

Niagara Region’s new Official Plan also identifies and protects the Employment Areas for a range of employment uses, including heavy industrial, light industrial, and knowledge and innovation industries. This Employment Lands future security is essential as developable lands become increasingly scarce in this area, and other parts of Ontario, restricted in development by the Greenbelt and other measures.

The November 2022 notice of approval of the Niagara Region Official Plan also references helping the Region prepare for an anticipated population of 694,000 people and 272,000 jobs, by 2051. “Clearly defining and mapping Niagara’s employment areas will help direct investment to those areas, attracting and retaining jobs, and growing Niagara’s economy,” says a summary.

The Niagara Industrial Association has also steadfastly advocated for the preservation of Employment Lands: Its members alone, provide more than 6,000 typically well-paying and stable jobs, producing a total manufacturing revenue of \$1.3 billion in its most recent calculation.

The stakeholder voices from Niagara and elsewhere in Ontario are clear. We must have protected Employment Lands zoning that exist cooperatively alongside rapid residential development. Employment Lands have to be properly preserved for future investment and growth, with zone changes correspondingly restricted by the Province of Ontario.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Define the need for critical employment lands in official plans while maintaining and protecting the existing volume of employment lands in the pursuit of residential zoning.
2. Ensure the Ontario Land Tribunal protects employment lands through its appeals process.
3. Recognize these lands must sustainably co-exist alongside other community zoning purposes. Employment Lands serve as a future jobs-creating and municipal-revenue complement to new residential developments coming onstream soon — given explicit government priorities to build needed new homes, and residences.

References

Job-Producing Lands Release, Niagara Industrial Association, <https://niagaraindustry.com/niagaras-job-producing-lands-must-coexist-with-new-housing-nia-official-press-release/>

Niagara Employment Area Strategy, [Report - Niagara Region's Employment Area Strategy: Background Report and Recommendations](#)

Niagara Industrial Association, <https://niagaraindustry.com/>

Niagara Region Gateway CIP, <https://niagaracanada.com/incentives-and-programs/gateway-cip/>

Effective Date: April 29, 2023

Sunset Date: April 29, 2026

G. Deploying Economic Principles to Policing

Submitted by: Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant & Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce & Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

Issue

As homelessness, addictions, and mental health continue to plague large numbers of individuals in urban settings, business communities continue to grapple with disruptions, vandalism, threats of violence, and intimidation of staff and customers. Police budgets are ballooning to deal with this problem reactively while not effectively targeting the root cause of these disruptions. By critically evaluating and deploying funding to crime deterrent programs, long-term success can be achieved at reducing incidents of crime and tax-payer funding of over-inflated reactionary policing budgets.

Background

The interconnectedness of social issues facing Ontarians today has led to an increase in the frequency of negative interactions between persons struggling with substance abuse, mental illnesses, and homelessness and businesses in many urban cores across Ontario. While superficially this may appear to be a social issue only, the cost of policing, social services, healthcare, and other emergency interventions are ever increasing costs to the taxpayers of Ontario. The tax burden borne by local businesses to support these services, as well as the threats and interruptions these negative interactions present is making the province of Ontario a less and less attractive place to invest and do business.

Policing and enforcement in these situations are certainly a necessary response to protect the public welfare, but often more can be done to prevent individuals from falling into these situations in the first place taking into consideration that Municipalities are regarded as also playing a significant role in providing crime prevention intervention in Ontario²³⁰. Quite often, they are considered the best source to identify crime and problems in their area as well the conditions that contribute to these problems, including addiction and poverty.

Community-based crime prevention programming, especially those aimed towards at-risk youths, are seen as key methods to reduce criminal activity. However, valid concerns surrounding police-driven programming involving youths, especially those from marginalized communities, can't be overlooked²³¹²³². While there have been strides in the judicial realm pertaining to those facing Youth Criminal Justice Act involvement, including a reduction in charges, increased diversion tactics and decrease in the use of youth court, obstacles remain for some youths²³³.

In the meantime, businesses, especially small businesses, continue to face growing challenges surrounding robberies and break-ins²³⁴²³⁵, highlighting the need for immediate solutions making the urgency for current, and additional community-based initiatives, imperative.

Initiatives that can involve businesses directly, such as the CAMSafe program launched by the Belleville Police Service in June of 2021 and is now being adopted in other communities, deserve closer consideration²³⁶.

²³⁰ Crime Prevention in Ontario: Booklet 1 – Section 5 – Ontario's partners in crime prevention.

<https://shorturl.at/mwLS8>

²³¹ Police, advocates differ on ways to address rising youth crime rates – Cambridge Today. <https://shorturl.at/qryAV>

²³² Police school resource officer program cancelled by Waterloo region's public school board – CBC News, 2021.

<https://shorturl.at/mnqEM>

²³³ Youth criminal justice – Good progress but more to do – John Howard Society of Canada, June 2023.

<https://shorturl.at/OS014>

²³⁴ Rising crime is raising big challenges for Canada's small businesses – Financial Post, November 2023.

<https://shorturl.at/lyQRZ>

²³⁵ Toronto councillor sounds alarm on rise in small business break-ins across the city – CBMC, March 2024.

<https://shorturl.at/yBHK6>

²³⁶ Belleville Police Service launches new CCTV camera registry – Qunite News, June 2021. <https://shorturl.at/rACM3>

Programs such as this, as well as programs that receive provincial grants²³⁷, and the potential for others that can offer measurable cost savings on police and social services for every dollar invested, should all be considered.

It follows, then, that an economic analysis of potential provincial programs and funding can be deployed to assess the highest value return on investment of provincial funding allocations.

Additionally, pending updates to the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act are contemplating removing the ability for Municipal Police Services to deploy Special Constables on proactive community patrols, instead compelling Police Services to utilize only fully sworn officers. This change could dramatically increase the cost of servicing urban cores that have been successfully managed using special constables to date. The Province should ensure that this option be maintained so that municipal policing budgets can be as economical as possible.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. In consultation with the municipalities, police boards, business communities, and the populations they serve:
 - a. Use economic analysis principles in assessing crime diversion program efficacy in communities of all different demographics to establish an evidence-based approach to provincial funding of diversionary police programs.
 - b. Identify underperforming programs that do not adequately serve communities of all types and prioritize provincial funding for programs according to efficacy for each demographic cross section and community.
 - c. Implement a system to measure long term impacts of the investment in diversion programs to systematically gauge performance across all community types and demographics.
 - d. Evaluate the efficacy of these programs in the context of other wrap-around services available to individuals in each community to gauge the broader impacts of the Provincial Programs and ensure no individuals are systematically excluded from these services.
2. Ensure that municipalities can continue to use Special Constables in proactive patrolling of urban areas in lieu of fully sworn officers to reduce tax burdens.

Effective Date: April 27, 2024

Sunset Date: April 27, 2027

H. Lack of Access to, and Affordability of Childcare Hurts Ontario Businesses

²³⁷ Community safety initiative and resources – Province of Ontario. <https://shorturl.at/betI0>