482-5222, extension 233.

Nomination forms have now also been posted for the Burnie Gillespie Memorial Award (sponsored by the Johnston Group), the Chair's Award, and the Membership Award. Deadline for submissions is March 31, 2004. For more information please contact Scott McCammon at scottmccammon@occ.on.ca.