



Aurora Chamber of Commerce Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Success of Small Business Will Determine the Success of Ontario's Economy

*New Report by Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Aurora Chamber of
Commerce Marks Small Business Week 2016*

AURORA, ON, October 19, 2016: To mark Small Business Week 2016, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) in partnership with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, released the report *Obstacles and Opportunities for Small Business in Ontario*. The report highlights the contributions of small businesses to the provincial economy, while also identifying, and offering solutions to, the most pressing challenges that small business owners face.

The report's recommendations are the result of detailed consultations over the course of six months held by 25 chambers of commerce and boards of trade with hundreds of small business owners throughout the province as part of the OCC's Small Business Too Big To Ignore campaign. The campaign revealed that the three major barriers that small businesses face are Business Education Tax (BET) rate reductions, a lack of access to the workers employers need and government funding alignment on infrastructure projects.

"In Aurora local businesses are working hard to expand their operations, however they are facing some big obstacles including infrastructure deficits and the rising cost of doing business in Ontario," said Javed S. Khan, Chair, Aurora Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. "It is critical that regional governments work with the provincial and federal governments to ensure that investments and programs are targeted to reduce operational costs and to support business growth in our region," added Khan.

The report also highlights that businesses with fewer than 100 employees make up 98 percent of total Ontario businesses and two-thirds of private sector employment in Ontario. They contribute approximately 28 percent to the provincial GDP and created 87.7 percent of the new jobs nationally from 2005 to 2012. Given the significance of small businesses to the provincial economy, the OCC urges the government to take immediate action to implement the following three recommendations in the near term:

1. Continue the scheduled Business Education Tax (BET) rate reductions
2. Develop a single access point for all government-funded workforce, training, and employment services.
3. Have all three levels of government commit coordinated infrastructure dollars to connect all Ontario businesses to the 21st century global economy.

"Small businesses in Ontario are being held back by a diverse set of challenges that need to be addressed by all three levels of government." said Allan O'Dette, President and CEO of the OCC. "We are encouraging the provincial government to implement our report's recommendations so that we can ensure that our economy will have sustained economic growth for many years to come."

The OCC encourages the provincial government to work closely with the employer community to implement the recommendations in the report. These recommendations will feature prominently in the OCC's work leading up to the 2018 provincial election. At that time, the advocacy organization will evaluate the political platforms of each party with a particular consideration as to how their campaign commitments align with the interests of small business owners in Ontario.

Khan added, "From a local standpoint, there are significant challenges affecting the small business community in Aurora as we speak. The Aurora Chamber of Commerce has received a number of comments from members of the local business community surrounding the growing number of 'for lease' signs popping up in Aurora storefronts and businesses. This trend is becoming increasingly apparent; it is a growing concern for the Aurora Chamber and for the business community at large. The Chamber is eager to see this issue addressed by the Mayor and Town Council, and is keen to facilitate a roundtable meeting with key stakeholders to discuss a strategy to combat the problem."

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