

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce Turns Up The Volume in 2002: A Year in Review

New Leadership and a Fresh Vision: In April 2002, **David Bishop** past Chair and CEO, announced the appointment of **Len Crispino** as the new President and Chief Operating Officer of the OCC. Len joined us from a distinguished career with the Ontario Government, where he recently served as the President and CEO of Ontario Exports Inc.

Improving our Governance: Following extensive consultations with our members, the OCC is taking measures to improve our communication and marketing efforts in order to enhance our policy development and advocacy process and add more depth and substance to our positions. In August the OCC developed the **Advocacy Plan** to track and monitor our policy resolutions and other advocacy activities on a regular basis. In December we began distributing the first update of the Plan.

Resolutions: In order to keep up with the numerous emerging issues of the province, the OCC participates and organizes various conferences for chamber delegates to discuss issues and introduce resolutions. The **90th Annual General Meeting & Convention** was held this year in May in Burlington, Ontario. For the Canadian

Chamber of Commerce's Convention, held in September, many members of the Ontario Chamber join our **Team Ontario** and engaged in numerous consultations to review and make recommendations to the Canadian Chamber's proposed resolutions. The **3rd Annual Governing Council Meeting** was held this year at the end of November, where affiliates presented a number of resolutions on issues in finance and taxation, transportation, health, education and energy issues.

Policy Submissions: The OCC was busy this year preparing submissions and meeting senior members of the Ontario government to discuss issues including Opportunity Bonds, Tax-Incentive Zones, Grow Bonds, establishing a Transportation Authority, Tax Reform, WSIB Coverage, Education Equality, Energy and the Kyoto Protocol, among other emerging issues.

In 2002, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce reconstituted the **Ontario Business Advisory Council**, which originally was formed in 1982. **OBAC** is a forum for senior Ontario business leaders to have an informal and candid dialogue with senior members of the Ontario Government.

Three meetings were held in 2002 with **Dalton McGuinty**, Leader of the Official Opposition, the Honourable **Jim Flaherty**, Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, and the Honourable **Tony Clement**, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The new OBAC season will kick-off the year with **John Manley**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Canada on January 6, 2003.

This year marked our **20th Anniversary** of the **Outstanding Business Achievement Awards**, it also marked our largest and most successful **OBAA** to date. Over 800 guests at this year's gala dinner, including the Honourable **James K. Bartleman**, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Premier **Ernie Eves**, several senior cabinet ministers along with many members of the Ontario business community, were together to celebrate business excellence in Ontario.

The OCC looks forward to continue our rejuvenation in 2003, and we welcome feedback from our membership on our initiatives.

OCC Participates in Tourism Consultations

On November 29, 2002, the OCC was invited by the Ministry of Tourism to participate in consultations on the development of a tourism strategy to improve Ontario's competitiveness.

Stakeholders were divided into breakout groups to discuss key industry issues and strategies that could attract visitors to Ontario.

A discussion paper of the tourism strategy consultations can be found at the ministry's website at www.tourism.gov.on.ca

Feedback is welcome and local chambers and boards that are interested in tourism issues are encouraged to provide their input and comments to Larry Till at the ministry, via email at larry.till@mczcr.gov.on.ca.

Last Opportunity to Register for John Manley OBAC

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Canada, **John Manley**, will be speaking candidly to members of the **Ontario Business Advisory Council** on **Monday, January 6, 2003**.

OBAC allows senior members of the business community to have an in-camera (no press) session with senior political leaders.

Registration is limited. For more information, or to register, please contact **Regan Clarke** at (416) 482-5222, extension 222 today.

Upcoming Events

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to local Chambers and Boards:

- ✍ **Ontario Business Advisory Council**, January 6, 2003
- ✍ **Education Committee Meeting**, January 7, 2003
- ✍ **Finance & Tax Committee Meeting**, January 14, 2003
- ✍ **Executive Committee Meeting**, January 15, 2003
- ✍ **Health Policy Committee Meeting**, February 21, 2003

For more information on all committees, please contact [Atul Sharma](mailto:Atul.Sharma) at (416) 482-5222, ext. 235.

Shared Border Accord Developed Between the United States and Canada

In December, the Consulate General of the United States informed the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that new measures to strengthen the security of the U.S. borders would be announced in the near future.

The U.S. and Canadian governments have agreed to align, as much as possible, their customs commercial programs along their shared border.

This agreement marked the creation of the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program, which is the result of a shared objective to enhance the security and safety of Canadians and Americans, while enhancing the economic prosperity of both countries. The FAST program will allow importers on the U.S./Canada border to obtain expedited release for qualifying commercial shipments.

Commercial truck drivers who transport goods across the U.S./Canada border may apply for membership in the FAST Commercial Driver Program. Applications and forms are available on the Consulate's website at www.usembassycanada.gov (under the Toronto Consulate Section) or at www.amcits.com.

The benefits of the program include usage of the FAST dedicated lanes in Canada and the U.S; faster border crossings with accelerated customs and immigration processing; and lastly, the FAST program will allow drivers to transport eligible goods for approved carriers and importers.

The program will promote free and secure trade by using common risk-management principles, supply chain security, industry partnership, and advanced technology to improve the efficiency of screening and clearing commercial traffic at the border.

Commenced in December 2002, FAST processing is available at the following major U.S./Canada border crossings: Blaine-Douglas, Buffalo-Fort Erie, Detroit-Windsor, Lewiston-Queenston, Port Huron-Sarnia, and Champlain-Lacolle.

For more information on the FAST Commercial Driver Program, please visit the CCRA website at www.ccradrc.gc.ca.

The letter from the Consulate General to the OCC can be accessed on our website at www.occ.on.ca.

OCC to Launch Pre-Budget Survey

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is currently preparing a 2003 provincial Pre-Budget Submission Survey.

In preparation for the 2003 Ontario Budget, Janet Ecker, Minister of Finance, is conducting a series of consultations across the province.

As part of the development of the OCC Pre-Budget Submission, we are preparing a brief survey of our members requesting feedback on current provincial finance and tax policy issues.

If you would like to provide additional feedback to the Pre-Budget Submission please send comments to Atul Sharma.

The survey will be posted on the OCC's website, at www.occ.on.ca, and will be directly emailed to you when completed.

New Season of the Ontario Business Advisory Council Begins with John Manley

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce that the new season of the Ontario Business Advisory Council (OBAC) began with a bang on Monday, January 6, 2003.

Over fifty of Ontario's senior business leaders joined the Honourable John Manley, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in an in-camera session for an informal pre-budget consultation, as Mr. Manley prepares for his first budget, expected in February.

The focus of the discussion was on the competing costs and priorities of the Federal government in the upcoming budget, with particular emphasis on health care, security, and relations with the United States.

The Ontario Business Advisory Council is a forum for business leaders to exchange ideas with senior political leaders.

OBAC also provides a stimulating atmosphere in which senior executives are able to network and consult with peers about concerns and issues affecting other industries.

Upcoming meetings for the 2003 season are being finalized with Premier Ernie Eves; Dalton McGuinty, Leader of the Official Opposition; and Janet Ecker, Ontario's Finance Minister.

For more information on the OBAC meeting please visit the OCC website at www.occ.on.ca.

Upcoming Events

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to local Chambers and Boards:

-  **Finance & Tax Committee Meeting**, January 14, 2003
-  **Education Committee Meeting**, January 16, 2003
-  **Executive Committee Meeting**, January 15, 2003
-  **Education Committee Meeting**, January 16, 2003
-  **Education Committee Meeting**, February 4, 2003
-  **Finance & Tax Committee Meeting**, February 11, 2003
-  **Board of Director's Meeting**, February 20, 2003
-  **Health Policy Committee Meeting**, February 21, 2003

For more information on all committees, please contact [Atul Sharma](mailto:Atul.Sharma@occ.on.ca) at (416) 482-5222, ext. 235.

OCC Looking for Feedback Through Pre-Budget Survey

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is pleased to present our 2003 Pre-Budget Submission Survey.

Chamber members are encouraged to take a few moments to complete the survey which can be found on the OCC website at www.occ.on.ca.

The purpose of the survey is to identify finance and tax issues that are important to chamber members.

The OCC will use the results of this survey to develop its 2003 provincial Pre-Budget Submission which will provide recommendations to the Ontario Government for their upcoming budget. It will also be used to prioritize areas of focus for the development of policy positions.

The 2003 Pre-Budget Submission will include an overall economic outlook for the province and will incorporate several resolutions previously adopted at the Governing Council session, the Annual General Meeting, Board of Director's meetings, and other Committee

activities over the past year.

In determining member's top spending and tax policy priority areas, we have provided a list of issues and options to choose from. Some examples include health, education, infrastructure, tax reform and debt levels.

In response to the important issue of business competitiveness, we examine the issues of red tape and evaluate factors that affect today's companies. In the past year, has your business encountered more or less red tape from the government?

Please take a few moments to complete the Pre-Budget Submission Survey that was sent to you and posted on our website.

The survey was sent earlier this week, if you have not received it, or have any technical questions, please contact our Webmaster at elizabethlopez@occ.on.ca.

Your contribution is greatly appreciated and will help us enhance our position as the Voice of Business in Ontario.

OCC to Unveil Results of Health Survey

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce that we will soon be delivering the results of our 2002 Health Survey.

This survey marks our first official survey for the *Ontario Business Survey*, an online survey program to be launched ten times a year on relevant business issues.

The Health Survey was conducted between November 18th and December 2nd 2002, to identify health care issues that are important to Chamber members. The OCC will use the results of the survey to prioritize areas of focus and to assist in the development of policy positions.

Close to 250 of Ontario's business leaders responded to the survey, and provided feedback on business competitiveness factors, health benefit costs, health care reform, and other priority issues.

Watch for the results of the 2002 Health Survey in the next week.

What's Making Headlines at Queen's Park

Tourism Industry: Minister of Tourism and Recreation, **Frank Klees**, urged the federal government to remove the Air Travelers Security Charge. Since April of last year, the feds have charged an additional \$24 per round trip on domestic and overseas flights. In November 2002, the OCC attended an all-day Ministry of Tourism consultation with other key industry stakeholders, on methods to improve the tourism industry in Ontario.

Skilled Trades: **Dianne Cunningham**, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, announced that the province will invest \$3 million through the Apprenticeship Innovation Fund, to improve classroom training curriculum and increase access to skilled trades. The OCC has been working closely with Skills Canada for the Skilled Trades Summit, which will be held in Kitchener, Ontario in May 2003.

In Ottawa: **Sheila Copps**, Heritage Minister, unofficially began her campaign for the Liberal leadership, but hasn't publicly announced if she is joining **Paul Martin** in the race for PM. Since Industry Minister **Allan Rock** dropped out of the race, that leaves the third expected candidate to be Finance Minister **John Manley**, who was the most recent speaker at the Ontario Business Advisory Council in January.

Energy: As part of the government's action plan to lower hydro bills, stakeholders are encouraged to review the consultation papers available on the Ministry's website at www.energy.gov.on.ca and prepare submissions to the Honourable **John Baird**, Minister of Energy, by January 23, 2003. The OCC is also pleased to announce that we have recently confirmed Mr. Baird as the next speaker for our **Ontario Business Advisory Council** on February 25, 2003.

Upcoming Events

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to local Chambers and Boards:

- ✍ **Education Committee Meeting**, February 4, 2003
- ✍ **Finance & Tax Committee Meeting**, February 11, 2003
- ✍ **Board of Director's Meeting**, February 20, 2003
- ✍ **Health Policy Committee Meeting**, February 21, 2003
- ✍ **Ontario Business Advisory Council**, February 25, 2003

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Last Chance to Contribute to the OCC's 2003 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission

If you have not already done so, we strongly encourage members to contribute to the OCC's 2003 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission. Please take a few moments to complete the Pre-Budget survey that was sent to you last week. It can also be found on our website at www.occ.on.ca

Members are encouraged to complete the survey and to also forward it to their own members in order to increase the scope of the results.

We appreciate the many Chambers and Boards who have already submitted their results.

The OCC will use the results of this survey to develop its 2003 provincial Pre-Budget Submission which will provide recommendations to the Ontario Government for their upcoming budget.

In preparation for the 2003 Ontario Budget, the Minister of Finance, **Janet Ecker**, has begun consultations with industry stakeholders and advocates.

On Monday, January 27, 2003, the OCC will meet with the Minister for a pre-budget consultation.

The 2003 Pre-Budget Submission will include an overall economic outlook for the province and will incorporate several resolutions previously adopted at the Governing Council session, the Annual General Meeting, Board of Director's meetings, and other Committee activities over the past year.

On Thursday, January 30th, the OCC will be delivering its 2003 Pre-Budget presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance & Economic Affairs.

Please take a few moments to complete the Pre-Budget Submission Survey that was sent to you and posted on our website. Once again, we thank all the members who have already taken the time to complete the 2003 Pre-Budget survey.

If you have not received the survey, or have any technical questions, please contact our Webmaster at elizabethlopez@occ.on.ca.

Upcoming OBAC Meetings with Baird, Eves, and McGuinty

The 2003 season of the Ontario Business Advisory Council (OBAC) continues on Tuesday, February 25th, with a meeting featuring the Honourable **John Baird**, Minister of Energy.

Given the current uncertainty created by the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and the capping of electricity rates in Ontario, members of OBAC have an excellent opportunity to engage the Minister in discussion on these key issues affecting the province's business community.

OBAC is an informal forum that facilitates the candid exchange of ideas between senior political leaders and leaders of the Ontario business community.

The inaugural meeting of the 2003 season took place earlier this month with **John Manley**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, delivering a timely consultation on the upcoming federal budget.

Premier **Ernie Eves** has confirmed that he will participate in an upcoming OBAC meeting following the delivery of the provincial budget in early spring.

Ontario Liberal Leader, **Dalton McGuinty**, the Leader of the Official Opposition, has also recently confirmed that he will be participating in a future OBAC session. Given the upcoming provincial spring election, OBAC members may find Mr. McGuinty's timely session of interest.

OCC Participating in Consultations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is currently participating in a number of upcoming government consultations starting next week.

On Monday, January 27, 2003, the OCC will be meeting with the Minister of Energy to discuss the government's action plan to lower hydro rates. Following that meeting, we will be consulting with the Minister of Finance regarding the upcoming Ontario budget.

On Tuesday, the OCC will meet with the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity, and Innovation, resuming energy discussions with a consultation on the province's electricity market.

On Thursday, the OCC presents our 2003 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Please contact us at (416) 482-5222 if you have any comments regarding these consultations.

Upcoming Events

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to local Chambers and Boards:

- ✍ **Education Committee Meeting**, February 4, 2003
- ✍ **Queen's Park Liaison Forum**, February 7, 2003
- ✍ **Finance & Tax Committee Meeting**, February 11, 2003
- ✍ **Board of Director's Meeting**, February 20, 2003
- ✍ **Health Policy Committee Meeting**, February 21, 2003
- ✍ **Ontario Business Advisory Council**, February 25, 2003

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OCC Delivers 2003 Pre-Budget Submission to Standing Committee on Finance

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce delivered its 2003 Pre-Budget Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on January 30, 2003.

The presentation included a provincial economic outlook, budget priorities and tax recommendations, as well as preliminary results from the 2003 OCC member Pre-Budget Survey.

The OCC expects real GDP to approach 3 per cent this year. Preliminary results from the survey's over three-hundred responses, indicated that member's have an upbeat outlook for 2003 and are quite optimistic for 2004.

In its presentation to the Standing Committee, the OCC recommended four budget priorities for the 2003 Ontario budget. The OCC recommends that the government balance the books and reduce debt, reinstate delayed tax cuts, establish initiatives which foster an encouraging business environment, and provide efficient and effective spending on targeted social areas.

Analysis of the preliminary survey results indicates the importance members attribute to decreasing debt. The OCC recommends that the provincial government must reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 15 per cent by 2010.

In addition, we recommended a number of tax recommendations for the spring budget. First, we continue to recommend that the province reinstate delayed tax cuts, remove profit-insensitive levies (including the corporate capital tax and the corporate minimum tax), establish tax-incentive zones for Northern Ontario and Brownfield sites in Southern Ontario, and create a Grow Bonds program for Northern Ontario regions to promote economic growth.

Other tax recommendations for the longer-term include ending the small business CIT clawback, moving towards a lower common non-residential education property taxes and harmonizing GST and PST.

A copy of the complete presentation and submission will soon be available on our website.

Pre-Budget Survey Extended One Week!

The 2003 Pre-Budget survey has been extended by one week. Members can continue to submit their responses until **Friday, February 7, 2003**.

We are pleased to announce that we have received great feedback from our members and would appreciate even more from those who have not yet responded to the survey. Please take a few moments to visit the OCC website at www.occ.on.ca and complete the Pre-Budget Survey.

The OCC has already used the preliminary results from the survey in our presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on January 30, 2003. We would like to continue gathering results and develop a more substantive report for Finance Minister Ecker as she prepares her spring budget.

In determining member's top spending and tax policy priority areas, we have provided a list of issues and options to choose from. Some examples include health, education, infrastructure, tax reform and debt levels.

In response to the important issue of business competitiveness, we examine the issues of red tape and evaluate factors that affect today's companies. In the past year, has your business encountered more or less red tape from the government?

We thank the many Chambers and Boards who have already submitted their results. Please take a few moments to complete our Pre-Budget Survey available on our website. If you have any technical questions, please contact our Webmaster at elizabethlope@occ.on.ca.

Former Chamber Manager Passes Away

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce offers its condolences to the friends and family of **Jack Middlemass**, who passed away from a heart attack on January 21, 2003.

Jack most recently served as Chair of the 2002 Ontario Summer Games, but enjoyed a 15-year career with the Waterloo and Kitchener Chambers of Commerce.

He is survived by his Wife, two adult children and his two grandchildren.

Upcoming Events

Listed below are some upcoming events that may be of interest to local Chambers and Boards:

- ~~///~~ **Education Committee Meeting**, February 4, 2003
- ~~///~~ **OCCE Conference**, February 5 – 7, 2003
- ~~///~~ **Queen's Park Liaison Forum**, February 7, 2003
- ~~///~~ **Finance & Tax Committee Meeting**, February 11, 2003
- ~~///~~ **Board of Director's Meeting**, February 20, 2003
- ~~///~~ **Health Policy Committee Meeting**, February 21, 2003
- ~~///~~ **Ontario Business Advisory Council**, February 25, 2003
- ~~///~~ **Executive Committee**, March 6, 2003

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