

DRAFT



Report Back on Small Business Strategy

Ministry of Economic Development and Growth
Minister Responsible for Small Business

Committee TBC
Date: TBC

Minister

Deputy Minister

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

To address heightened stakeholder concern about cost, competitiveness and growth challenges facing Ontario small and medium-sized businesses, the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth is proposing a small business strategy with three pillars:

- 1) Lower costs
 - 2) Create opportunities
 - 3) Modernize government
- The strategy will feature a range of new initiatives (outlined on slides 7-16) and existing actions across multiple ministries.
 - MEDG and partner ministries are seeking Cabinet approval to implement the new initiatives, including direction to request additional resources where required, and continue with the existing initiatives under the banner of the Small Business Strategy.
 - Pending necessary approvals the strategy will be announced in Fall 2017 for implementation beginning January 1, 2018.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

- On May 19, 2017, Ontario announced proposed measures, to be introduced in Fall 2017, to help business grow and cut red tape, including reviewing licence and registration fees paid with a goal of providing relief to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- On May 29, 2017, Ontario announced a reduction to the regulatory fee required to sell beer, cider and wine by \$2,000 per year for small, independent grocers.
- On September 14, 2017, Ontario introduced the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act. If passed, the Act would help build a more modern regulatory environment by rooting out unnecessary burdens and streamlining regulations.

CONTEXT FOR ACTION

- Small businesses are vital to the Ontario economy. They are responsible for two-thirds of private sector employment, and provide essential goods and services to larger companies, consumers and government.
- In an increasingly competitive economy where change is the norm, small businesses face increasing costs – such as energy costs and the cost associated with cap and trade - and other pressures affecting their bottom-line. Employment in small businesses have been growing slower, on average, than larger businesses since the recession.
- Locally-oriented industries such as retail, construction and restaurants may address the bottom-line impact of cost pressures by raising prices over the medium-long term. However, in the short term bottom-line deterioration could be acute in these and other sectors, negatively affecting business activity and employment.
- Export-oriented firms such as those in manufacturing cannot manage cost impacts by raising prices, nor by quickly enhancing productivity.
- As businesses are faced with increasing cost pressures that will affect their profitability, Ontario needs a plan to help a wide range of small and medium-sized businesses to manage this period of transition.

SMALL BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Small businesses are challenged by rising input costs.

- The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) estimates a cap and trade regime will raise gasoline prices by 4.3 cents a litre.
- An OCC survey finds that 33% of Ontario small business believe rising energy prices will cause member firms to delay or cancel investment.
- A CFIB survey finds that over a third of their respondents are considering closing or selling their businesses in response to Bill 148.

Small businesses are constrained by low levels of productivity and skilled labour shortages.

- An OCC survey found a mismatch between the nature of job vacancies and the qualifications of those seeking work. 39% of employers said they had difficulty filling a job opening as they cannot find qualified employees.

Small business identifies regulation as an impediment to business.

- Small business owners often lack the capacity and resources required to navigate government regulation effectively or to absorb the costs of compliance.

EXISTING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- Small business programs commonly focus on start ups and innovation, e.g.:
 - The small business innovation challenge to help small and medium-sized businesses develop public sector technology solutions
 - 2 challenges have been launched, three new challenges under development;
 - Starter Company Plus, which supports small business start-ups
 - Launched in June 2017 so results not yet confirmed.
 - Starter Company supported the starting of 2,482 businesses and creation of 3,443 jobs;
 - The Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, which connects “Main Street” entrepreneurs with business acceleration experts
 - Assisted in starting over 4,600 new businesses and expanding 2,175 businesses resulting in the creation of over 7,600 new jobs; and
 - The MaRS business acceleration program, which provides specialized mentorship, educational services and competitive market intelligence to technology-based start-ups
 - Supported the creation of 187 new companies and 1,346 jobs and the retention of 7,007 jobs.
- Programming exists to target established and main street businesses, but more is needed:
 - The small business deduction from corporate tax;
 - The Fair Hydro Act, 2017 - reducing electricity bills for up to half a million small businesses
- MIT, through the Global Trade Strategy, has expanded its suite of programs and services.
 - This includes advisory and mentoring services, one-window access to export ecosystems, an exporter preparation program - Accelerate to International Markets (AIM), market/sector specific seminars, funding to prepare and enter markets, incoming buyers, and in-market support through trade missions.

A need exists to better support established and main street small businesses adapt to a changing environment and chart a course for future prosperity.

ONTARIO'S SMALL BUSINESS STRATEGY

Initiatives For Decision At This Time	Other New Initiatives Tracked Elsewhere	Ongoing Program (no decision required)
Lower Cost		
Fee Reduction / Voucher	Tax	WSIB Premiums
Create Opportunity		
Access to Capital	Canada-Ontario Job Grant	Global Trade Strategy
Procurement	Group Sponsorship for Apprentices	Exporter Marketing
Main Street Improvement Fund	Graduated Apprenticeship Grant	Magnet Pilot
Wage Subsidy (TBD)		Training for Age-Restricted Products
		Accelerate to International Markets (AIM) program
Modernize Government		
Small Business Services		
Risk-based Inspections by Default		
Coordinated Inspections Pilot		
Equivalency		

FEES REDUCTION / VOUCHER

Description

- Transfer payment program targeted at firms with 1 – 499 employees in four specific industries – manufacturing; accommodation and food; retail trade; and agriculture.
- This program can be further scoped by only targeting firms with 5-100 employees in the four industries above. Financial relief can be provided in the form of a targeted grant based on a set of eligibility criteria.
- A targeted voucher can provide financial relief to selected industries more effectively than fee reductions, which in many cases would require legislative changes.
- Eligible firms (approx. 89,000) will receive a payment of \$660 per year for two years, regardless of how much is paid in fees.
- Program could be announced on Jan 1, 2018, but payments, depending on the delivery system used, likely would not start until mid-2018.
- Number of firms supported and financial savings provided to firms will be measured.
- OSS working with MEDG and TBS-CAC to assess the costs, benefits, and risks to using a system such as Grants Ontario to administer the fee-voucher program.

Expected Cost

- 2017/18 - \$0.2M, 2018/19 - \$58.6M, 2019/20 - \$58.6M
- 8 additional FTEs required
- Potential systems changes (e.g., Grants Ontario, IFIS, ONE -KEY), resources, staffing, and training to administer the fee voucher program.

Risks and Considerations

- Some firms will receive more funding than they pay in fees. Some firms may not pay fees in all.
- While the application process will be simplified, registering on a system such as Grants Ontario and applying for the payment may be time consuming for companies.
- Due to potential system IT changes, program payments likely not to begin until later in **Q1 2018/19**.

Stakeholder Views

- Firms may view voucher amount as insignificant.
- Larger firms, firms not in the target industries and individuals will not receive the voucher, as a result, will view the program negatively.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Description

- FinTech-enabled small business lending program for “retail” improvements / replacements:
 - Would provide support for small loans (<\$100,000)
 - Would emphasize speed of approval process and simplicity of application; and
 - Could involve partnerships with both emerging fintech lenders and traditional lenders deploying innovative solutions.
- Broaden program design beyond specific FinTech subsector (i.e. P2P lending) and include innovative traditional players (e.g. credit unions).
- Rigorous screening of proposed partners in lending program and their lending rules.
- Program design needs to assess the financial risk of lending program and also need to give consideration to resolving potential financial / regulatory issues.
- Performance measures could assess changes in access to capital for small businesses (e.g. lower interest rates, access to desired loan amounts).

Expected Cost

- Costs would depend on the desired scope of number of businesses / loans and the number of platforms to support
- Costs would depend on the design of the lending program including financial risk profile

Risks and Considerations

- Risks relate to partners lending to questionable / controversial small businesses, ensuring equitable access to capital, expense risk / fiscal impact associated with bad debts, financial / regulatory issues with lending partners, and stakeholder perception of supporting “payday loans”.

Stakeholder Views

- Not available

PROCUREMENT

Description

Multiple initiatives to demonstrate government is open for business for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

- Designate 33% of government procurement spend to SMEs by 2020
- Eliminate bidding fees for vendors doing business with the Ontario government on the Ontario Tenders Portal and MTO's RAQS system
- Publish ministry procurement plans
- Focus on outcome-based procurement
- Enhanced outreach and education; eliminate barriers and avoid new barriers to doing business with Ontario

Phased implementation recommended in OPS. Potential future expansion to agencies and BPS to be explored.

May require procurement policy, operational process and systems changes

Implementation of some phases will require 9 – 12 months

Expected Cost

- More than \$2M annual funding (estimated) required for OTP and \$400K (estimated) for RAQS
- Additional funding/resources required to support new procurement planning requirements, expanded outreach program and acceleration of outcome/innovation procurement (TBC)
- Program delivery, procurement costs and administration costs expected to increase with no identifiable offsets

Risks and Considerations

- Tracking/reporting mechanisms do not exist exposing government to criticism and creating audit risk
- Elimination of user fees is not likely to increase bids received on OTP or RAQS.
- OTP and RAQS are at end of contract life and would require negotiations with vendor for timely and costly systems changes.
- Ministry procurement plans do not exist and will have to be manually developed and published
- To avoid bid, trade and legal disputes, processes must be, and be perceived, to be fair, open, non-discriminatory and transparent

Stakeholder Views

- Not available

MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT FUND

Description

- Main Street Improvement Fund to include:
 - A Main Street Revitalization stream to allocate funding for Main Street revitalization planning and implementation activities and include direct business support for capital improvements through Community Improvement Plans (CIPs).
 - Expanding the Digital Main Street program outside of Toronto
 - Provide 100% subsidized energy audits for small businesses to focus on reducing energy consumption.
 - A Large-Scale Revitalization Support stream to provide priority assistance and incentive, for a large investment(s) in a community's downtown revitalization by offering matching funds or support (e.g. up to 25% of project costs).
 - A Marketing stream to cover advertising to draw people to various communities across the province
- Two out of four program components of the Fund are built on existing programs by OMAFRA (Downtown Revitalization) and the City of Toronto (Digital Main Street) – Spring 2018 launch.
- Performance measures include jobs created through revitalization projects, decreased commercial vacancy rates, business retention and expansion, increased property values (leads to increased tax dollars), increased business reach/competitiveness via Digital Main Street, decreased costs through Energy Audits, total investments (including private-sector) on revitalization.

Expected Cost

- 2017/18 - \$0M
- 2018/19 - \$20M
- 2019/20 - \$20M (project costs may flow into 2020/21)
- FTE requirements - 2

Risks and Considerations

- Implementation details of Energy Audits to be coordinated through MoE
- Digital Main Street to be delivered with partners. Impact is dependent on broadband access in rural Ontario.
- Current OMAFRA-led Downtown Revitalization program is specific to Rural Ontario.

Stakeholder Views

- Significant share of Main Street: Retail, Professional services, Food and Accommodation impacted by minimum wage; challenges with tax assessment; the availability of vacant unit rebates which impacts investment attraction on Main Street; and meeting accessibility requirements in small businesses.

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

Description

- Many small businesses do not have the time or resources to know and understand changing business requirements or the government services available to support the SME sector. Ontario's Small Business Services would function as a coordinated approach to promote a streamlined small business service offerings.
- 1. Ontario.ca/SmallBusiness - will be a trusted site that provides information to assist small businesses get started, grow, and manage day to day operations.
- 2. A telephone Contact Centre – will provide a high level of customer service to small businesses and respond to inquiries related to government programs.
- 3. Awareness and Education – third party providers will deliver information and training for businesses and a domestic marketing campaign will promote Ontario's small business strategy.
- 4. In-market support - will provide in-person coaching / mentoring and education services, either through Field Services or partner service provider to reach more small “main street” businesses.

Phase 1 – October 16 launch: Ontario.ca/smallbusiness webpage will provide links to existing content and services; Third party partnerships in place.

Phase 2 – early 2018 launch: full launch - net new content on Ontario.ca/small business; domestic marketing campaign including awareness and education plan; and contact centre.

Expected Cost

- 2017/18: \$500,000 – TBD
- 2018/19: \$400,000 - TBD
- 2019/20: \$200,000 - TBD
- *MEDG/MRIS is also seeking 4 permanent FTEs to support the execution of Ontario Small Business Services.*

Risks and Considerations

- Depending on the other items included in the small business strategy, there is a risk that small businesses will see this initiative as a minimal effort to assist with the transition to compliance with Bill 148.

Stakeholder Views

- Stakeholders welcome the initiative to simplify their interactions with government.
- The domestic marketing campaign will be an important component to increase awareness of enhanced services available to small businesses.

RISK BASED INSPECTIONS BY DEFAULT

Description

- All government compliance programs impacting business are already risk-based.
- We are seeking Cabinet direction to build on the work of the Economic and Regulatory Deputy Minister's Committee (EDRMC) and Treasury Board Secretariat's Enterprise Risk Management Unit to identify and adopt an OPS-wide risk framework that will guide risk-based approaches.
- A government lead would identify and facilitate key ministry partnerships to improve data analysis and information sharing.
- By improving the data analytics used by government to target their inspections, it is anticipated that compliant businesses will experience fewer unnecessary inspections.
- Government resources would be better utilized to target businesses that are non-compliant.

Expected Cost

- 2017/18 – \$0
- 2018/19 - \$0
- 2019/20 - \$0
- No new FTEs, however a percentage of existing FTE time will be required from each participating ministry.

Risks and Considerations

- Many OPS programs have sector-specific components.
Mitigation: Ensure the OPS-wide Risk Framework is flexible enough for ministries to continue to use sector-specific approaches.

Stakeholder Views

- Ministries agree that using a risk-based approach reduces burden on compliant small business while allowing them to deploy their resources more effectively.
- Businesses expected to support this approach as compliant businesses would benefit from more targeted inspections.

COORDINATED INSPECTIONS PILOT

Description

- MEDG is seeking Cabinet approval to implement a coordinated inspections pilot for the restaurant and bar sector.
- Coordinated inspections help target non-compliance of “bad actors” while reducing inspections (i.e., reducing burden) for “good actors”.
- For the purposes of the pilot, coordinated inspections would mean the creation of a formal relationship between a lead ministry and key partners to identify both critical problems (top 5 observable risk) and examples of excellent compliance and inform the responsible partner. This formal partnership would use effective and systematic information sharing between regulators to coordinate compliance activities.
- It is anticipated work on the administrative components could begin in 2018, and coordinated inspections could begin April 1, 2018 to align with current provincial inspection schedules.

Expected Cost

- 2017/18 – TBD*
- 2018/19 - TBD*
- 2019/20 - TBD*
- *Exact costs are still TBD and will include inspector training and FTEs to support the administration of the pilot.

Risks and Considerations

- A lead ministry and partner ministries/municipalities still need to be selected. **Mitigation:** Criteria to select a lead and partner ministries/municipalities are currently being developed.

Stakeholder Views

- Businesses are expected to support this pilot as compliant businesses would experience reduced and targeted inspections from improved data analytics and information sharing amongst participating regulators.

EQUIVALENCY

Description

- MEDG is seeking approval to add a seventh Regulatory Modernization Principle. The seventh principle, equivalency, would state that ministries should, where appropriate, facilitate equivalent means of regulatory compliance where a business can demonstrate an alternative approach that meets or exceeds the requirement of the regulation.
- Regulatory equivalencies are already used in Ontario and abroad. MEDG is aware of at least 33 distinct examples of regulatory equivalency provisions in existing Ontario regulations.
- MEDG will work with Cabinet Office and affected ministries to incorporate equivalency into the regulation development process, where appropriate.

Expected Cost

- 2017/18 – \$0
- 2018/19 - \$0
- 2019/20 - \$0

Risks and Considerations

- Assessing regulatory compliance may be more difficult when regulatory equivalency is used. **Mitigation:** Individual ministries would be responsible for determining how to best assess alternative means of compliance for their specific program.

Stakeholder Views

- Businesses are expected to support the additional flexibility provided by equivalency. If the same or better outcomes can be achieved by different means than stipulated in the regulation, businesses may use alternative means of their choosing to reduce their regulatory burden while achieving the intended policy outcome.

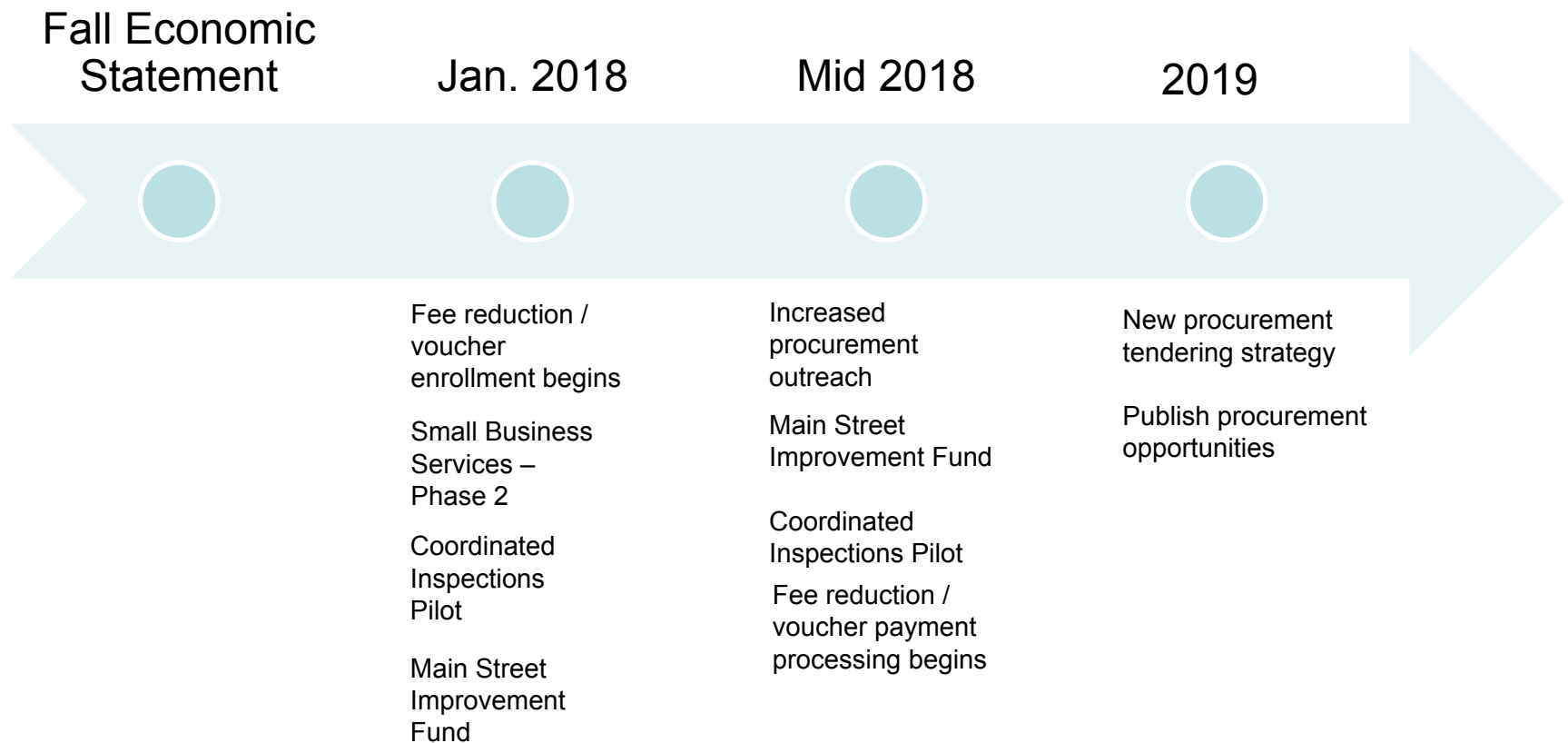
PROPOSED INITIATIVES - FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Ministry	Initiatives	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
MEDG	Fee reduction / voucher	\$0.2 million	\$58.6 million	\$58.6 million
	Potential systems changes (e.g., Grants Ontario, IFIS, One-KEY), resources, staffing, and training to administer fee voucher program.	\$0.5M-1M	\$1M	\$1M
MEDG	Access to capital	TBD	TBD	TBD
MGCS	Procurement	n/a	\$3 – 5M	\$3 - 5M
OMAFRA (fund components may be delivered by different ministries and partners)	Main street improvement (new funding would be required, no internal offset available)	--	\$20 million *Projects under the Large Scale Revitalization stream may be rare (due to reliance on private sector investments)	\$20 million (project costs may flow into 2020/2021 to enable project completions)
MAESD	Wage subsidy	TBD	TBD	TBD

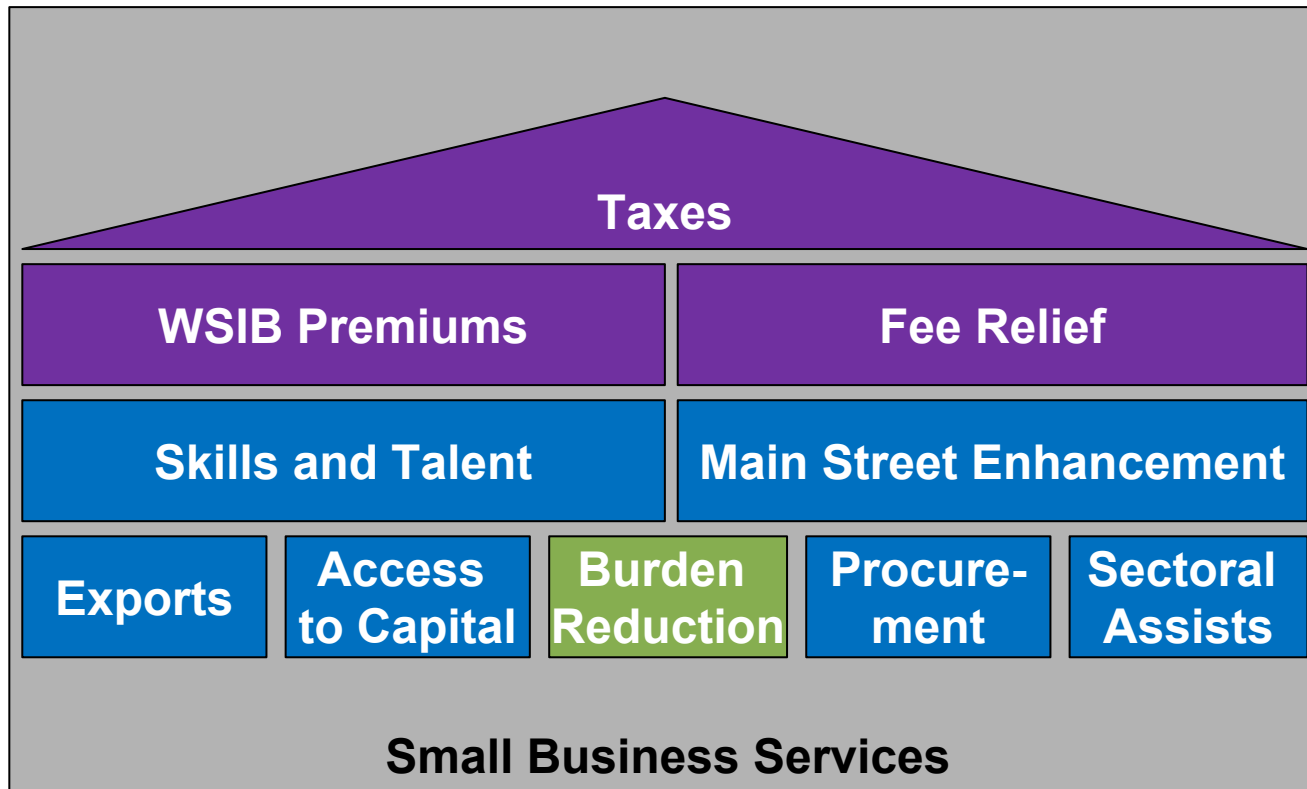
PROPOSED INITIATIVES - FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Ministry	Initiatives	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
MEDG MGCS	<u>Small Business Services</u> Contact Centre – operated by Canada Business Ontario Awareness and Education including domestic campaign In-Market Services Note: MGCS/ServiceOntario's role has been reduced as MEDG will not be utilizing its Contact Centre. Please remove the reference to MGCS.	\$200,000 - \$300,000 \$300,000 - TBD TBD	\$200,000 - \$300,000 \$200,000 - TBD TBD	\$200,000 - \$300,000 \$0 TBD
MEDG	Risk-based Default	\$0	\$0	\$0
MEDG	Coordinated inspections *exact costs are still TBD and will include inspector training and FTEs to support the administration of the pilot	TBD*	TBD*	TBD*
MEDG	Equivalency	\$0	\$0	\$0
<u>TOTAL</u>				

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE



COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK



Pillars

1. Lower Costs
2. Creating Opportunity
3. Modernizing Government

COMMUNICATIONS

Strategic Approach:

- Targeted, proactive and coordinated communications approach led by MEDG with support and active participation from partner ministries.

Small Business Key Messages:

- The Ontario government is committed to promoting fairness and opportunity for all Ontarians.
- Small businesses are vital to Ontario's economy. There is an opportunity for government to enhance its small business supports to ensure the continued vitality and inclusive growth of this mainstay segment of the Ontario economy.
- The Ontario government is committed to modernizing the way the government interacts with small business and their workers.

BGI Messaging:

- Ontario's five-year, \$650-million Business Growth Initiative is helping to grow the economy and create jobs by addressing some of the very real challenges Ontario's economy is facing.
- Our efforts are focused in three key areas:
 - Lowering business costs through modernized, streamlined regulations that impose fewer obstacles to growth.
 - Scaling up — catapulting more Ontario firms into global leadership, from startups to ambitious medium-sized firms. We need lots more of these — and ultimately home-grown large-scale firms.
 - And creating an innovation-driven economy.

COMMUNICATIONS

Rollout:

- MEDG, with the affected ministries, will work with the Premier's Office and Cabinet Office on the implementation of an integrated communications strategy. More detailed communications activities/rollout for the proposed initiatives will be provided when the details are approved and confirmed.
- More immediately, there is an opportunity for Minister Leal to announce the first phase of the Small Business Services [name TBC] during the Small Business Week (Oct 15-21).
- Should the first phase of this online resource be ready for that timeline, a Newsroom statement by the Minister is recommended.
- This will support the phasing in of the Small Business Strategy and raise awareness of the upcoming changes and new programs.

Considerations:

- Some stakeholders may question what this new strategy will actually do for their businesses. They may not find the proposed initiatives to be effective to offset the challenges they're facing.
 - **Response:** highlight that the government is working to enhance its small business supports and modernize the way we do business with them to ensure the continued vitality and inclusive growth of this mainstay segment of the Ontario's economy.

PROPOSED CABINET MINUTE

Cabinet agreed that

1. The Ministry of Economic Development and Growth will:

Coordinated Inspections

- A. Act as the project facilitator, in collaboration with affected ministries, identify a lead ministry to implement a Coordinated Inspection Pilot for the restaurants and bars sector that seeks to:
 - i. Target non-compliant businesses while reducing inspections (i.e., reducing burden) for compliant businesses.
 - ii. Create a formal relationship between the lead ministry and key partners to identify both critical problems and examples of excellent compliance and to inform the responsible partner.
- B. Report outcomes back to Cabinet, once the pilot is complete, including opportunities to improve information sharing between ministries, perform more targeted inspections and reduce the inspection burden on compliant businesses.

Risk-Based Inspections by Default

- C. Work with affected ministries, including the Treasury Board Secretariat, to identify and adopt an OPS-wide risk framework to guide risk-based approaches.

Equivalency

- D. Amend the Regulatory Modernization Principles, as referenced in the May 17, 2017, Cabinet minute, to include a new seventh principle regarding equivalency that would read: "Facilitate equivalent means of regulatory compliance, where appropriate, and where a business can demonstrate an alternative approach that meets or exceeds the requirement of the regulation as appropriate."

PROPOSED CABINET MINUTE CONTINUED

Fee Reduction / Voucher

- E. Develop a temporary, targeted business fee reduction / voucher grant program to provide funding to small and medium-sized businesses in targeted sectors to address the cost of fees paid to the province by firms in these sectors.
- F. Report to Treasury Board on the details of the fee reduction / voucher grant program.

One Window Service for Small Business

- G. Receive report back.
- H. Working with Cabinet Office and MMA, Energy, MOECC, MAESD, MRIS, MIT, OMAFRA, MGCS, MOL, MOF, MNDM and ADO develop Ontario.ca/Smallbusiness webpage with content that supports small businesses.
- I. Establish contact centre with third party provider to receive incoming inquiries from small businesses.
- J. Work with Cabinet Office Communications to develop and deliver a domestic marketing campaign and with third party organizations to deliver education and awareness of Ontario's small business strategy.

PROPOSED CABINET MINUTE CONTINUED

2. The Ministry of Economic Development and Growth with the support of the Ministry of Finance will:

Peer-to-peer lending

- A. Details to come...

3. The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services will:

Procurement

Work with Treasury Board Secretariat, MEDG, and ministries, as required to:

- A. Develop and implement a framework to designate 33% of procurement spend to small and medium enterprises by 2020
- B. Identify options to enhance its vendor outreach program including linkages with MEDG's Small Business Connects
- C. Enhance procurement planning towards publication of upcoming ministry procurement opportunities
- D. Report back on options to eliminate user fees for the Ontario Tenders Portal including timing, implementation and ongoing costs
- E. Ensure any new processes developed to support small and medium enterprises are fair, open, non-discriminatory and transparent to ensure that government is not exposed to greater risk of bid, trade and legal disputes
- F. Explore considerations for the potential future expansion to provincial agencies and/or the Broader Public Sector

Fee Voucher

- A. Explore options for the administration of the voucher program including the possible use of Grants Ontario

PROPOSED CABINET MINUTE CONTINUED

4. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will:

Main Street Improvement Fund

- A. Work with affected ministries, including the Treasury Board Secretariat, to develop initiatives that provide supports for small businesses in downtowns and traditional main street areas, including:
- i. A Main Street Revitalization Program that will strengthen and expand OMAFRA's *Downtown Revitalization Program* by re-introducing allocated funding for planning and implementation activities;
 - ii. Include direct business support for capital improvements through Community Improvement Plans (CIPs);
 - iii. Expand the *Digital Main Street* program outside of Toronto, to provide Main Street businesses with digital and technology supports to increase their competitiveness; and
 - iv. Provide subsidized energy audits for small businesses to focus on reducing energy consumption and deploying energy saving measures.
 - v. Provide support and incentives for large scale revitalization investments in a community's downtown by offering matching funds or support.
5. MEDG, with the affected ministries, work with the Premier's Office and Cabinet Office on the implementation of an integrated communications strategy.

APPENDIX A: ITEMS FOR DECISION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FEE REDUCTION / VOUCHER

Context

- The government administers 1,076 fees each year, with about 350 fees charged to business.
- Generally, fees exist to offset the costs to government of administering specific activities. However, not all fees provide full cost recovery to government for administering these services.
- Some fees relate to specific activities (eg. alcohol licensing) or industry sub-sectors and are not general to all firms in an industry.
- On May 17, 2017, Cabinet directed MEDG and the Minister Responsible for Small Business and affected ministries to report to Treasury Board and Cabinet with options for reductions to fees by small businesses by Fall 2017.

Stakeholder Views

- Small- and medium-sized enterprises have expressed concerns over increasing costs pressures, such as electricity prices, cap and trade and the proposed minimum wage increase.

Other Jurisdictions

- The state of Pennsylvania waves certain fees for businesses started by veterans.
- The city of Boulder's Flexible Rebate Program provides certain companies a rebate for certain taxes and fees after submitting receipts.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration waives the application for the first human drug application submitted by a small business.

FEE REDUCTION / VOUCHER

Option 1

- Fee reduction / elimination – involves a point of sale interaction with small businesses whereby the fees paid for government services are reduced at payment.
 - Government has directed ministries to move toward full cost recovery for fees.
 - In many cases, fees would require legislative/regulatory or IT and administrative system changes to reduce or eliminate the fees.
 - Some ministries do not distinguish between fee payers - whether by industry or firm size. Consequently, fee reductions could not be targeted.

Option 2

- Voucher – maintain the current fees paid by small businesses. However, business would be eligible for full or partial reimbursements of fees paid after the point of sale interaction.
 - Can be targeted towards certain size of firms (eg. small business) and/or industries.
 - Can be developed to be time-limited.
 - Would not require legislative or point of sale technological changes to implement.

FEE REDUCTION / VOUCHER

Recommendation

- Develop a transfer payment program targeted at firms with 1 – 499 employees in four specific industries – manufacturing; accommodation and food; retail trade; and, agriculture.
- A payment of \$660 will be provided to eligible companies, regardless of the amount of fees paid.
 - This voucher amount was determined by looking at the top three fees, based on number of transactions, for each target industry. The amount is an average of the largest fee from the top three from each sector.
 - It is estimated that about 87,800 firms will be eligible for the voucher.
- Programs could be announced on Jan 1, 2018, but payments, depending on the delivery system used, likely would not start until **later in Q1 2018/19**.

Risks

- Larger firms, firms not in the target industries and individuals will be not included in the program and, as a result, will view the program negatively.
- Some firms will receive payments larger than the amount they typically pay in fees. In fact, some firms may not pay any fees.
- Subsidies to targeted industries may be contradictory to international trade obligations.

Mitigation Strategies and Logistical Details

- Ministry will work with MGCS and GrantsOntario to implement the program.
- Program design will be simplified to reduce administrative burden on firms. For example, firms will not be required to submit receipts to identify costs incurred. However, the process may still be time consuming for companies.
- Depending on design, the program may not meet all of the requirements of the Transfer Payment Accountability Directive.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Context

- **Access to Capital.** Small businesses need better access to financing to grow.
- **Lowering Costs of Doing Business.** Innovations enabled by FinTech can reduce costs associated with obtaining growth capital and increase the profitability / cash flow of small businesses.
- **Supporting Startups/Scale-ups.** Supporting FinTech companies to gain and expand their market share.

Stakeholder Views

- Highlight views / stats / news from major stakeholder groups regarding the core problem / opportunity

Other Jurisdictions

- Federal government worked with large financial institutions to introduce the \$500 million Canadian Business Growth Fund
- UK's British Business Bank has worked with a number of financial institutions and funding platforms (including Fintech-enabled lenders) to support small business lending.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Option 1

- FinTech-enabled small business lending program for “retail” improvements / replacements
 - Would provide support for small loans (<\$100,000)
 - Would emphasize speed of approval process and simplicity of application; and
 - Could involve partnerships with both emerging fintech lenders and traditional lenders (e.g. credit unions and banks) deploying innovative solutions.
-

Option 2

- Advisory network for FinTechs. Leverage existing government startup/scale-up advisory services with FinTech-focused regulatory experts (e.g. the OSC Launchpad) to:
 - enable more rapid growth of innovative FinTech companies;
 - bring benefits of Ontario-based FinTech solutions to Ontario small businesses; and
 - open new markets for Ontario-based FinTechs

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Recommendation

- FinTech-enabled small business lending program for “retail” improvements / replacements

Rationale for Recommendation

- Ensures that small business are able to access needed growth capital. Also leverages the province’s strategic investments in enabling platform technologies (e.g., payment processing).

Risks

- Risks relate to partners lending to questionable / controversial small businesses, ensuring equitable access to capital, expense risk / fiscal impact associated with bad debts, financial / regulatory issues with lending partners, and stakeholder perception of supporting “payday loans”.

Mitigation Strategies and Logistical Details

- Broaden program design beyond specific FinTech subsector (i.e. P2P lending) and include innovative traditional players (e.g. credit unions)
- MEDG//MRIS and MOF to do rigorous screening of proposed partners in lending program and their lending rules (note: may require new FTEs or other resources).
- Program design needs to assess the financial risk of lending program, including expense risk / fiscal impact associated with bad debts. It will also need to give consideration to resolving potential financial / regulatory issues.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Costs

- Costs would depend on the desired scope of initiative, e.g. number of businesses / loans and the number of platforms to support
 - Costs would depend on the design of the lending program including financial risk profile
-

Outcomes and Metrics

- Longer term performance measures could assess ability of program to improve access to capital of small businesses (e.g. lower interest rates, access to desired loan amounts)

Next Steps

- Consult with stakeholders to develop broader understanding of the funding need
- Explore potential funding platform providers
- Explore potential program design options

PROCUREMENT

Overview

Multiple initiatives to demonstrate government is open for business for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

- Designate 33% of government procurement spend to SMEs by 2020
- Eliminate bidding fees for vendors doing business with the Ontario government on the Ontario Tenders Portal and MTO's RAQS system
- Publish ministry procurement plans
- Focus on outcome-based procurement
- Enhanced outreach and education; eliminate barriers and avoid new barriers to doing business with Ontario

Logistics

- Recommend phased implementation in the OPS (ie - large spend ministries) and potential future expansion to agencies and BPS to be explored
- May require procurement policy, operational process and systems changes
- Implementation will require 9 – 12 months

Risks and Other Considerations

- OTP and RAQS would require significant and costly systems changes at the end of its contract life. Government will not recoup the investment needed to modify the current system
- It is unlikely the service provider will invest in changes at a time when they will be preparing to bid on replacement RFB
- MGCS may have to delay the competitive procurement process if resources are diverted to conduct negotiations and implement revisions to the existing contract and system
- May delay migration of RAQS to the OTP
- MGCS recommends that 'bidding' fees be an eligible cost as a part of MEDG's fee-voucher program which would ensure targeted sectors benefit from this initiative

PROCUREMENT

Costs

- \$2M or more annual funding (estimated) required for Ontario Tenders Portal fee elimination and \$363K for RAQS
- Funding and resources required to modify systems to support reporting and monitoring (TBD)
- Funding and FTE impact likely for expanded outreach program, reporting/tracking and acceleration of outcome/innovation procurement (TBC)
- Procurement and contract administration costs (TBC)
- Ministries may require additional resources (TBC)

Outcomes and Metrics

- % of SME participation in procurements and outreach
- Data not available to support additional metrics

Next Steps

- Determine resource requirements and timeline to implement
- Engage systems provider to identify implementation options and costs and confirm willingness to make changes
- Explore options to eliminate bidding fees on OTP and RAQS including use of fee-voucher program as a way to rebate bidding fees specific to targeted sectors
- Develop engagement plan for vendors, vendor associations and SME stakeholders
- Develop procurement planning process for ministries
- Develop communications plan for vendors and ministries
- Consult with TBS on policy requirements, if any, and considerations for agencies and BPS in future phases

Industries Expected to Benefit

- Construction, road maintenance, IT and professional services sectors would benefit most from the procurement changes
- Elimination of user fees is not likely to increase bids received on OTP or RAQS

MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT FUND

Context

- Small businesses in downtowns and traditional main street areas struggle to compete with other commercial nodes (e.g. large format retail) and emerging technologies (e.g. e-commerce)
- Financing for business development and commercial real estate has gradually shifted from downtowns and independent small businesses, to favouring larger scale developments
- Commercial districts can lack the collective market focus and organizational capacity to strategically address challenges and opportunities
- Healthy and vibrant downtown and main street areas can benefit businesses and property owners, as well as residents, community organizations, and local government.
- OMAFRA has delivered a Downtown Revitalization program since 2005. Over 70 communities across rural Ontario have been supported by the program since that time.

Stakeholder Views

- Top issues raised by Ontario Business Improvement Areas Association (OBIAA): New definition of a BIA's roles in the Municipal Act is needed; challenges with tax assessment; the availability of vacant unit rebates which impacts investment attraction on Main Street; and meeting accessibility requirements in small businesses.

Other Jurisdictions

- Through its state-level affiliates, the US National Main Street Center delivers its Main Street Approach to revitalization (on which OMAFRA's program is modelled)
- The Approach is centered on balancing annual economic development planning and implementation activities in four areas, called the Four Points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization

MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT FUND

Option 1

- A. Introduce a Main Street Revitalization program that would i) strengthen and ii) expand OMAFRA's *Downtown Revitalization Program* by i) re-introducing allocated funding for Main Street revitalization planning and implementation activities and ii) include direct business support for capital improvements through Community Improvement Plans (CIPs).
- *Pros - Built on a proven model already deployed in Ontario; existing resources can be leveraged; Cons - Some benefits to business may be diffuse and indirect; high fiscal impact; direct business support is available to communities with CIP only*

-
- B. Expand the *Digital Main Street* program outside of Toronto - an online platform and service for main street businesses that can help with the adoption of digital tools and/or technologies. Digital Main Street was created in 2016 in partnership with the City of Toronto and TABIA (Toronto Association for BIAs) and is supported by private sector partners.
- *Pros – direct support to modernize businesses; Cons – Impact still uncertain; excludes non Main Street businesses.*

-
- C. Energy Audits and Deployment Fund. Provide 100% subsidized energy audits for small businesses to focus on reducing energy consumption. Audits will contain recommendations regarding actions businesses can take to reduce consumption and the fund will co-fund 50% (or TBD) of project costs to support businesses deploying energy saving measures.

CONFIDENTIAL CABINET DOCUMENT

- *Pros – Helps Main Street control rising energy costs; Cons – Uptake of such programs run through some LDCs has been low; excludes non Main Street businesses*

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MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT FUND

Option 2

- *Large-Scale Revitalization Support Fund.* Provide priority assistance and incentive to a firm or group of firms, looking to make a large investment (e.g. \$20 million) in a community's downtown revitalization by offering matching funds or support (~25%).
 - *Pros – enables large-scale transformation of Main Street; Leverages investments from large firms; Cons – very high fiscal impact, benefits concentrated to 1 or a few communities, no estimate on the take-up potential of such a program.*
-

Option 3

- *Main Street Business Incubator Hubs Fund.* Through such a fund, the province could support the revitalization of Main Street by encouraging small businesses to grow in the area and expand into other spaces on main streets.
- *Pros - Fosters growth of innovative businesses on Main Street; Cons – ignores existing Main Street businesses*

MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT FUND

Recommendation

- Integration of Option 1 (Main Street Revitalization Fund, Digital Main Street, Energy Audits) and Option 2 (Large-Scale Revitalization Support Fund)

Rationale for Recommendation

- Leverages a proven model, already in use by OMAFRA.
- Holistic Main Street focus through place-based revitalization efforts, as well as direct support to Main Street businesses in addressing competitiveness challenges and redevelopment costs.
- Creates infrastructure to take advantage of large-scale transformation opportunities for Main Street.

Logistical Details

- Municipalities, OBIAA, TABIA and BIAs could possibly assist in the development of the program and assessment of applicants for the awarding of funds
- BIAs, with the support of local municipalities, businesses, and other community organizations could lead the development and implementation of strategic plans.

Risks and Mitigation Strategies

- Main Street Revitalization Program would leverage lessons learned through over 12 years of program delivery to mitigate risks with community investment
- Current OMAFRA-led *Downtown Revitalization* program is specific to Rural Ontario. Scoping strategies will need to be undertaken for expansion to urban areas.
- Internet broadband availability/speed in Rural Ontario may impact uptake for *Digital Main Street* program.
- Investment in community-based organizations (e.g. BIAs) less risky than direct investment in businesses
- Targeting main street areas may limit access to other businesses that could benefit from the programs.
- Funding for business projects (e.g. façade improvement) can only be delivered through a CIP, limiting the number of municipalities that could receive funding.
- A limit of \$15,000-20,000 provincial funding per project (common in CIPs) could impact the program's ability to support larger-scale projects, but would enhance funding currently provided by municipalities under a CIP
- If all options are integrated into one Fund, a large-scale project could utilize all of the funding.

MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT FUND

Costs

- ~\$25 million
 - \$5-8 million (Main Street Revitalization Fund)
 - \$10-15 million (Large Scale Revitalization Fund) *
 - \$10-15 million (Energy Audits and Digital Main Street) **

** There is a high probability that such projects are rare (due to the dependence on large-scale private sector funding for revitalization, meaning there could be years where there is no fiscal impact.*

*** It may be possible to include these in the Main Street Revitalization Fund. However, data on costs and feasibility for Digital Main Street and Energy Audits needs to be confirmed before it can be factored in.*

Next Steps

- TBD

Outcomes and Metrics

- Business attraction, business retention, business expansion, employment growth, increased occupancy in main street properties, private sector investment
- Increased collaboration among businesses, local government, and community organizations
- Communities that have moved through OMAFRA's downtown revitalization program have achieved notable impacts in these areas (Appendix)

Industries Expected to Benefit

- Retail trade
- Other services (e.g. personal services)
- Accommodations and food
- Health care and social assistance
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Note: Rural communities (25-100K), there is a higher share (Vs. Urban) of : Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Finance, and Real estate.

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

Problem Statement

Many small businesses (i.e., those with fewer than 100 employees and/or revenue of \$30,000 to \$5 million) do not have the time or resources to know and understand changing business requirements or the government services available to support the SME sector. Ontario's Small Business Services would function as a coordinated approach to promote a streamlined small business service offerings.

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

The proposal/options being developed

1. Website

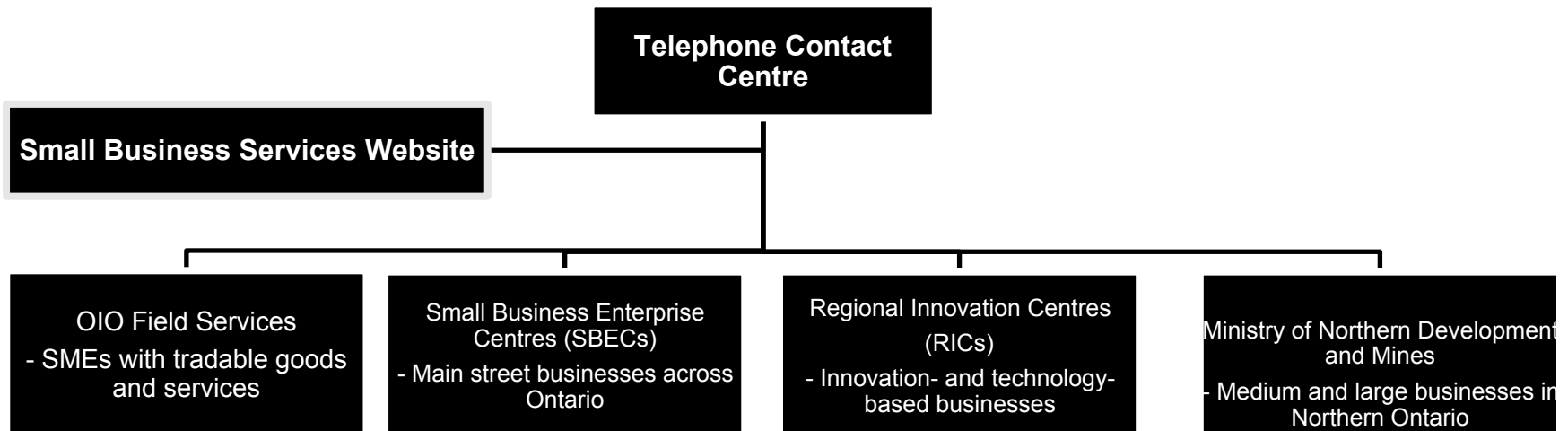
The Small Business Services website will support Ontario small businesses by providing information to assist them with getting started, their growth plans and day to day operations.

- Website information will include:
 - New content and resources to make it easier and more effective for businesses to interact with government;
 - Information on MEDG's small business measures (e.g. proposed fee reduction measures, export promotion, procurement, funding, etc.);
 - Details on and links to the services available to different businesses across the province (e.g. SBECs, RICs, OIO Field Services, third parties);
 - A link to MOL's Bill 148 implementation tools (currently under development);
 - A link to the [Ontario Business Programs Guide](#), a new service launching in beta to help businesses find business support programs and initiatives.

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

2. Telephone Contact Centre

- Operated by Canada Business Ontario (CBO), the Small Business Services phone line will answer questions and provide a high level of customer service to small businesses.
- With their current partners which include MIT's 1-877 Go Trade line, CBO is able to fully execute 80% of calls. With a higher level of training, MEDG would seek to achieve a higher level of call completion without the need for further triaging.
- The remaining calls would be connected with the government services they need to start, run or grow their small business in Ontario, including OIO Field Services, SBECs, RICs, and MNDM.



SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

3. Awareness and Education, including Domestic Marketing Campaign

- To drive traffic to the website and telephone line, a domestic marketing campaign will be ready to launch in January 2018.
- By leveraging a third party's existing relationships with small businesses to deliver information and services, Small Business Services (SBS) will provide a coherent message to small businesses.
- To assist with the implementation of Bill 148, SBS will distinguish the roles of MOL as enforcement body, MEDG as support body, and the third party vendor as education provider.
- MEDG/MRSB is considering partnering with the Ontario Chambers of Commerce and the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, and other potential partners.

4. In-Market Services

- Will provide in-person coaching / mentoring and education services, either through Field Services or a partner service provider.
- The intent will be to reach more small “main street” businesses not currently captured by MEDG's service offering.

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

Current Status:

- The Ontario Investment Office is working towards the following being ready to launch in October 2017:
 - Phase 1 of Ontario.ca/smallbusiness that includes a landing page and links to existing government web content.

For a January 2018 launch:

- Phase 2 of Ontario.ca/smallbusiness that includes net new content that speaks to small businesses;
- A telephone contact centre delivered by Canada Business Ontario that provides information to small businesses;
- A third party vendor to deliver education and awareness on Bill 148 to small businesses across the province; and
- Domestic marketing campaign to increase traffic to website and program uptake.

Next Steps:

- Liaise with Cabinet Office on necessary web approvals.
- Work with cross-ministerial working group on development of web content;
- Execute transfer payment agreement with Canada Business Ontario;
- Continue discussions with education and awareness third party providers (CPA and OCC); and
- Work with Cabinet Office to develop and deliver a domestic marketing campaign using an external marketing agency.

Industries Expected to Benefit

- Small businesses with tradable goods and services;
- Main street businesses across Ontario; and
- Innovation- and technology-based businesses.

RISK-BASED INSPECTIONS BY DEFAULT

Overview

- All government compliance programs impacting business are already risk-based.
- It was agreed that using a risk-based approach reduces burden on compliant small business.
- We will likely be seeking Cabinet direction to build on the work of the Economic and Regulatory Deputy Minister's Committee (EDRMC) and Treasury Board Secretariat's Enterprise Risk Management Unit to identify and adopt an OPS-wide risk framework that will guide risk-based approaches.

Logistics

- Establish government lead to identify and facilitate key ministry partnerships to improve data analysis and information sharing.
-

Risks and Other Considerations

- While there are commonalities in definition of risk and risk assessment, it is not clear whether the OPS Enterprise Risk Management Framework is used as a guide for risk-based inspections across all ministries. **Mitigation:** Work with ERDMC and TBS's Enterprise Risk Management unit to identify current practices.
- Many OPS programs have sector-specific components. **Mitigation:** Ensure the OPS-wide Risk Framework is flexible enough for ministries to continue to use sector-specific approaches.

RISK-BASED INSPECTIONS BY DEFAULT

Costs

- n/a

Next Steps

- Establish government lead to identify and facilitate key ministry partnerships to improve data analysis and information sharing
- Cabinet consideration in September 2017

Outcomes and Metrics

- By improving the data analytics used by government to target their inspections, it is anticipated that compliant businesses will experience fewer unnecessary inspections.
- Government resources would be better utilized to target businesses that are non-compliant.

Industries Expected to Benefit

- All sectors would benefit.
- Compliant businesses subject to risk-based inspections would benefit from reduced inspections resulting from improved data analytics and information sharing amongst ministries

CO-ORDINATED INSPECTIONS PILOT

Overview

- Coordinated inspections help target non-compliance of “bad actors” while reducing inspections (i.e., reducing burden) for “good actors”.
- For the purposes of the pilot, coordinated inspections would mean the creation of a formal relationship between a lead ministry and key partners to identify both critical problems (top 5 observable risk) and examples of excellent compliance and inform the responsible partner. This formal partnership would use effective and systematic information sharing between regulators to coordinate compliance activities.
- The technical working group has recommended the **restaurant and bars** sector for the pilot.

Logistics

- To better evaluate the impact of coordinated inspections, it is recommended that the pilot use an experimental group (which benefits from coordinated inspections) and a control group (where the status quo is maintained).
- It is anticipated work on the administrative components could begin in 2018, and coordinated inspections could begin April 1, 2018 to align with current provincial inspection schedules.

Risks and Other Considerations

- A lead ministry and partner ministries/municipalities still need to be selected. **Mitigation:** Criteria to select a lead and partner ministries/municipalities are currently being developed.
- The province will need information sharing agreements with provincial and municipal partners. **Mitigation:** The current Delivery Plan has time allocated to the completion of the necessary agreements.

CO-ORDINATED INSPECTIONS PILOT

Costs

Exact costs are still TBD. There will be no new costs to MEDG, however, the lead and partner ministries may require additional funding for inspector training and FTEs to support the administration of the pilot.

Outcomes and Metrics

- Coordinated inspections result in compliant businesses undergoing fewer inspections
- Coordinated inspections lead to efficiencies for regulators and focus inspection resources on non-compliant businesses

Next Steps

- Finalize sector selection, lead ministry and partner ministries/municipalities.
 - Cabinet consideration – September 2017
 - Develop and launch of pilot – Fall/Winter 2017/18
-

Industries Expected to Benefit

- Compliant Businesses within the Restaurant and Bar sector would benefit from reduced inspections.

EQUIVALENCY

Overview

- MEDG proposes adding a seventh Regulatory Modernization Principle to the six principles approved by Cabinet in May. The seventh principle, equivalency, facilitates equivalent means of regulatory compliance where a business can demonstrate an alternative approach that meets or exceeds the requirement of the regulation.
- Regulatory equivalency will provide businesses with flexibility on how they comply with regulations. If the same or better outcomes can be achieved by different means than stipulated in the regulation, businesses may use alternative means of their choosing.
- This addition aligns with the themes and policy objectives of existing and proposed burden reduction initiatives.
- Guidelines for equivalency will be available in late fall 2017.

Logistics

- Regulatory equivalencies are already used in Ontario and abroad. MEDG is aware of at least 23 distinct examples of regulatory equivalency provisions in existing Ontario regulations.
- MEDG will work with affected ministries to incorporate equivalency into the regulation development process, where appropriate.

Risks and Other Considerations

- Assessing regulatory compliance may be more difficult when regulatory equivalency is used.
Mitigation: Individual ministries would be responsible for determining how to best assess alternative means of compliance for their specific program.

EQUIVALENCY

Costs

- n/a

Outcomes and Metrics

- Prescriptive regulations can deter innovation by businesses. Regulatory equivalency provisions provide an outcomes-based approach, allowing businesses to choose their method of regulatory compliance provided the results are equal or greater than required. This encourages businesses to develop innovative and creative ways to comply with regulations that will both inform government and reduce burden on businesses.

Next Steps

- MEDG is seeking approval to consult with affected ministries, including MAG, to understand the circumstances where it would be appropriate to incorporate equivalency, including the potential legal and enforcement impacts.
- Cabinet consideration – September 2017

Industries Expected to Benefit

- Would apply to all sectors.
- Industries that are provided equivalency options would benefit from additional flexibility in meeting regulatory requirements

APPENDIX B: OTHER INITIATIVES (NOT FOR DECISION)

OTHER INITIATIVES (NEW)

Initiatives	Ministry	Description
Wage Subsidy (TBD)	MAESD	Ontario Summer Job Service, wound down in 2015, could be reconstituted on a temporary basis to support employers hiring youth and students. Under the original provisions of the program, employers could receive a \$2/hr wage subsidy for hiring students between the ages of 15 and 30 (who are returning to school in September) for up to 16 weeks of employment.
Canada-Ontario Job Grant	MAESD	The new program may focus on employers who face greater barriers to investing in training (i.e., small businesses), and workers who are typically under-represented in employer-directed training investments.
Group Sponsorship for Apprentices	MAESD	To expand the group sponsorship model as part of the apprenticeship modernization strategy underway. Additional support for apprenticeship group sponsor consortia may help small businesses to attract, support and train apprentices while reducing administrative burden.
Graduated Apprenticeship Grant	MAESD	MAESD is considering options for converting the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit (ATTC) into a graduate grant to support apprentice completions.

OTHER INITIATIVES (ONGOING PROGRAMS)

Initiatives	Ministry	Description
WSIB Premiums	MOL	Building on a 6.2 per cent reduction to the average premium rate in 2017, the Board of Directors has approved a 3.3 reduction to the average premium rate for 2018. This brings the total cumulative reduction to the average premium rate since 2016 to 9.3 per cent. The reduction will bring the average 2018 premium rate down to \$2.35 for every \$100 of insurable earnings from \$2.43 in 2017.
Global Trade Strategy	MIT	
Exporter Marketing	MIT	Execute an integrated marketing campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of exporting as a way to grow business and increase participation in the relevant programs and services for exporters
Magnet Pilot	MIT	MIT has partnered with Ryerson University to develop an export growth business portal using the Magnet technology platform. The portal will provide Ontario SMEs with targeted information about exporting programs and services from a number of partners.
Training for Age-Restricted Products	MOHLTC	Enhance funding to local public health units (PHUs) to enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) and the Electronic Cigarettes Act (ECA).
Accelerate to International Markets (AIM) program	MIT	Increases export readiness and competitiveness in international markets. Increased exports have proven to produce more high paying jobs in the local economy.