

Chamber of Commerce weighs in on legacy of 2015 Pan Am and Parapan American Games

A report from the Caledon Chamber of Commerce and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce identifies the crucial steps that governments and the private sector must take in order to ensure that the 2015 Toronto PanAm and Parapan Games leave a positive, lasting economic legacy in Caledon and the province.

“To leave a legacy of success for the Games, there must be a fair procurement process which provides local business the opportunity to participate in goods and services of the games,” observed Maurizio Rogato of the Caledon Chamber Board of Directors. “We must underscore the importance of the role the games can play in strengthening the local economy, creating local jobs and branding local business on the global sporting stage. Without this critical component, the legacy of the games is at risk of being branded a sole public expenditure, with cost over runs and an ultimate burden to our economy.”

In less than a year, the Games will come to a close. If projections are accurate, they will bring 250,000 visitors to Ontario, generate \$3.7 billion in new economic activity, and result in an expected 26,000 new jobs. While the Games are likely to provide a short-term boost to the economy, the lasting impact is much less clear.

According to the report, Beyond the Finish Line, Ontario needs to follow the lead of other major sporting event hosts and market itself more prominently to potential visitors from abroad.

“The Games have the potential to attract as many as hundreds of thousands of visitors from across the Americas,” commented Ontario Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Allan O’Dette. “But they won’t arrive unsolicited – we need to step up our marketing game abroad.”

The report also highlights the need to make sure that government’s traffic reduction targets for the Games do not slow the movement of goods in the province by ensnaring transport trucks in gridlock. Congestion already costs the GTHA \$6 billion in lost productivity annually. Observers anticipate that congestion in the region will worsen during the Games, partially as a result of the government’s ambitious 20 per cent traffic reduction target.

The business group also urges Ontario businesses to leverage the unique opportunity presented by the Games to establish deeper relationships with their Latin American counterparts. Ontario’s exports to the region account for only 2.1 per cent of Ontario’s exports. The group applauds the Government of Ontario for spearheading the Toronto Pan American Economic Summit, a three day conference that will bring together 1,500 business leaders from across the Americas.

“Government cannot bear sole responsibility for the success of the Games. Businesses and all Ontarians need to get excited about their potential and take advantage of the tremendous opportunities they provide,” O’Dette added.

The 36-page report can be accessed at http://www.occ.ca/Publications/BeyondtheFinishLine_online.pdf