

**Media Release
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ONTARIO BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX SHOWS BUSINESSES PLAN TO EXPAND, BUT ARE UNSURE ABOUT FUTURE OF ONTARIO ECONOMY

Index comes as business leaders, Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce, think tank, and pollster table agenda for new Ontario premier on how to strengthen the Ontario economy.

Centre Wellington, January 30, 2013 - *The Ontario Business Confidence Index* shows that most Ontario businesses are confident in their own outlook (72 percent) and are planning to expand over the next five years (60 percent). However, the same businesses are unsure about the overall direction of Ontario's economy--41 percent express confidence.

The index is a survey of 2,386 businesses and was conducted as part of *Emerging Stronger 2013*, a business-driven economic agenda for Ontario released today by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce, along with their research partner, the Mowat Centre at the University of Toronto.

Emerging Stronger 2013 is a transformational agenda aimed at accelerating Ontario's economic growth. It identifies Ontario's challenges and advantages, and sets out practical and detailed recommendations for government and business.

Some of its key recommendations include: enabling better access to capital for startups and small businesses through crowd funding; encouraging businesses to employ more Aboriginal people and people with disabilities; opening up more government services to private sector and not-for-profit delivery; utilizing Ontario's large immigrant population to grow exports; and, allowing more employers to participate in training.

The agenda comes days after Kathleen Wynne was named Ontario's next premier and is intended to provide a non-partisan platform that should appeal to all three parties.

"In order to provide a 21st century workforce, the smaller rural centres need a transportation connection with their neighbouring larger urban centres," said Janet Harrop, President of the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce. "Ontario needs to invest in a transit system that works for all of Ontario to connect people with jobs."

“The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has criss-crossed this province engaging and hearing from local chambers and their 60,000 members,” said Allan O’Dette, CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. “We are confident that Ontario has all the assets to prosper, but we need to act collectively, strategically, and with purpose.”

“This Index is one of the largest surveys ever conducted of business opinion in Ontario,” according to Dave Scholz, Vice President of Leger Marketing, the pollster. “Business sentiment is very much 'glass half-full' in the province right now.”

Among the survey findings are:

Ontario is falling behind on productivity: only 10 percent of respondents believe their sector is a global leader in productivity.

Some sectors are much more confident than others: the financial services sector is the most confident in their own outlook (74 percent say their business will expand in the next 5 years).

Businesses are struggling to diversify their exports: 45 percent of Ontario businesses view China as the most critical market in the next 5-10 years. Yet only 1.4 percent of Ontario’s exports are bound for China.

Some regions are more confident than others: Greater Hamilton Area businesses are most likely to respond that the economy is heading in the right direction (48 percent), while Eastern Ontario businesses are the least likely (36 percent).

[Click here](#) to read *Emerging Stronger 2013*.

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Source: Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Mowat Centre and Leger Marketing.

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