



# Detailed Policy Priorities Report

## Spring 2022

This report is current as of March 12.

### AGM policy debates

Following last year's AGM, the Chamber has written to all the relevant cabinet ministers to share the resolutions under their portfolio. We are also integrating key resolutions into our overall advocacy program. Work has also begun on the 2022 policy resolution season with the submission window closing on June 10. Based on the feedback from last year's AGM, we have updated the "national significance" criteria to provide greater clarity for chambers.

### COVID-19 recovery

The COVID-19 Recovery Leadership Council and Business-Led Recovery campaign continued its work over the last quarter and formally concluded its mandate this month. The Council held a final meeting with Health Canada Deputy Minister, Stephen Lucas, to discuss preparedness for future pandemics and subsequent waves of COVID-19. The Chamber continues to be active on direct advocacy and public affairs work related to border reopening and welcomed progress last month to start to ease restrictions for fully vaccinated travellers and the lifting of the advisory against all non-essential travel.

### Sponsored policy initiatives

Sponsored policy initiatives continue to be a vehicle for the Canadian Chamber to advance focused objectives over a time-specific period leveraging additional resources. Updates are provided under the various thematic headings but this list provides a brief snapshot.

- The Business-Led Recovery campaign focuses on sharing business best practices and providing tangible recommendations to government on the COVID recovery. The initiative formally concluded this quarter.
- The [Net-Zero Council](#) is dedicated to advancing business leadership on climate change and aims to inform government policy through numerous channels, including the federal government's Net-Zero Advisory Body.
- The [Canada's FoodLink](#) campaign focuses on the resilience, innovation and potential for growth in Canada's agriculture sector.
- The [Cyber. Right. Now.](#) campaign focuses on securing Canada's infrastructure, businesses and communities from increasing cyber-attacks. It also seeks to position our economy for future growth by investing in cybersecurity at levels on par with our G7 peers, promoting cybersecurity innovation in Canada and boosting investment in cyber



talent development and diversification. We are now in the process of renewing the campaign this Spring.

- The [Our Trading Future](#) campaign focuses on key bilateral priorities in the Canada-U.S. relationship. We are now in the process of renewing the campaign this Spring.
- The [Inclusive Growth](#) campaign continues important work supporting women through the pandemic, as well as on diversity and inclusion through webinars, social media, events and advocacy.
- The [What It Takes To Grow](#) platform served as the Chamber's all-encompassing election platform document with the list of priorities we encouraged political parties to prioritize during the federal election. This platform has subsequently been refreshed and is now being used to encourage growth-supporting policy priorities for the new government.
- The [Critical Minerals Council](#) launched this quarter with a focus on building critical mineral supply chains given they enable the production of consumer products, defence and industrial applications, and our ability to transition to a low carbon economy.
- The [Western Executive Council](#) launched this quarter with a focus on putting forward a positive vision to strengthen the economic competitiveness of Western Canada.
- The [Life Sciences Strategy Council](#) launched in March with a focus on building resiliency, driven by more cutting-edge research, better adoption of health innovations enabled by an interoperable health data infrastructure and a more robust manufacturing footprint, integrated with global supply chains.
- The E-commerce and Digital Trade Strategy Council focuses on advocating for a consistent, harmonized and predictable approach from governments in regards to privacy, cross-border data flows, payments and taxation surrounding ecommerce and the digital economy.

Across our sponsored policy initiatives is a continued focus on paid promotion to complement earned media. This includes Canada's FoodLink, Cyber. Right. Now., Our Trading Future, and What It Takes to Grow. Public ads consist of a mixture of newsprint, posters in the vicinity of Parliament Hill, airport banners at YOW and digital banners geo-targeting Ottawa.

## Policy committees

The policy team refreshed the [terms of reference](#) for our standing policy committees. The new terms of reference provides greater clarity to members on the work of committees, chair terms and the annual cycle of work. A number of policy committee co-chairs have been appointed since the new terms of reference came into effect.

With public health restrictions easing in Ontario, the Ottawa Liaison Committee will shortly resume its in-person meetings.



## **Natural resources, environment and sustainability**

The Net-Zero Council has continued its work in advance of the government tabling its climate plan at the end of this month. In addition to formal submissions to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), as well as the Net-Zero Advisory Board, the Council will continue analysis once the climate plan is tabled. The Council is meeting with Minister Guilbeault and staff are meeting with political advisors in Ministers' offices.

The government is moving ahead with various initiatives related to plastics regulation and staff have engaged in ECCC consultations. Staff are also monitoring developments at the global level that are occurring through the global plastics treaty discussions.

The Critical Minerals Council started its work last month with a formal launch to discuss priorities for the initiative, which focus on developing domestic value chains, seizing global market opportunities, and advancing Canada's net-zero ambitions through local sourcing of required critical mineral inputs for low-carbon energy generation. Officials from Natural Resources Canada participated in the launch meeting. The Chamber also hosted its Critical Mineral Executive Summit last month to have a publicly-focused conversation. Minister Wilkinson joined the event.

Staff also worked with members to make a submission into the Canadian Securities Administration consultation about securities disclosures related to climate risk. The Chamber also participated in Finance Canada's carbon border adjustment consultation and made a formal submission.

## **Transportation, infrastructure and supply chains**

Responding to the blockades over January and February were a major focus for the team. The Chamber had an active media presence on the issue and spearheaded two multi-association open letters to underscore the need for government action. One letter included the support of over 170 business organizations.

Staff have also been engaged in the government's supply chain consultations, participating in both the launch session with Ministers Alghabra, Ng, Champagne, and Qualtrough as well as a follow-up session with Parliamentary Secretaries. Chamber staff also appeared at the House of Commons Agriculture Committee study into supply chains.

The Western Executive Council has begun its work with a key focus on various federal issues to ensure a strong regional economy. Priority issues under discussion include energy, agriculture and infrastructure, among others. The group will have an in-person meeting next quarter.

## **International policy**

Work has continued under the auspices of the Canada-U.S. Trade Council. The Council met with staff from Minister Joly's office to brief them on our priorities. The group also made a contribution to the US Department of Energy's supply chain review. There has also been an open letter to urge action to coincide with the one-year anniversary of the Roadmap Partnership.

We were pleased to see the publication by the White House of the one-year supply chain reviews. Both the Department of Defense and Department of Energy's supply chain reviews – which we participated in – contained a strong emphasis on working with allies to pick up on the



themes from our submissions. Staff appeared at the House of Commons International Trade Committee as part of the Committee's Canada-U.S. study to discuss various bilateral priorities.

On border issues, a policy win was achieved with the Canada Border Services Agency agreeing to delay the launch of a major overhaul to its IT system for importers, which would have caused major border disruptions had it been launched this Spring.

Responding to ongoing developments in the Russia-Ukraine situation have also been a priority for staff. This included both engagement with members to understand the impact of economic sanctions and countermeasures as well as ensuring a flow of information to government officials.

Work continues with our B7 counterparts to provide advice into the G7 Leaders Summit occurring in June.

## **Agriculture**

The Canada's FoodLink campaign has been focused on work leading up to Budget 2022, including numerous regulatory, innovation, and sustainability measures. In the lead-up to Budget 2022, the group met with the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry and the House of Commons Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary for agriculture. Staff will also publish an op-ed in late March 2022 to highlight some of the campaign's priorities.

Staff have also been working with agriculture associations on tools to encourage the government to advance work on non-tariff barriers that prevent the full utilization of trade agreements, particularly the Canada-EU CETA.

## **Cannabis**

The National Cannabis Working Group has been focused on advocacy related to Budget 2022, with a particular focus on the Health Canada review of the *Cannabis Act*. There has also been a focus on import licensing for medical cannabis products, excise tax issues, and creating an "economic home" for cannabis within the federal government.

The Working Group continues to engage with officials at Public Safety Canada and Health Canada about domestic issues facing the industry. Staff have also met with the Trade Commissioner Service to discuss support for the medicinal cannabis industry.

## **Workforce strategies**

The team is preparing for a second round of consultations related to the Employment Insurance system and advocating for a comprehensive review of the program, including transfers to provinces and territories for skills training, which is more than \$2 billion annually.

The team is also focused on the labour shortages and continues to respond to monthly labour force numbers by highlighting our policy recommendations. In 2022 the National Workforce Policy Committee will be making recommendations involving interprovincial labour mobility.

Staff also appeared at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development as part of its study of the "care economy," as well as the House of



Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration as part of its study on international students.

Staff have also engaged with the office of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship to better understand the processing of Ukrainian refugees and how the Chamber Network can support labour market and community integration. Efforts also continue with industry counterparts towards a proposed framework for a Trusted Employers Program to present to government.

## **Inclusive growth**

The BIPOC Leadership and Inclusion Council has particularly focused on supplier diversity procurement and providing recommendations to the federal government as efforts progress towards embedding supplier diversity practices.

The Council for Women's Advocacy is focusing on issues related to women in the workforce and increasing female representation in senior business roles. This includes building talent pipelines of female employees through a toolkit on *Championing Women in Business in Canada: A Playbook to Help Employers Recruit, Retain and Promote More Women and Bring Them Onto Boards*. This was launched on International Women's Day.

## **Tax and fiscal policy**

The Think Growth campaign concluded its mandate with the launch of two reports earlier this year. One report focused on the tax rates in Canada relative to the United States and what it means for business investment. The other report focused on the administrative burden for businesses of the tax system.

There has been ongoing involvement with various tax consultations. This includes a submission into Finance Canada's consultation on the Digital Services Tax to oppose unilateral measures, as well as consultations on tax incentives for investments in net-zero technologies. The Chamber also intends to engage on issues related to interest deductibility.

The team has also provided a letter of support for a forthcoming test case at the Federal Court of Appeal seeking to simplify and modernize the application process for the SR&ED tax credit program.

Since the government has signalled its intent to reopen legislation related to the tax treatment of intergenerational business transfers, the team has worked proactively with members to identify potential legislative solutions. This will enable us to respond once the government advances its work.

The Chamber hosted a C-Suite roundtable with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance during the launch week for pre-budget consultations. This was complemented with more focused smaller group sessions at the staff level, as well as with NDP and Conservative MPs.

## **Digital economy**

The Cyber. Right. Now. campaign is focused on Budget 2022 and has ramped up its external promotion to draw attention to its recommendations to increase investments into cybersecurity. The campaign is also focused on finding lessons learned from recent high-profile ransomware



attacks to support advocacy work. To support work, there have been small group meetings with political staff from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, as well as Public Safety Canada.

Staff have continued to consult members on issues related to spectrum allocation and understand their perspectives as the government consultations progress. The re-introduction of federal privacy legislation remains a priority for our members and staff participated in an industry roundtable with Minister Champagne to discuss the issue.

Work is also underway to prepare for the Executive Summit on Artificial Intelligence in June.

## **Health innovation**

The Health Innovation Committee is prioritizing its efforts to engage with Health Canada and the Canadian Agency for Drugs Technology in Health to discuss ways to improve patient access and the regulatory regime. The Committee is also seeking progress around a national health data strategy.

The Life Sciences Council is now underway with work to refine its priorities and build member consensus. The group is particularly looking at how to develop scorecards to ensure tangible progress is made against objectives for the industry. The group has also written formal introductory letters to key ministries to build out its work.

Work is also underway to prepare for the Executive Summit on Life Sciences in April.

## **SME issues**

Ongoing advocacy as a result of the SME Committee's passed resolution from the 2021 AGM saw policy wins, including an extension of the CEBA repayment deadline to qualify for the forgivable portion, and ensuring CEWS and CERS continued for businesses still operating under public health restrictions. Advocacy is ongoing to support debt forgiveness on pandemic debt, commercialization of innovation and creating new opportunities for SMEs.