

Building a strong economy and a strong community

By: **Stuart Harrison, President & CEO** and **Sandra Dueck, Policy Analyst, Peterborough Chamber of Commerce**

The core work of the Chamber is to represent our members, but just as significant is to be the catalyst that strengthens our entire community. We believe that a strong business sector lifts everyone up and makes the community a better place to live, work and play. We may advocate for our members, but that advocacy affects everyone – other businesses, community groups and charities, all three levels of government through fair taxation, and the poorest among us. A strong economy provides for a strong community.

Recently, we were asked if our messaging to government had changed since the election and the Conservative Party winning the majority. As the advocacy group for business, our message will continue to centre around four pillars:

1. Strengthening Business Competitiveness
2. Fostering Job Creation
3. Building Healthy Communities
4. Improving Government Accountability

These pillars set the course for our advocacy during the provincial election and we anticipate they will fuel our discussion during the upcoming municipal election campaign.

At the provincial level, Ontario is in a time of transition, the



Stuart Harrison, President & CEO and other Chamber Network leaders representing their communities at Queen's Park Advocacy Day 2017

government that guided us through almost a decade and a half is no longer in power. It's an adjustment period as we learn and understand the position of Premier Ford and his government. The main messaging is around improving life for Ontario's residents, which is not dissimilar to the goal of the previous government, but from a different path.

Since the return of the legislature on July 9th there have been commitments of improved trade between provinces as a result of the Council of Federation meetings and continued connections made to our trading partners to the south.

There are more discussions to be had and most likely, there are still changes to come, just as there would had the election results been different. This is where the Chamber commitment to our four pillars benefits our advocacy as we are dealing policy not politics.

Already there have been a number of significant changes from the cancellation of the cap and trade program to the management changes at Hydro One to a re-examination of the sexual education curriculum. And most recently, the cancellation of the

Basic Income Guarantee trial in Lindsay, Thunder Bay etc. which was an eyebrow raiser. It's not immediately clear what the benefit is of cancelling this program before it's complete - a short three-year trial, which we are almost half way through.

As a society, we are measured by how we can effectively empower our most vulnerable, and we need to consistently ask ourselves how we measure up. This was a good opportunity to look and gain data on a possible alternative to the existing social safety net, which we think we can all agree needs to be improved. We've now lost that opportunity to a vague promise of "something different within 100 days". At this point, it's impossible to say whether or not that "something different" will pan out to be a better solution and that uncertainty presents valid cause for concern for many.

The Chamber network fought hard against Bill 148, which many viewed as the business community against the lowest income earners. The truth of our argument, which is well documented, was that we thought it was unfair for the business community to share the entire

burden of lifting our most vulnerable up. We recommended three things: a longer runway for the implementation of Bill 148, the completion of the Basic Income Guarantee study, and income tax measures to help low income earners.

Basic Income Guarantee may not have proven to be the right solution, but cancelling the trial guarantees that the option is off the table. The Chamber published an election platform for the Provincial election that called for an evidence-based approach to public policy. Cancelling a trial before it's finished certainly doesn't meet that criteria.

The importance of evidence-based public policy should not be lost on anyone. Just as a business doesn't move forward on a project until it has examined the pros and cons, the possible outcomes, and the various ways to achieve the end goal, so too should the public policy that guides government decisions. This belief is what elevates government decisions above politics, but it requires certainty, consistent thought and a clear and well-communicated path.

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Member Milestones

- The **Loomex Group** is hiring. They're looking for a full-time Cleaner/Custodian.
- **Silver Bean Cafe** is the latest Peterborough Chamber #LoveLocalPtbo sponsor to be highlighted. Watch the video on the Chamber Facebook page.
- Congratulations to **Laridae** on moving into their new location at 269 Charlotte Street. Learn more: laridaemc.com

- The Instagram account for **KawarthaNOW.com** was featured in an Expedia.ca article on Peterborough as one of Canada's 21 most active cities.

- The **Canadian Canoe Museum** received \$22,000 from the 'Golfing Gals Who Give' group.

- Congratulations to Jennifer Garland and **The Mane Intent** on their fifth anniversary in business and the launch of their new website. Check out themanintent.ca and stop into the party Monday (August 13) from 5 – 8pm.

- Welcome to the Chamber **Victorian Order of Nurses serving Peterborough, Victoria, Haliburton** Learn more: von.ca

Featured Member Discount Program: Coffee Break Learning with Sofie Andreou

Chamber members, send your Member Milestones to reception@peterboroughchamber.ca or call 705-748-9771 x 0.

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