

Putting a Peterborough lens on Provincial Budget 2017

By: Sandra Dueck, Policy Analyst, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

The fact that the Ontario Budget for 2017-2018 is a balanced budget is one of the forefront messages of the recently released document. While, a balanced budget is commendable, especially since it's the first balanced budget since the recession, it doesn't erase the debt the province has accumulated and will still require payment to service.

"Budget 2017 demonstrates that much of Ontario's fiscal outlook will depend on the prosperity of our private sector," said Richard Koroscil, Interim President & CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC). "The government acknowledged that business investment spending slowed in 2016, though expects firms to increase investment by 3.1 percent, annually, to 2020 – an amount that would outpace growth in real GDP growth and household spending. These assumptions depend upon business confidence and U.S. demand, which is subject to considerable risk given recent comments by American President Donald Trump."

On the positive side, a balanced budget does allow the government more flexibility in program funding and that is reflected in the budget. "Peterborough is well served by this budget," Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and Minister Responsible for Small Business told me in a phone call hours after the budget. "The investment in pharmacare for children will help fill a gap for those without full benefit packages and allow parents to put that money to other uses, while continued investment in the Red Tape Challenge will help reduce the regulatory burden for small business."

With 93% of Peterborough Chamber membership falling into the small business category of 100 employees or less it is good to hear the commitment to this program reiterated. The Chamber is also pushing for a Red Tape Challenge analysis of the small business sector as a whole.

The budget also shows that the private sector has had a positive impact on the economy and demonstrates a clear commitment to good jobs throughout our province. 98% of all new jobs since the recession in Ontario have been full time, and 78% in above-average wage industries.

Using the OCC analysis, what does Budget 2017 mean for Peterborough?

Infrastructure

In Budget 2017, the Government indicates it will invest \$13.5 billion through Moving Ontario Forward to enable faster and more frequent service on the GO network and Union-Pearson Express. In addition, the Government announced that funding for the Connecting Links program will increase to \$30 million per year by 2018-19.

OCC Analysis

In our 2017 Pre-Budget Submission, we called for a one-time, \$30 million enhancement of the Connecting Links fund as a transitional measure to assist affected communities in addressing the two-year gap in which the program was discontinued.

Peterborough Analysis

In the past, the townships of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen and Norwood-Asphodel have received Connecting Links funding because their main street is a piece of Highway 7. However, infrastructure needs in the City and County are still significant and will continue to challenge municipalities in the future. The Peterborough Chamber looks forward to seeing the province's Long Term Infrastructure Plan which will be released by the end of 2017.

Business Growth Initiative

The Business Growth Initiative was announced in Budget 2016 as a plan to support Ontario's transition to a new economy. Budget 2017 includes an expansion of the BGI by \$650 million over five years.

Peterborough Analysis

Entrepreneurship is a designated pillar in the Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development Strategic Plan, the focus of the Innovation Cluster and other groups such as Start Up Peterborough. To



see the Government's plan to invest in areas of advanced computing, artificial intelligence, 5G and autonomous vehicles gives entrepreneurs direction to focus their efforts in many sectors.

Cap and Trade

In Budget 2017, the Government indicates it is working on a separate system of Ontario-based voluntary carbon offsets to support the Government's carbon-neutral commitment. The proceeds of the carbon allowance auctions are expected to be \$1.8 billion in 2017-18 (\$1.9 billion was projected) and \$1.4 billion in 2018-19. Projected spends of those proceeds include:

- \$800 million towards helping homes and businesses adopt low-carbon technologies
- \$55 million towards municipal partnerships to achieve emission reduction targets
- \$420 million towards modernizing transit towards low-carbon goals (i.e. rail, cycling infrastructure)
- \$410 million towards implementation of the Green Investment Fund initiative

OCC Analysis

The OCC has become increasingly concerned that increased input costs imposed on the private sector mean that Ontario risks losing out on jobs and investment. However, we are encouraged that the government has developed a plan for the next two years of carbon allowance auction proceeds.

Peterborough Analysis

As a community that is very connected to nature, the cap and trade program has been challenging. There is still a lot of uncertainty amongst the Peterborough Chamber membership as to whether or not this is the best program for business

and to achieve the overall goal of GHG emission reduction targets. We look forward to hearing more about how businesses of all sizes and across all sectors can access funding.

Interprofessional Primary Care Teams

The Government is investing a further \$15 million to create new, or expand existing, interprofessional care teams.

Peterborough Analysis

The Peterborough Chamber is pleased to see this commitment by the provincial government. Your chamber started this call in the mid-2000's with a policy resolution called "Addressing the Bottlenecks to Healthcare". This resolution called for the creation of multi-disciplinary care teams in emergency rooms. One result of the resolution was the province allowing pharmacists to administer the flu shot.

Welcoming New Canadians

Budget 2017 reveals that the federal government has increased the province's 2017 allocation for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) by 500 nominees, to a total of 6,000. The OINP is also modernizing its application process this year with a new, paperless online system.

Peterborough Analysis

The Peterborough Chamber has been a voice in the discussion around integration of newcomers to our community and economy. The Peterborough Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a provincial Minister's Employment Table with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and brought together employers and service providers to discuss how to improve programs to access international talent.

Event Calendar



TUESDAY May 9th, 2017

Chamber AM Meet Up: Benefits of an Accessible Business

The Carousel
116 Lansdowne Street East
Coffee's on at 7:00am
Speakers from 7:30-8:30am

Speaker: Jason King

Details: Learn about the benefits of an accessible business and manageable steps to achieving accessibility.

Be ready with your 30 second elevator pitch to tell others what's going on in your business.

Cost: Pay for your breakfast



TUESDAY May 16th, 2017

Facebook: Quick Tips for Success

Chamber Boardroom
175 George Street North
4:00pm - 6:00pm

Speaker: Toby Mcleod, Strategy.ca

Details: There are several new components to the Holistic Group meetings, including time for a speaker on professional development issues and a roundtable discussion for practitioners to build their referral network.

Cost: Free for members

Note: Pre-registration is required; space is limited.



WEDNESDAY May 17th, 2017 (Chamber & WBN members only)

7 Reasons Why You Should Include Do-It-Yourself Video in Your Marketing Strategy

Chamber Boardroom
175 George Street North

12:00pm - 1:00pm

Speaker: Lynn Teatro, Teatro

Details: There is an enormous variety of video types for you to use for content marketing. Learn the benefits of content marketing with videos, the many styles, the where, the when, and the how of Do-It-yourself Video Content Marketing.

Cost: Free (bring your own lunch)

Sponsor: Bell

Note: Pre-registration is required