

July 8, 2020

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

SUPPORTING A COLLABORATIVE AND INTEGRATED PRIVATE-PUBLIC LEARNING MODEL THAT PROMOTES CAREER PATHWAYS IN THE SKILLED TRADES

The Timmins Chamber is a strong advocate for matters that impact businesses in the community; provincially, this includes a broad range of issues such as workforce attraction and retention strategies, addressing the skills gap beginning at the secondary school level, as well as enhancing Indigenous participation in the skilled trades.

Widespread concerns have been expressed over the potential supply of workers in the trades. Currently, Ontario is facing an ever-widening skills gap as the number of young tradespersons has dropped, and fewer still are enrolling in college programs to rejuvenate the skilled workforce. With stigmas surrounding trades work and fewer Northern Ontario secondary schools offering viable skilled workshop programs, Ontario can seek to promote public-private partnerships to promote career pathways in the skilled trades.

Timmins currently boasts four publicly funded school boards, all of whom are faced with ageing workshops and equipment as well as an outdated curriculum. This ageing infrastructure can pose potential health and safety concerns and dissuade students enrolling in shop programs.

As a result, our member The Bucket Shop has devised a made-in-Timmins solution to address the outdated programs and infrastructure with the development of a privately built Centre of Excellence to be shared by each school board. Moreover, they would leverage the new facility to expand upon their successful program that provided an *"Introduction to Welding"* for Indigenous women. A leading company that has recently invested in a multi-million-dollar world-class facility, The Bucket Shop is prepared to invest in the construction of a Centre of Excellence for Integrated Skilled Trades (COEXIST) in Timmins—built in a geocentric location to the four high schools in Timmins. This critical investment would see an enhanced, hands-on learning experience, administered by The Bucket Shop in conjunction with the School Boards, and paired with an educational component that augments the skilled trades as a viable career path.

The Chamber represents 600 members in Timmins and surrounding areas and wishes to endorse our full support for this important project. The Bucket Shop has presented the concept to several potential partners (private, public, and funding agencies) and has received a unanimously enthusiastic response. We request that all interested parties, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and the Ministry of Labour, the local School Boards, Indigenous groups, First Nations communities, and operating mines come to the table to see this project to fruition and that it receives the full support of the Province.

This request comes on the heels of a policy resolution that was submitted by the Timmins Chamber in May 2019. The resolution provided the following recommendations to the Provincial government:

1. Develop and implement strategies and initiatives that enhance exposure to the trades at the secondary school level.
2. Work with Ontario's employer community and post-secondary institutions to determine and promote in-demand skilled trades to secondary schools.
3. Develop trades camps for youth in partnership with secondary schools and local colleges to further enhance exposure to the trades.
4. Provide financial assistance and insurance for employers who take secondary school students on trades-related placements.

As high schools in Timmins struggle to maintain existing workshop infrastructure and adhere to health and safety measures, the Chamber is pleased to provide its full support to this investment that would see the construction of a world-class Centre of Excellence for Integrated Skilled Trades (COEXIST) for our high school students and attract interest towards a viable career path in the skilled trades.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keitha Robson".

Keitha Robson
Chief Administrative Officer
Timmins Chamber

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Val Venneri".

Val Venneri
2019-20 President
Timmins Chamber

Cc. The Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade
The Hon. Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour
The Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
The Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines; Minister of indigenous Affairs
The Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
MPP Gilles Bisson, Timmins
Mayor George Pirie, Mayor for Timmins