

Now is the time for a made-in-Ontario comeback

Over the last 10 years, plant closures and the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs have hurt our province's economy. It is clear that the current government has little regard for this valuable sector of our economy, and manufacturers in Dufferin-Caledon and throughout Ontario cannot help but worry about the future.

I can see why they are worried. In Dufferin-Caledon, I have visited many businesses and manufacturers who have shared with me their concerns about the increasing cost of doing business in Ontario. Job creators who have proudly called our communities home for many years, some over multiple generations, are now feeling the pinch as Ontario continues to become a less competitive place to grow a business or start a company. Almost more than any other issue, the price of energy is a major concern. Many businesses are struggling to keep the lights on and the machines operating. Some have unfortunately been forced to question whether they can even stay open.

This is a very concerning situation. The Liberal government has been in power for nearly a decade now, and during that time Ontario has added 300,000 public sector jobs, while the important manufacturing sector has been left behind.

The decline of manufacturing in Ontario is not just the result of global events beyond our control. Even prior to the 2008 recession, Ontario had already lost a significant amount of manufacturing jobs due to the current government's policies that drove up the cost for all power users and created unnecessary red-tape for businesses, which makes it harder to grow a company in Ontario. Moreover, by continuing to chronically ignore the deficit and ever-mounting Provincial debt, the Liberal government has created a perpetual environment of uncertainty in our province; which is toxic to economic growth.

A well-run province attracts investment, and businesses look for stable provinces or states when considering expansion. For example, why would a business risk relocating to Ontario when every year there is the threat of increased taxes to address the current government's chronic overspending?

I understand where manufacturers are coming from, and I understand their frustration. Every single one of them is a job creator in their community. If they are allowed to grow, they will create more jobs. They want to grow, they want to create jobs, they want to be successful and provide a good wage for their loyal employees. The problem is that the current government made it increasingly difficult for them to do so, and has turned its back on Ontario manufacturing.

My Progressive Conservative (PC) colleagues and I do not share their view. Tim Hudak and the PC Caucus do not believe that manufacturing is a thing of the past. We believe that just as manufacturing has always been an important part of Ontario's economy, it will and must continue to play a vital role in the future. That is why we have recently released a discussion paper, entitled Path to Prosperity: Advanced Manufacturing for a Better Ontario, that outlines a new direction to help restore Ontario's reputation as a province that is open for business, competitive with its neighbours and the economic engine of Canada.

If you are interested in reading our latest white paper, you can find a copy online at www.ontariopc.com/policy

