



## Small Business Too Big To Ignore: Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce

**Nearly 3 million Ontarians are employed by small businesses of 100 or less employees, but the rising cost of doing business in the province is stunting their growth**

Chatham-Kent, ON, (Embargoed) For release May 3, 2016: The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), is launching *Small Business Too Big To Ignore*, a six month campaign that will highlight the important contributions of small businesses to our communities and investigate the top barriers to small business growth. Coinciding with the launch of this campaign, the OCC also released its report, *Top 3 Obstacles to Small Business Success*, aimed at starting a conversation about the underlying challenges that are weighing on small businesses and stifling job creation.

In the report, the OCC cites the rising cost of doing business as a major impediment to small business growth. In fact, OCC survey results show that one in twenty businesses in the province expect to close their doors in the next five years due to rising electricity prices. In addition, 38 percent will see their bottom line shrink, with the cost of electricity delaying or canceling investment in the years to come.

“Rising electricity prices are just one of the many elements adding to the cost of doing business in the province and the Chatham-Kent business community is included in this concern.” stated Gail Bishop, President and CEO of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, “Our Chamber is launching this campaign to look at how we can mitigate these types of costs by engaging both government and business leaders to answer ‘what exactly is ailing small business? We’re keen to hear the concerns of our small business sector as it’s important to them, Chatham-Kent and Ontario at large as we work together to enhance the environment for doing business.”

In addition to the rising cost of doing business, the report also lists key infrastructure gaps and a lack of access to skilled workers as the top three obstacles weighing on small business. According to a recent OCC survey, 39 percent of employers have had difficulty filling a job opening over the past year and a half - an increase of 11 percentage points since 2014.

“Building a 21st century workforce has been a cornerstone of our advocacy efforts for quite some time,” said Gail Bishop “We’ve seen tremendous progress on this file over the past few years but as we continue to hear of the challenges our local businesses have in filling voids in their workforce we need to foster greater connections between skilled workers and employers.”

Along with fellow chambers of commerce and boards of trade throughout the province, the Chatham-Kent Chamber will hold consultations over the next six months with small business owners to identify the barriers that they face.

“Small businesses of 100 or less employees are the core of our membership and employ nearly 3 million Ontarians, which is why we’ve decided to undertake the *Small Business Too Big To Ignore* campaign,” said Allan O’Dette, President and CEO of the OCC. “The insights gained from the local chamber consultations will inform an upcoming OCC report to be released during Small Business week in October 2016. We’re really looking forward to the feedback.”

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