

FEDERAL ELECTION 2021

hamilton
chamber of commerce
your voice in business

PRIORITIES



On behalf of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, I would like to present our Federal Election 2021 Priorities for you and your campaign's consideration. We thank and commend you for your participation in the democratic process, seeking to represent Hamilton and our community's interests in Parliament.

As President & CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton's oldest institution at 176 years old, I have the privilege of speaking for our 1,000+ members that employ over 75,000 people in our community. The Chamber is presenting recommendations herein to further support and strengthen our local economy.

We appreciate the efforts from Ottawa that have helped to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic thus far. However, it remains imperative that the federal government provide ongoing financial support and relief to Canadian businesses as the effects of the pandemic continue to endure.

Additionally, the government must plan for Canada's economic recovery and take action now to prepare for a more sustainable economy of the future. There is also a crucial need to address several policy areas related to improving equity and affordability for all Canadians. Combined, these measures will help to restore business confidence as we emerge out of the pandemic.

Our long-standing advocacy of the Hamilton B-Line LRT project, which received a federal funding commitment earlier this year, meets all of the above criteria, and remains our top priority for the federal government. We are pleased that each party has pledged to honour that commitment beyond this election. It is just one of many opportunities in Hamilton's near future that, with federal support, will help sustain the exciting renewal of this great Canadian city.

We look forward to continuing our dialogue with you and wish you well on your campaign.

Sincerely,



Keanin Loomis
President & CEO
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce



COVID-19 PANDEMIC RECOVERY SUPPORTS

Create a replacement program for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS). This should be exclusively available for businesses that are still hurt by pandemic-related public health restrictions. This program should cover the period from October 2021 until spring 2022. The revamped version must retain at least the 75% (CEWS) and 65% (CERS) subsidy rates, in line with what businesses in other sectors had access to until they were permitted to recover.

Introduce debt relief by forgiving interest payments on COVID-related government backed loans for SMEs in the hardest-hit sectors. This measure should apply to the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), the Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP) and the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program (HASCAP).

Provide clear direction to provinces on a uniform national proof of vaccination system. Government is urged to adopt and implement a digital proof of vaccination program as soon as possible and to provide guidelines to businesses on how it should be used. This will ensure consistency and simplicity of adoption across the country and moreover will prevent the need for any significant lockdown measures to be re-instated should the public health indicators warrant.

Promote mental health-friendly workplaces. Mental health policies and considerations on accommodations are essential and it is encouraged that all employers establish a mental health policy. Government should provide draft policies that account for best-practices and allow employer flexibility to adapt accordingly. Governments need to provide subsidized training opportunities for managers at all levels on inclusive human resources policies and procedures, which include essential considerations on mental health supports. We must sustain the conversation on mental health well beyond the pandemic to destigmatize and acknowledge the potential consequences of mental health challenges.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Support for implementation of Hamilton BLAST Network. With the federal government's contribution to this project announced earlier this year, it is essential to begin construction on the 14-kilometre B-Line LRT as soon as possible. The development it will catalyze and the jobs it will create will be crucial to the Hamilton region's post-pandemic recovery. As well, it is important to begin planning the additional investments required to complete the full implementation of Hamilton's future rapid transit network.

Investments in modern transportation infrastructure. We must plan now for the transportation needs of the future, which include considerations on the electrification of existing networks, collection and utilization of data, and ensuring sufficient capacity for long-term economic prosperity. It is also imperative that increasingly stringent environmental standards are applied to assessments on increased transportation infrastructure due to its significant share of Hamilton's local emissions profile. The John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport and the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority have many opportunities for investments that are certain to provide excellent returns.

Enable local climate resiliency. Support municipalities with the tools they need to protect and climate-proof their existing infrastructure and to assist with transition to carbon neutrality specific to local needs.

Eliminate barriers to interprovincial labour mobility and trade. Economic activity in Canada is hampered by inconsistent provincial rules around transportation, the environment, securities, professional certification, agri-food marketing, food safety, and more. To ensure businesses can make the most of internal markets, Canada should work with provinces to accelerate harmonization efforts.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Develop a small business net-zero strategy. This strategy will provide Main Street SMEs with incentives and opportunities to participate in Canada's plan to achieve net-zero emissions.

Build Canada's and Hamilton's clean industrial advantage. It will be essential for government to support the decarbonization of energy- and emissions-intensive industries through targeted investments into the research, incentivization and implementation of emissions reductions technologies. Governments must work to de-risk energy sharing opportunities and to collaborate with industry partners to explore the feasibility of large-scale emission reductions, including incentivizing waste heat harvesting for use in district energy systems to offset building heating emissions.

Support for studying a carbon border adjustment in coordination with other countries. Ensuring international collaboration and coordination with our allies will be essential to preserving Canada's competitiveness in our pursuit of zero emissions.

Implement a strategy for low carbon exports. A well-considered strategy will enable businesses to reach new customers who want goods that are less energy intensive.

Supporting and investing in industry under Canada's Climate Change Plan. Ensure that the Canada Climate Change Plan includes specific investments to decarbonize Canada's industrial manufacturing sectors, incentivizing them to explore options to achieve greenhouse gas reductions and improve efficiency.

SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN

Create new opportunities for diversity-owned business and those with diverse workforces to access federal contracts. Provide enhanced opportunities for diversity-owned businesses to secure public procurement contracts, including metrics and resources targeted at supporting access for women-owned and other diversity-owned businesses and those diversifying their workforces.

Support women-specific support services/programming. By ensuring that all levels of government apply intersectional, anti-racism, gender-based and diversity lenses to information policy decisions and that government invests in organizations with experience in advancing gender equity.

AFFORDABILITY

Create a Basic Income pilot project and thoroughly examine its results upon completion. Given the experiences and learning of the pandemic, particularly with the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Response Benefit (CRB), we must assess the potential costs, benefits and outcomes of a nationwide basic income social assistance program.

Commit to long-term investments in and incentives towards affordable housing development. All levels of government need to urgently recognize the need for expanded, long-term, dedicated supports for affordable housing development – these include financial resources, subsidies and incentives.

Review federal and provincial minimum wage policies to reflect a modern, living wage policy. Doing so would improve the lives of thousands of Canadians by lifting them out of poverty and help to spur further economic spending at a critical time of recovery.

CHILDCARE & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Increase investments in childcare at all levels. Ensure that considerations on affordable and accessible childcare informs future economic recovery initiatives and is considered an integral component of all economic development activities. The federal government should report on the National Child Care Secretariat to monitor, coordinate and evaluate existing child care measures across Canada to ensure intergovernmental collaboration to achieve the best possible program outcomes for Canadian women, children and families.

Government must seek to explore how expanded childcare offerings can help facilitate further employment opportunities within the sector and increase childcare capacity. Further it should understand the vital role that affordable and accessible childcare and early childhood education plays in workforce participation.

Consultations on childcare reforms must include input from parents, providers, employers and other stakeholders to prioritize equitable and informed policy outcomes. It will be essential to gather the perspectives and input from those with lived experience to foster the best possible long-term solutions to equitable access to high quality and affordable childcare and early childhood education.

Support sector growth and retention. Government should promote further professionalization of the sector by subsidizing a living wage, enabling better working conditions and increased employee retention. In order to ensure long-term viability and employment attraction to the sector, all levels of government must commit to implementing a living wage across all sectors of the economy, but even more so for those essential services that have been historically under-appreciated.

WORKFORCE RESKILLING

Create flexible, accessible, navigable upskilling and reskilling options. Developing a culture of lifelong learning can create talent pipelines through targeted matchmaking programs. This approach will help build resilient employees and businesses alike, reduce risks for all groups and create a more diverse workforce.

Maximize micro-credential opportunities. All levels of government need to ensure that micro-credentialing strategies and programs are designed and informed by inputs from employers, job-seekers and service providers. In order to ensure long-term benefits are derived, government, employers and service providers need to engage in an iterative dialogue through multiple program cohorts to understand how best to design and improve outcomes for job-seekers, and particularly those experiencing further community marginalization.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Renew the Canada-U.S. relationship. Focusing on areas of alignment to ensure Canada is a valued ally, including critical mineral supply chains, a strengthened shared defence industrial base, a renewed and reinvigorated Regulatory Cooperation Council and joint action on climate change in the transition to a lower carbon economy.

SUPPORTING AN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Continue facilitating the secure digitalization of SMEs. The government can enhance growth by making cybersecurity part of the recently launched Canada Digital Adoption Program and by championing the development of cybersecurity standards across the country.

Build closer collaboration among governments, employers and educational institutions. To succeed in the 21st century economy, Canada needs a 21st century workforce, which it can only achieve through better communication and collaboration among the key players.

Supporting Canada's and Hamilton's innovation ecosystem. Provide incentives and invest in made-in-Canada/Hamilton innovations to fight climate change across transportation, infrastructure and industrial emissions and utilize the net zero accelerator to explore wide array of emissions-combating technologies including waste heat harvesting for building heating. McMaster Innovation Park in particular is a centre of economic growth in Hamilton that has and will benefit greatly from federal investments.

Implement a national life sciences strategy. The strategy must execute specific measures that will attract investments from life sciences companies into Canada for domestic production, develop life sciences R&D infrastructure, improve the system of patient access, invest in life sciences talent and ensure Canada is part of global supply chains. Hamilton's life science industry is worthy of investment as it performs world-class research and grows in economic importance.

Develop forward-looking natural resource strategies. Ontario's mining and forestry sectors are well positioned to provide Canada and its trading partners with a reliable source of primary resources required for electric vehicles, computer chip manufacturing, buildings, and more. Cohesive strategies and targeted investments in Northern Ontario will be necessary to meet the growing demand for these products.

Expand investments in broadband through the Universal Broadband Fund. Hamilton is 70% rural. Enabling more access to 5G internet in rural and remote communities will support job creation outside urban centres.