



May 6, 2022

Mr. Ryan Mallough, Senior Director, Provincial Affairs, Ontario
Ms. Julie Kwiecinski, Director, Provincial Affairs, Ontario

Dear Julie Kwiecinski,

Thank you for sharing the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses' election survey. We are pleased to share these responses with you from the Ontario PC Party Campaign.

Ontario's small businesses are an important part of Ontario's economy, employing more than two million people in communities across the province. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted small businesses significantly, and they continue to face unique challenges in accessing capital, talent and markets. Ontario's progress against the COVID-19 pandemic has been hard-fought, and we have a plan to ensure that our economy stays open. Small business owners are resilient and hard-working, with big dreams and bold ambitions. Doug Ford and our PC government is committed to helping the province's entrepreneurs recover and thrive.

Putting more money in your pocket has been something our government has been focused on since day one. We were elected on a promise to keep costs down for the people of this province and we are the only party that has a track record of success.

Ontario is facing the largest labour shortage in a generation with over 300,000 jobs going unfilled. That is why Doug Ford and the Ontario PCs are working for workers by launching Better Jobs Ontario. This new program is for anyone looking to train for in-demand work by paying up to \$28,000 for short duration job-specific training. This includes those on social assistance, those who are self-employed, gig workers, youth and newcomers.

A skilled workforce is critical for supporting economic growth, filling labour shortages and securing Ontario's future prosperity. The PC government is investing \$1 billion annually in employment and training programs. We are committed to creating a comprehensive, long-term Ontario Workers' Plan to address labour shortages and to train the workers of the future. This plan will include initiatives already underway like the expansion of the Skills Development Fund and the employment transformation project. It will also include new initiatives like real-time labour market data and partnerships with local organizations to develop better programs that match workers with jobs and jobs with workers.

Ontario is leading with first-in-Canada changes to make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family. Our PC government has introduced significant tax relief supports for businesses and families across the province.

By expanding on the current Second Career program, more applicants will now be eligible for up to \$500 per week in financial support for basic living expenses. We are getting it done by helping people learn the skills they need to earn bigger paycheques and start life-long careers that provide for them and their families. Doug Ford and our PC government is working for workers by encouraging apprenticeships and opening up jobs in the skills trades, allowing



colleges to grant 3-year degrees. Additionally, the Jobs Training Tax Credit was created to help interested workers looking to make a change get the training they need to sharpen their skills.

It should be simple and straightforward to start, grow and manage a business in Ontario.

As outlined in our 2022 Budget the PC government is reducing the burden of red tape on Ontario's citizens. Since 2018, nine regulatory modernization packages, including eight bills, have been brought forward with a focus on reducing costs, enabling Ontario to be more competitive while strengthening those standards that are essential to keeping people safe and protecting the environment.

As a result of these efforts, the PC government has enabled \$449 million in net annual savings for businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, universities and colleges, school boards and hospitals in regulatory compliance costs as of December 31, 2021. This exceeds the target set to generate \$400 million in annual cost savings for businesses announced in the *2018 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review*.

A single window for business will make it easier for businesses to navigate to relevant business information and will introduce service standard guarantees so businesses can track the information they need from the government. This is just one of the many actions that Doug Ford and our PC government is taking to help businesses thrive and grow.

Since the start of this pandemic, we've been getting it done by working for workers. We were the first to introduce unlimited job-protected leave so that nobody has to choose between their job and their health and we also led the way as the first to legislate COVID-19 paid sick days.

The fact is that Ontario workers have access to the most generous sick pay program in Canada. Nowhere else in the country comes anywhere close. As we have during the pandemic, Doug Ford and our PC government took action to support workers and their health.

Most workers in Ontario with full-time, permanent jobs have medical insurance and dental coverage. In comparison, less than a quarter of people who work part-time or in precarious jobs have similar benefits, which means these workers, and their families, often have to make difficult choices between their health and other necessities like food and shelter. Independent contractors, low-wage workers, newcomers, younger workers, and racialized people are less likely to have workplace benefits.

Our government is paving the way to put workers first and believes that every worker in Ontario deserves protections, rights and access to opportunities.

Doug Ford and our PC government is working for workers by appointing five experts to provide advice on expanding benefits like health, dental and vision care to more workers, even if they change jobs. Members of our Portable Benefits Advisory Panel will recommend the design and implementation of a new plan that will cover millions of precarious workers in sectors such as retail, the gig economy, and hospitality, and would be the first-of-its-kind in North America.



Over the coming months, the panel will conduct research and consultations, assessing existing gaps in benefits coverage for different types of workers, such as those in part-time positions who do not have health and dental coverage through their employers. They will submit a final report to the government in Summer 2023 with recommendations on how to best administer and implement the new benefits plan.

To support workers and employers, Ontario has new legislation to:

- Allow surpluses in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's Insurance Fund to be distributed over certain levels to businesses, helping them cope with the impacts of COVID-19.
- Enable the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to work with entities, like the Canada Revenue Agency, to streamline remittances for businesses, enabling a way to give them an efficient one-stop-shop for submitting premiums and payroll deductions.

Our government has learnt a lot since the beginning of the pandemic and we know what it takes to build Ontario up again.

With more than 32 million vaccine doses administered and more than 90 per cent of people aged 12 and over fully vaccinated, the province has fared better than many jurisdictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ontario PC government's plan to Stay Open includes concrete measures to build Ontario's health care workforce, shore up domestic production of critical supplies, like personal protective equipment and vaccines, and invest in hospitals, long-term care homes and home care. The pandemic revealed challenges in securing Critical Supplies and Equipment (CSE) to keep the people of Ontario safe. To ensure the province will no longer have to rely on foreign markets to acquire PPE, as well as to reduce supply chain vulnerability, Ontario plans to support domestic production.

Highlights of our *A Plan to Stay Open* include:

- As of early April 2022, more than \$77 million of the Ontario Together Fund's allocation has been committed, leveraging almost \$230 million in investments in building Ontario's domestic capacity to manufacture Ontario-made personal protective equipment and providing other solutions in response to COVID-19 to build resilience in the health care sector.
- Ontario is embracing the opportunity to become a global hub for biomanufacturing and life sciences and making a strategic investment of \$15 million over three years in a new *Life Sciences Innovation Program* to develop and scale up the commercial potential of therapeutics and medical and digital technologies.
- To increase capacity and to build a strong and resilient health care system, the government is investing \$300 million in 2022-23 as part of the province's Surgical Recovery Strategy, bringing the total investment to roughly \$880 million since the start of the pandemic.
- The province will be required to maintain a PPE and CSE stockpile to meet needs during both normal operations and extraordinary events.



To ensure our government is ready to respond to any future emergency or pandemic, the PC government is committing \$3.5 million in 2022-23 to enhance the government's approach to emergency management through additional capacity to plan, prepare, respond and recover from emergencies.

As soon as it was safe to ease restrictions, our government encouraged everyone to explore Ontario and support local tourism and small businesses.

Doug Ford and our PC government continue to encourage Ontarians to support their local small businesses and to shop safely while doing so. When Ontarians *Shop Local, Shop Safe and Shop with Confidence*, we're doing our part to ensure the future vitality of our main streets, our communities and our province.

Ontario's Small Business Success Strategy, launched prior to COVID-19, identified the need for small businesses across the province to build or enhance their online presence to remain competitive and expand their markets. COVID-19 has further reinforced the need for Ontario small businesses to embrace digital tools, including having online storefronts and expanding them. The Strategy also seeks to promote entrepreneurship in all of Ontario's diverse communities.

Doug Ford and our PC Government has a plan to get it done by rebuilding Ontario's economy, building highways and key Infrastructure, and putting more money in your pocket.

After 15 years of the liberal government, Ontario had lost more than 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs.

Under our PC government, Ontario is open for business. In the 18 months leading into the COVID-19 pandemic, we had added more than 300,000 jobs. Ontario has recovered and added tens of thousands more jobs than it lost during the pandemic.

In fact, even though Ontario accounts for about 38 per cent of Canada's population, it accounted for 76 per cent of all the jobs created in Canada in 2019, some 243,000. As we turn the corner and exit out of the pandemic, we are going to get right back to continue leading North American in job creation.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the CFIB and contributing to Ontario's economic prosperity.

Sincerely,

Ontario PC Party Campaign