

WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL Chamber of Commerce

MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor-Essex Regional and Ontario Chambers of Commerce Continue to Advocate Solutions to Lower Energy Costs for Business

Windsor, ON – A new report from the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce (WERCC) in partnership with 40 other local chambers and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), calls on the Government of Ontario to tackle the impact of rising electricity costs on the business community. The report, *Empowering Ontario: Constraining Costs and Staying Competitive in the Electricity Market*, is the most widely consulted report in the history of the province-wide network.

The OCC/WERCC report, which can be found at www.occ.ca, makes five recommendations that government and energy agencies must take to curb rising costs and keep businesses in the province. These recommendations are the product of a year-long research and consultative process with over 100 businesses, energy experts, and government agencies.

The OCC/WERCC report follows the WERCC report, *Windsor-Essex Regional Energy Paper*, released in March 2013. One of the key recommendations of the WERCC report was more transparency. The report is available online at www.windsorchamber.org. Rising electricity costs were also addressed at the WERCC's First-Ever Policy & Solutions Forum, held May 2014, which featured experts from Eastern Canada speaking and providing ideas. The actual presentations are available at www.windsorchamber.org/event/windsor-essex-policy-forum/.

The OCC/WERCC report is accompanied by public opinion research from Leger, which cautions that soaring electricity prices have reached a crisis point for Ontario businesses and consumers. The research finds that 81 percent of Ontarians are concerned that rising electricity prices will impact the health of the Ontario economy and the same percentage fear that rising electricity prices will impact their disposable income. Recent WERCC surveys show that this is a number one issue.

“Not too long ago we were one of the lowest cost jurisdictions for electricity. Now we’re one of the highest with more price hikes on the way. This is the number one priority of our business community,” said Matt Marchand, WERCC President & CEO. “We must act soon to mitigate these increases, as our already strained competitive position will be further disadvantaged,” he continued.

“The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce is concerned about the overall rising cost of business across Ontario, including energy and power, ORPP and Cap and Trade,” added Marchand.

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The OCC/WERCC report also recommends that government improve the transparency of electricity pricing and system cost drivers. By publishing average electricity rates and disclosing the costs of important investments, government will be held accountable for future decision-making. The lack of transparency in the system has led to reduced customer engagement and confidence in the electricity market. Currently, less than half of Ontarians understand the drivers that contribute to rising electricity bills.

“The Ontario Chamber Network of 60,000 businesses consistently hears that the price of electricity is undermining their members’ capacity to grow, hire new workers, and attract investment,” said Allan O’Dette, President and CEO of the OCC. “The Government of Ontario has before them a number of decisions that must be made in order to bend the trajectory of soaring electricity costs. A first step will be to increase the transparency of decision- making in the system so that there is clear accountability and confidence in the electricity market.”

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