



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southwestern Ontario Chambers Bring Business Priorities to Queen’s Park

Chatham-Kent, Leamington District and Windsor Essex chambers join Ontario Chamber Network to advocate for agriculture, agribusiness, manufacturing, infrastructure, energy and workforce priorities



<p>Todd Bennet, Chair Elect, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce; Premier Doug Ford; Rory Ring, President & CEO, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce;</p>	<p>Rory Ring, President & CEO, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce; Ursula Tiessen, Administrative Coordinator. Leamington & District Chamber of Commerce; MPP Trevor Jones; Wendy Parsons, General Manager, Leamington & District Chamber of Commerce; Todd Bennet, Chair Elect, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Ryan Donally, President & CEO, Windsor Essex Chamber of Commerce, Premier Doug Ford, MPP Andrew Dowie</p>
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SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO — The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Leamington District Chamber of Commerce and Windsor Essex Chamber of Commerce joined chamber colleagues from across Ontario at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce’s 2026 Advocacy Day at Queen’s Park, bringing a united, non-partisan message to government: Ontario’s future prosperity depends on practical action to strengthen the competitiveness of businesses, workers and communities.

Held June 2, Advocacy Day brought local chamber leaders together with government representatives, policy experts and decision-makers for direct dialogue on the issues shaping Ontario’s economy, including trade competitiveness, growth-enabling infrastructure, talent development, energy affordability, resilient communities and business investment.

For Southwestern Ontario, the message was clear: agriculture, agribusiness and manufacturing must be positioned to lead as Ontario responds to export-market uncertainty, labour force challenges, energy pressures and long-term competitiveness risks.

The Chatham-Kent, Leamington District and Windsor Essex chambers emphasized that their communities sit at the intersection of food security, advanced manufacturing, cross-border trade and supply-chain growth. Their advocacy focused on the enabling conditions businesses need to invest and expand: modern water, wastewater, transportation and energy infrastructure; predictable electricity pricing; reliable and lower-carbon natural gas capacity; stronger workforce pathways; and policies that help exporters diversify markets and compete globally.

“Southwestern Ontario is one of the places where Ontario’s economic future is being built,” said **Todd Bennett, Chatham Honda and Chair-Elect of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce.**

“Our message at Queen’s Park was practical and solutions-focused: build the infrastructure, support predictable and reliable energy, strengthen the workforce and give agriculture, agribusiness and manufacturing the tools to compete, grow and create jobs.”

A key focus of the chambers’ advocacy was the agriculture and greenhouse sector, which is central to food security and economic growth in Chatham-Kent, Leamington District and Windsor-Essex. The chambers called for provincial investment in growth-enabling infrastructure in agricultural regions, including water, wastewater, energy and transportation systems that can unlock private-sector expansion, support housing, reduce pressure on municipal tax bases and help Ontario businesses respond to changing export conditions.

The chambers also advanced energy priorities critical to both agriculture and manufacturing. For greenhouse operators, food processors, manufacturers and other employers, predictable electricity pricing and reliable energy infrastructure are not optional — they are foundational to investment, competitiveness and long-term planning. The chambers’ advocacy included support for modernized electricity rate structures, better tools to manage price volatility, regional natural gas capacity planning and a practical pathway to lower-carbon energy without undermining affordability or reliability.

Manufacturing was also a major priority. Windsor Essex and Chatham-Kent advocated for an integrated approach linking Ontario’s automotive future with critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, automation, cybersecurity, grid readiness and dual-use supply chains. The chambers stressed that Ontario must support the full value chain — from Northern critical minerals to Southern manufacturing — if the province is to protect high-value jobs, attract investment and remain competitive in electric vehicles, advanced mobility and emerging industrial markets.

“Advocacy Day is an important event on the Chamber calendar,” noted Ryan Donally, the President and CEO, Windsor Essex Chamber of Commerce. “The day brings together the entire network of Chambers and Board of Trade to represent the entire voice of business across Ontario. Meetings and discussions throughout the day with both members of Government and opposition were positive and productive.”

During the day, the delegation also held a highly positive and mutually supportive meeting with MPP Trevor Jones. The meeting included Wendy Parsons, General Manager and Ursula Tiessen, Administrative Coordinator of the Leamington District Chamber, Rory Ring, President and CEO and Todd Bennett (Chatham Honda), Chair-Elect of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. The discussion reflected the chambers’ shared commitment to constructive, non-partisan advocacy and to working with elected officials across party lines to advance local and provincial prosperity.

“Our chambers came to Queen’s Park with one voice: local businesses are ready to lead, but they need government to move with urgency on the basics that make growth possible,” Bennett said. “That means infrastructure that keeps pace with investment, energy systems that are reliable and affordable, workforce strategies that meet employer needs, and trade policies that protect and expand opportunity for Ontario businesses.”

The participating chambers said Advocacy Day reinforced the importance of the Ontario Chamber Network as a province-wide platform for local business priorities. By coming together with colleagues from communities across Ontario, Southwestern Ontario’s chambers helped demonstrate that prosperity is built locally — in farms, greenhouses, factories, dealerships, small businesses, logistics networks and downtown main streets — but requires coordinated provincial action.

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