

CANDIDATE & COMMUNITY BRIEFING

TRUTH, RECONCILIATION AND SHARED PROSPERITY

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation | September 30, 2026

Rory Ring, President & CEO | For candidates, members, media and residents

Today is a day of remembrance and recognition.

An inclusive economy and shared prosperity are everyday work - and everyone has a part to play.

Today we honour residential school Survivors, remember the children who never returned home, and recognize the families and communities who continue to live with the consequences. September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day. The national day responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 80.¹

For the Chamber, this discussion begins with truth, listening and respect. Reconciliation cannot be reduced to a business case, a purchasing target or an investment opportunity. Economic participation is one part of the work; it does not replace remembrance, healing, rights or accountability.

1. Recognition must become everyday practice

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB) describe reconciliation in terms of rebuilding relationships, trust and equity. Their **A Way Forward** series connects that work to education and employment, finance and capital, procurement, and lands and infrastructure. It offers practical steps toward economic reconciliation, rather than a single commemorative activity.^{2,5,6,7}

The Chamber's message is therefore straightforward: what we learn today should influence how we hire, buy, lend, plan, invest and build relationships throughout the year.

2. Shared prosperity does not mean identical needs

An inclusive economy should make opportunity more accessible to everyone. **Economic reconciliation also recognizes the distinct rights, histories, cultures, governance and priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.** These distinctions, including differences among communities, must not disappear inside a general commitment to inclusion.^{6,7}

Ontario's First Nations Community Economic Development Guide emphasizes well-being and quality of life, community ownership, control and benefit, and development that reflects social, cultural and environmental values. The appropriate question is not only how much an economy grows, but who can participate, decide, own and benefit.⁴

RESPONSIBILITY IN POLICY AND OPERATIONS

3. The Calls to Action give business and government a role

Call to Action 92 asks Canada's corporate sector to apply the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to relevant policies and operations. Its three connected expectations are:³

Relationships and consent: undertake meaningful consultation, develop respectful relationships, and obtain Indigenous Peoples' free, prior and informed consent before proceeding with economic-development projects.³

Opportunity and lasting benefit: enable equitable access to corporate employment, training and education, and long-term sustainable benefits for Indigenous communities from development.³

Learning and conduct: educate management and staff about Indigenous histories, residential schools, treaties, rights and legal traditions; develop intercultural, conflict-resolution, human-rights and anti-racism skills.³

Call to Action 57 similarly calls on governments, including municipalities, to educate public servants about Indigenous histories and rights, supported by practical training. These are commitments to sustained institutional change, not only public statements.³

4. Education and employment: access, retention and advancement

Part I of A Way Forward recommends partnerships with Indigenous organizations, wider recruitment channels, mentorship, inclusive workplaces and attention to unnecessary hiring barriers. It stresses that successful recruitment is insufficient when the workplace does not retain and support Indigenous employees.²

Practical application: review job requirements for genuine necessity; preserve required professional qualifications and safety standards; connect learning to paid work and advancement; and create reliable ways for employees to raise concerns. Employers should resource education rather than assume an Indigenous employee will teach the organization or speak for all communities.

This connects directly to workforce development: the aim is not simply to fill vacancies, but to build workplaces in which people can contribute, stay and progress. That is part of an employer's responsibility, not something community amenities alone can deliver.

5. Finance and capital: enable enterprise and ownership

Part II identifies barriers involving collateral, credit histories, access to financial institutions and the fit between conventional lending practices and Indigenous circumstances. It recommends informed risk assessment, dedicated expertise, flexibility and relationships built around the priorities of Indigenous clients.⁵

Practical application: connect entrepreneurs with suitable Indigenous financial institutions, lenders, advisers and business supports. Assess working capital as well as start-up and expansion finance. Where communities seek ownership or joint ventures, examine the business case, governance, liabilities and distribution of benefits - not merely the announcement of a partnership.^{4,5}

Participation should extend beyond being hired or consulted. It can include entrepreneurship, investment, ownership and decision-making on Indigenous terms.

PURCHASING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND LASTING BENEFIT

6. Procurement: turn purchasing into a route to opportunity

Part III treats Indigenous businesses as contributors to employment, community well-being and economic self-determination. Its central advice is to build relationships before a request for proposals is issued, understand supplier capabilities, provide clear requirements and improve feedback and onboarding.⁶

Practical application for buyers: identify qualified Indigenous suppliers; make upcoming opportunities easier to find; provide plain-language requirements and a clear contact for questions; and offer useful feedback after bids. Strengthen the buyer's own knowledge as well as the supplier's ability to navigate procurement.

Support should extend beyond a single commemorative purchase. Repeat business, dependable commercial relationships and opportunities to participate in supply and value chains can help a firm plan and grow. The report also emphasizes verifying genuine Indigenous participation and monitoring promised benefits rather than accepting arrangements that exist only on paper.⁶

Municipal procurement proposals should be reviewed by procurement and legal staff for applicable authority, fairness, eligibility and accountability. This briefing recommends improving access and examining lawful options; it does not recommend informal favours, predetermined awards or bypassing competitive requirements.

7. Lands and infrastructure: capacity with rights and respect

Part IV connects housing, water, energy, transport and digital infrastructure with access to education, employment, markets and investment. It also emphasizes that land and water have cultural, spiritual and community significance that cannot be reduced to their commercial use.⁷

The report calls for early engagement, Indigenous-led priorities and partnerships grounded in self-determination. **Indigenous rightsholders are not simply another stakeholder group.** Supporting economic opportunity must not become pressure to accept a project, surrender priorities or treat a commercial agreement as a substitute for rights.⁷

Practical application: work through the representatives and processes identified by each community; discuss needs and alternatives before designs are fixed; resource participation and appropriate expertise; and clarify responsibilities for financing, ownership, maintenance and long-term benefits. Apply project-specific legal advice to consultation and consent requirements.

The economic connections are practical, not automatic

For illustration, a capable supplier may still be unable to deliver a new contract without working capital, reliable connectivity or trained employees. Improving procurement alone may leave those other barriers untouched. A coordinated response could connect the business with a buyer, lender, training provider and infrastructure partner, each acting within its role. This is an example of how the four pathways interact, not a reported Chatham-Kent outcome.

Shared prosperity depends on the quality of the relationship, the accessibility of the opportunity, and the benefits that are actually delivered.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES IN CHATHAM-KENT

8. Different responsibilities. A shared commitment.

The First Nations guide describes collaboration as a way to combine knowledge, resources and access to markets, while keeping community priorities central. It also emphasizes planning, qualified staff and clear agreements. The following are **proposed applications for Chatham-Kent**, not commitments made on behalf of Indigenous partners.⁴

Council and the Mayor: direction, resources and accountability

Support ongoing relationships with Indigenous governments and organizations through appropriate representatives and protocols. Ask how municipal policies, purchasing, infrastructure and economic-development decisions affect participation. Resource staff learning and relationship work. Request evidence of implementation without presuming to direct another government's priorities.

Municipal administration: make the process work

Coordinate procurement, planning, engineering, human resources and economic development. Identify barriers, clarify legal and operational responsibilities, and prepare credible options with costs and timelines. Provide clear points of contact and follow-through. A willingness to collaborate needs to be reflected in ordinary service delivery, not only special initiatives.

Businesses and not-for-profits: embed the work in operations

Examine recruitment, promotion, purchasing, payments, financing relationships and partnership terms. Set responsibilities for managers and boards. Support Indigenous-led enterprises as commercial partners and recognize the value of Indigenous expertise. A respectful workplace and a credible supplier relationship need attention after the initial introduction.

The Chamber: connect, convene, advocate and follow through

Help members access learning and business resources; facilitate introductions to Indigenous entrepreneurs and appropriate partners; identify recurring barriers; and bring evidence into advocacy. The Chamber should also apply these expectations to its own purchasing, programming and relationships. It is a participant and connector, not the owner of reconciliation or a spokesperson for Indigenous communities.

9. Connect reconciliation to existing economic-development work

CK Plan 2035 links business growth and skills with inclusion, quality of life, cultural participation and environmental stewardship. It provides a local strategic connection; it does not replace the plans or authority of Indigenous governments.⁸

Budgets and infrastructure: identify resources for relationship-building, training, technical advice, project preparation and sustainable service delivery. **Growth from within and BRE:** seek agreed, confidential ways to hear Indigenous business priorities and connect firms to existing supports.

Procurement and value chains: improve access to buyers and complementary suppliers. **Tourism and culture:** support opportunities Indigenous partners choose, with their authority over cultural interpretation and participation respected.

The question is not whether reconciliation belongs in economic development. It is whether everyday economic-development decisions reflect that responsibility.

FROM RECOGNITION TO FOLLOW-THROUGH**10. A practical commitment beyond September 30**

The following sequence is proposed for organizations considering their next steps. Set deadlines for work within your control, while agreeing relationship timelines with Indigenous partners rather than imposing them.

Today: make space to remember and learn. Use Indigenous-led educational resources and participate in public commemorative activities where invited. Do not require employees, Survivors or community members to share personal experiences.

Over the next 90 days: identify a responsible lead, review current relationships and internal practices, and select a small number of barriers to examine with willing partners. Establish the staff time, expertise and resources needed to act. Do not create another consultation exercise without a plan for follow-through.

At the next budget and procurement cycle: bring forward costed actions, responsibilities and realistic milestones. Explain what the organization can deliver, what depends on partners, and how continuity will be maintained beyond a single event or leadership term.

Measure changes, not only activity

The OCC/CCIB procurement report and the First Nations guide emphasize monitoring and accountability. Useful measures should be agreed with partners, proportionate to the work and supported by evidence.^{4,6}

Possible measures include retention and advancement rather than hires alone; bids, awards, repeat contracts and verified benefits rather than supplier-list entries alone; capital actually accessed rather than referrals alone; and functioning infrastructure or services rather than announcements alone. Protect confidential information and agree how findings will be shared. Learning, trust and cultural continuity also matter and cannot be reduced to a financial total.

11. Questions for candidates and organizational leaders

Whose priorities? Are Indigenous partners shaping decisions from the start?

What changes? Which barrier will be addressed, by whom and with what resources?

Who benefits? How are rights, ownership, risk and lasting benefits reflected?

What evidence? What will we report, and change, when results fall short?

Bottom line: remembrance and responsibility belong together

September 30 must retain its purpose: honouring Survivors, remembering the children who never returned home and learning from the continuing legacy of residential schools.¹

The commitment cannot end when the day does. For the Chamber, shared prosperity means working toward an economy in which more people and communities can participate, build businesses, develop skills, own assets and shape their futures - while respecting Indigenous rights and self-determination.

Honour today through remembrance.

Honour the commitment through everyday decisions.

Shared prosperity is everyday work - for everyone.

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Sources and further reading

1. [Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.](#)

Official commemoration, Orange Shirt Day and the response to Call to Action 80. Accessed September 30, 2026.

2. [Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business. A Way Forward, Part I: Establishing Equity in Education & Employment for Indigenous Peoples.](#)

Pages 2-8 and 11: purpose of the series, recruitment, retention, learning and leadership. Source: Part I OCC-The Way Forward.pdf.

3. [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Calls to Action \(2015\). National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.](#)

Calls 80 (commemoration), 92 (business and reconciliation) and 57 (public-servant education). Accessed September 30, 2026.

4. **Ontario. First Nations Community Economic Development Guide for Ontario (2018).**

Pages 4-9, 12-16 and 26-31: Indigenous-informed guidance on community priorities, ownership, capacity, collaboration and measurement. Source: first_nations_community_economic_development_guide_en(1).pdf.

5. [Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business. A Way Forward, Part II: Finance and Capital.](#)

Pages 2-7: access barriers, self-determination, financial expertise, trust and relationship-based approaches. Source: Part II OCC-Finance-Capital.pdf.

6. [Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business. A Way Forward, Part III: Procurement.](#)

Pages 2-3, 8-15 and 20: supplier relationships, clear processes, co-development, verification and accountability. Source: Part III OCC-Procurement.pdf.

7. [Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business. A Way Forward, Part IV: Lands and Infrastructure.](#)

Pages 2-7 and 17: rights, community priorities, infrastructure, consent and lasting benefits. Source: Part IV OCC-Lands-and-infrastructure-Final.pdf.

8. **Municipality of Chatham-Kent. CK Plan 2035.**

One-page strategic framework approved January 23, 2017: economic prosperity, healthy and safe community, people and culture, and environmental sustainability. Source: CK Plan 2035(20260929-131945).pdf.

Support and scope

The National Residential School Crisis Line is available to Survivors and families at **1-866-925-4419**. Information on further supports is available through reference 1.¹

This is a non-partisan public-education briefing, not legal or financial advice. Proposed local actions require appropriate review and direct engagement. The Chamber does not define reconciliation or make commitments on behalf of Indigenous governments, communities or businesses.