

Supporting Ontario's
Recovery and
Competitiveness



A Message from the Minister

Helping People and Businesses Recover, Grow and Prosper

As the proud son of small business owners, I know how much work goes into running a business, and as Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, I see the critical role businesses play in building vibrant communities and sustaining our economy. I also see how much COVID-19 has intensified the pressures on Ontario families and businesses.

Helping people and businesses emerge from COVID-19 through initiatives like the Ontario Small Business Support Grant, the *Main Street Recovery Act* and Digital Main Street are just three tangible actions we've taken, among many, to help business owners get back on their feet. All the while, we remain committed to creating the long-term environment businesses need to succeed — by modernizing government, reducing business costs and creating new opportunities to set Ontario up for recovery and growth in the years to come.

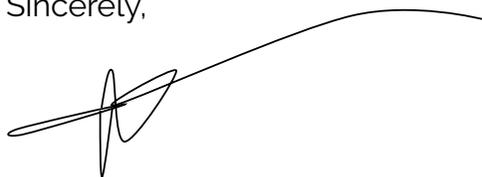
Before the pandemic, our government was working to modernize and streamline Ontario's rules and regulations. In order to restore Ontario's competitiveness and unleash the full potential of our communities, it's vital to simplify laws and procedures that impose needless burdens on people and businesses.

We are continuing this work with a real sense of urgency. As we head into the second year of battling this pandemic, the need to reform Ontario's regulatory framework is greater than ever. Red tape reduction has a key role to play in tackling barriers on business and laying the foundation for a strong economic recovery.

The Spring 2021 Red Tape Reduction Package is the next step in our plan to ease unnecessary burdens and help stimulate economic growth. The actions we're taking will benefit individuals, families and businesses by introducing new measures that will create the conditions for long-term investment and prosperity, while enhancing the policies that protect our environment and keep us safe and healthy.

Complex and outdated rules that are difficult to understand are a burden for small businesses with limited resources. They slow recovery, stifle the entrepreneurial spirit and make it harder for all businesses to grow and prosper. Easier-to-understand modern regulations make it easier for everyone to comply. That saves businesses and people time and money so they can focus on what's important now: recovering, rebuilding and re-emerging from this crisis stronger than before.

Sincerely,



Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria,
Associate Minister of Small Business
and Red Tape Reduction



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Our Ongoing Commitment to Making Ontario Work Better for People and Smarter for Business

Businesses across Ontario often face outdated and duplicative requirements that make it difficult to run their operations. These heavy administrative burdens slow down innovation, impede business growth and reduce Ontario's competitiveness in global markets.

Ontario once had the most costly and numerous regulatory requirements of any province or territory in Canada, and was ranked among the worst jurisdictions for red tape in North America. It cost companies an average of \$33,000 per year to comply with regulations. The government has significantly reduced these costs. Businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals are now saving approximately \$331 million in annual compliance costs (since June 2018).

TO DATE

\$331 million

in reduced costs annually

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municipalities, universities,
schools and hospitals

Making Changes that Matter



Before the pandemic, the government was working diligently to simplify Ontario's regulations, including:

- Making changes to allow drivers to carry proof of insurance on their smartphones
- Creating a one-stop shop for annual safety inspections of transport trucks
- Streamlining rules and requirements for quarries, farming and waste management, and creating strong, clear penalties for environmental violations
- Expanding access to lower-cost generic drugs to protect seniors and families from drug shortages

These changes were made to help Ontario work better for people and smarter for business by following five guiding principles that are working to transform the province into a modern regulator.

Our Five Guiding Principles

1. Protecting health, safety and the environment
2. Prioritizing the important issues — even when they're tough
3. Harmonizing rules with the federal government and other provinces where we can
4. Listening to you
5. Taking a whole-of-government approach.

Prioritizing Health, Safety and Environmental Protections

The province is working to ease regulatory burdens in a smart, careful way to ensure that health, safety and environmental protections are maintained and enhanced. For example, changes have been made that:

Strengthen enforcement tools to hold polluters accountable.

This includes allowing the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority to apply monetary penalties under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act* for non-compliance, such as failing to meet collection and management requirements.

These changes are ensuring that businesses comply with Ontario's recycling targets and other regulatory requirements.

Give municipalities input over access to local groundwater for use in bottled water to help further protect water resources in Ontario.

Water bottling companies have to obtain municipal support before applying for a permit to take groundwater, to access a new source of groundwater or to significantly increase their existing groundwater taking, with an exemption for small businesses.

Turning Temporary Measures into Permanent Policy



The government worked quickly to make temporary regulatory and rule changes that would help people and businesses during the pandemic. These included extending the expiry dates of many licences and permits, as well as allowing restaurants and bars to extend their licensed areas to serve additional customers on expanded patio spaces to ensure social distancing requirements are met.

Some of the temporary changes presented such clear benefits that the government made them permanent, including:

- Proposed changes to legislation that would limit municipalities from regulating noise during off-peak periods for deliveries to retail stores, restaurants, hotels and distribution facilities to support main street businesses and help ensure that shelves stay stocked so that businesses can operate efficiently.
- Allowing restaurants to permanently sell alcohol with food delivery and takeout orders — providing them with an avenue to enhance their business models.

These changes have helped businesses adapt to a new environment by cutting costs, increasing cash flow, opening new revenue streams, and providing new opportunities.

Ensuring families and businesses have access to the things they need

To support main street businesses, the government made legislative changes that would limit municipalities from regulating noise during off-peak periods for the delivery of goods to retail stores, restaurants, hotels and distribution facilities. This builds on the success of temporary measures taken to help keep shelves stocked and families equipped at the outset of the pandemic. Two previous pilots in prior years had shown off-peak delivery could also cut down rush-hour traffic, lower fuel costs for businesses, and reduce greenhouse gas and other emissions. By making these changes, Ontario ensured that families have access to the things they need, and important goods continue to be delivered to businesses as efficiently as possible.



Supporting local restaurants and bars, and expanding choice for consumers

Local restaurants are essential to the economy and help build the character of our communities. To give them every opportunity to succeed, the government is allowing restaurants and bars that hold a liquor sales licence to include alcohol with food as part of a takeout or delivery order. This change is helping restaurants and food businesses continue the new revenue streams the government had temporarily allowed due to the pandemic, positioning them for future growth opportunities.

Additionally, Ontario is supporting restaurants and bars by capping high food delivery fees charged to restaurants. Through the *Supporting Local Restaurants Act*, food delivery companies are required to limit the rates they charge to 20 per cent for each transaction — with no more than 15 per cent for commission for food delivery services. Caps apply to the largest food delivery companies in the province that serve 500 or more restaurants.



Planning for Recovery and Seizing Future Opportunities



The Spring 2021 Red Tape Reduction Package is the next step in the government's efforts to modernize regulations and ease unnecessary burdens, while helping to position Ontario's economy to succeed in a post-pandemic world.

The package features the proposed *Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act*, along with regulatory and policy changes designed to remove regulatory roadblocks and accelerate business growth to attract investment, drive competitiveness, and create jobs. This would help more people and businesses recover from the economic effects of COVID-19, while preparing them for future opportunities.

Further, in keeping with these Guiding Principles, the package would also help government deliver clear and effective rules to keep Ontario workers and families safe and healthy, while enhancing protections for the environment and resources.

The Spring 2021 Red Tape Reduction Package includes the following changes that would:



• Help consumers save money on electricity by making it easier for them to track their energy use

To help families save, Ontario is proposing that natural gas and electricity utilities be required to implement Green Button - Connect My Data to provide residential and business consumers with their energy consumption data in a common format. This proposed requirement could help consumers find easy and affordable ways to lower their energy usage and save money.



• Simplify sticker renewal for heavy commercial vehicle licence plates

Hardworking truckers need to be on the road, delivering Made-in-Ontario goods to markets across the province and beyond. That's why the government is making services faster, more accessible and more convenient for people to use by moving forward with online licence plate sticker renewals for heavy commercial vehicles. Currently, owners of heavy commercial vehicles over 3,000 kg, bus/school bus and farm vehicles must renew their licence plate stickers in person at a ServiceOntario centre. Introducing online renewals will save people and businesses time and money by letting people renew their licence plate stickers at their convenience from their home or office.

• Modernize inspections to expand the use of self-audits

To help businesses achieve compliance with certain regulatory requirements, Ontario is proposing changes to the *Employment Standards Act* to expand the use of self-audits. These changes would align the self-audit and inspections processes and clarify that officers could require an employer to complete a self-audit of their records in situations where they are already aware the owner is not complying with the act. These changes would provide an opportunity for officers to guide non-compliant employers towards becoming compliant and self-sufficient and make it easier for employers to understand and navigate the process.



• Create business certainty and improve timelines for mining projects

The government has a bold vision for Ontario's critical minerals industry — one where Ontario can generate investment and increase its competitiveness in the global market, while supporting the transition to a low-carbon global economy. As outlined in the critical minerals framework discussion paper, Ontario is committed to strengthening and clarifying processes outlined in the *Mining Act* for mine closure planning, particularly for advanced exploration closure planning. Ontario will also commit to undertaking a review of bulk sampling practices to ensure they meet the balance of a competitive mining sector with environmental protection and sustainability.



Accelerate the shift from paper to digital forms and help people and businesses do more online

Outdated processes take more time and cost more money than they need to. That's why the government continues to help people and businesses rapidly adapt to new demands and the changing business climate by modernizing regulations and removing unnecessary burdens that weigh them down. Modern regulations that use digital pathways where possible are faster to comply with, so that people and businesses can spend their time and money on what's important right now: recovering, rebuilding, and re-emerging from this crisis stronger than before.

The government is making the following changes that reduce burdens and modernize Ontario by:



Ensuring not-for-profit and other corporations can continue to conduct virtual meetings during COVID-19

- Ontario is proposing changes to the *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (ONCA)*, the *Corporations Act*, and the *Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, 2017* to ensure that Ontario not-for-profit corporations, share capital social clubs, and certain insurance corporations would continue to be able to conduct virtual meetings during COVID-19, despite certain other restrictions or requirements, if ONCA is brought into force.

Increasing transparency for provincial road building through a new online technical consultation portal

- Listening to the voices of the people most impacted is key to effective burden reduction. The government's proposed online technical consultation portal is a digital tool which will provide a single location for stakeholders and partners to comment on new and revised ministry standards, specifications and practices for road building and maintenance.
- This approach encourages broad participation from a wide variety of participants, and will make information and resources more useful and accessible.

Streamlining highway contract tendering and award processes

- Ontario is modernizing its highway construction and engineering contract processes by allowing administrative services, such as signing and submitting contract documents, to be done electronically.
- This saves businesses time and money by reducing the administrative burden and helps the government process highway contracts faster.

Reducing paper-based mining land forms for a more efficient, modern and competitive business environment

- Ontario is a resource-rich province, with mining playing a critical role in our economy. Ontario's Forms Repository had several standalone forms related to mining lands, and the province was able to eliminate certain paper-based forms when the Mining Lands Administration System launched in April 2018.
- The government is continuing to streamline forms to achieve a competitive business environment and ease burdens on the sector.



Allowing schools and school boards to submit student community involvement hours reports online

- To help foster volunteerism and the importance of contributing to and strengthening their communities, every student must complete community involvement activities as part of the requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
- To reduce administrative burden on the school system and improve efficiency, the government is proposing to remove the requirement for students to complete and submit paper-based forms. This would allow schools and boards to develop their own processes for collecting, recording and validating completed hours, including electronic processes.

Support workers by enhancing policies to protect them

Ontario's dedicated and skilled workforce is one of our strongest assets. That's why the government is taking smart and prudent steps to streamline reporting, update processes and clarify rules that ease regulatory burdens on businesses in a careful way, and enhance policies that keep Ontario workers safe and healthy.



The government is making the following changes that would:

Make it simpler for businesses to submit WSIB premium payments

- All Schedule 1 employers pay premiums directly to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), while employers also make payroll remittances to the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA).
- This proposal would streamline operations by enabling a "one-stop shop" for these payments, reducing the administrative burden on employers.

Help businesses with safety reviews

- To assist businesses with compliance, the government is proposing amendments to clarify when factories need to conduct safety reviews on certain machinery or processes before they are used or modified.
- The proposed changes will streamline existing requirements and make it easier for businesses to comply, while maintaining existing worker health and safety protections.

Update first aid requirements to keep workers safe

- Ontario is proposing to modernize workplace first aid rules by transferring responsibility for first aid from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, developing a new workplace first aid regulation, and establishing standards for training and training providers.
- This will be the first update to Ontario's workplace first aid rules in almost 40 years.





Consult on harmonizing head protection requirements

- Currently, requirements for hard hats are different across regulations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- Ontario is consulting on ways to make requirements around the use of hard hats more consistent across sectors. This would provide more clarity to employers, support better compliance with regulations, and ensure workers continue to be protected on their jobs.

Make it easier for employees to be paid through direct deposits

- Proposed changes to the *Employment Standards Act* would eliminate an outdated requirement that an employer must obtain written employee consent to pay wages by direct deposit where an employee's financial institution is not within a "reasonable distance" of the employee's usual workplace.
- This change would eliminate an unnecessary requirement and make it easier for hardworking employees to receive their wages by direct deposit.

Make it easier to report workplace injuries and illnesses

- Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*, employers are required to provide notice and reports to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and/or other specified workplace parties in relation to fatalities, critical injuries, occupational illnesses and other prescribed incidents or occurrences at the workplace.
- Reporting requirements are currently found in several different regulations under the OHSA and are not consistent, while some workplaces do not fall under a specific regulation at all. This can cause confusion for employers.
- Ontario is proposing to make it easier for businesses to report injuries and illnesses in the workplace by consolidating reporting requirements into a single regulation.

Keep employees who work at heights safe on the job

- Ontario is reviewing the working at heights training program to find ways it can improve standards for training content and delivery, equipment, and other key issues.
- This will ensure that employees who work at heights continue to receive high-quality training and are kept safe on the job.

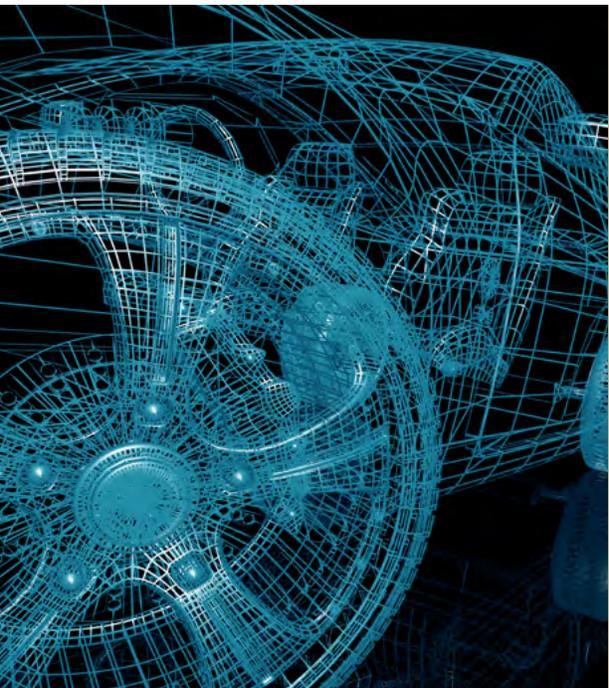




• Increase transparency and accountability for the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority and reduce burdens for the tire industry

To establish greater accountability, Ontario is making changes to the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority (RPPRA) to ensure it provides transparent, effective oversight for the new producer responsibility model. Ontario is amending RPPRA's Operating Agreement which will finalize actions such as revising the operating agreement with RPPRA, increasing data privacy, increasing oversight of costs, and establishing an industry advisory committee to help ensure transparency and effective oversight of the organization.

Ontario is also consulting on ways to reduce burdens for the tire industry by simplifying reporting requirements related to visible fees, while maintaining proper consumer protections. This change would remove duplicative rules that are currently in place through other legislation, such as the *Consumer Protection Act*. The proposal would also tackle barriers by removing or reducing audit requirements related to the regulation.

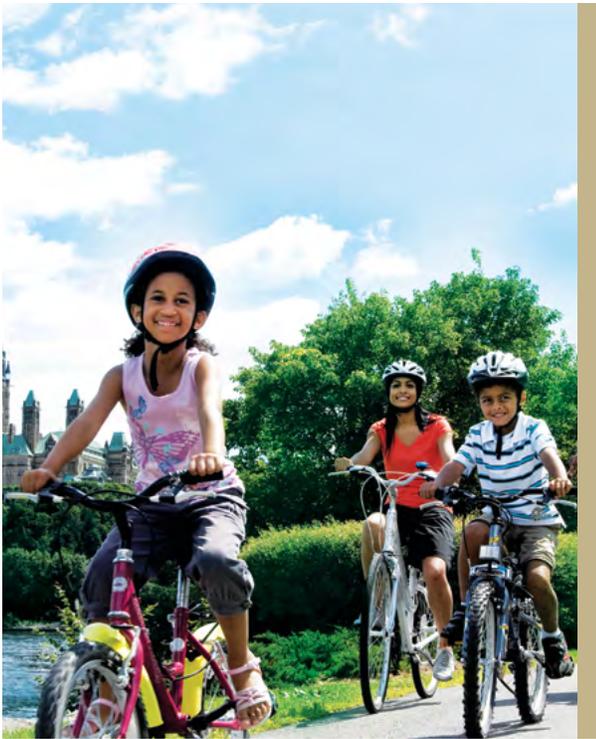


• Support Ontario's auto tech industry through innovative pilot programs

Ontario is fast becoming one of the great tech hubs not only in North America, but the world. In response to advances in technology, Ontario is consulting with auto and tech industry stakeholders on changes to the Automated Vehicle Pilot Program to help ensure Ontario remains a global leader in the connected and automated vehicle industry. Changes that may be consulted on include testing micro-utility devices such as personal delivery devices, adding new vehicle types like automated farm vehicles and removing certain restrictions around modified automated vehicles. Continuing to support Ontario's auto tech industry will help the economy recover, bring jobs and investment to Ontario, and deliver exciting new choices for drivers, businesses and transit riders.

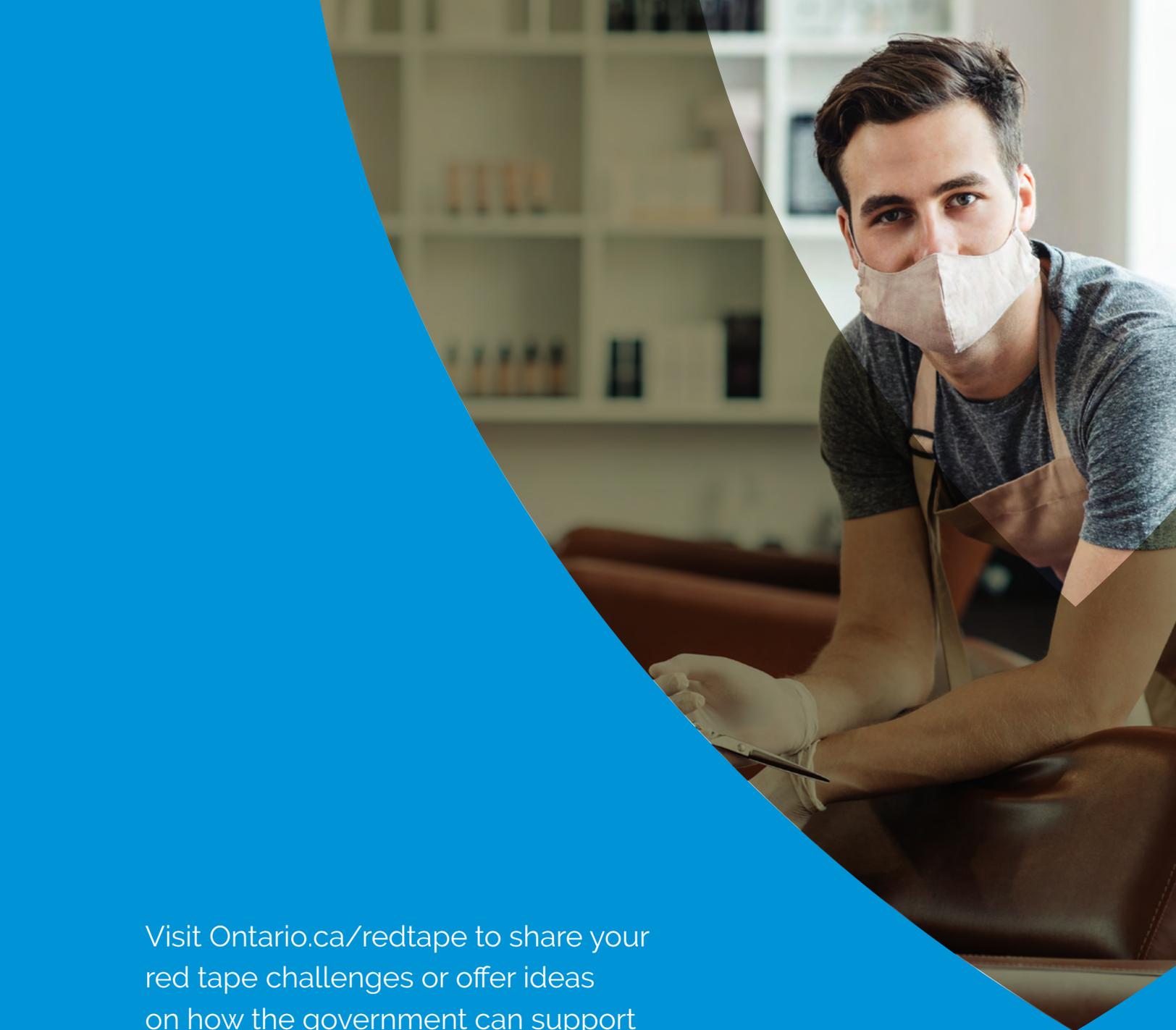
Support economic recovery through Provincially Significant Employment Zones

Recovery will be an all hands on deck effort, and the private sector, province and municipalities will all play a role in rebuilding and strengthening our economy. Within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, provincially significant employment zones (PSEZs) protect key employment areas by requiring provincial approval before conversions to non-employment uses. The government plans to consult with stakeholders by the end of the year to develop an enhanced policy framework for the longer-term use of PSEZs, and how they can be used to support economic development after upper- and single-tier municipalities have completed their municipal comprehensive reviews by July 2022.



Modernize Ontario's *Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act*

To better support families, and improve the spousal and child support payment process for payors and recipients alike, the government is proposing four legislative amendments to the *Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996* (FRSAEA). By ensuring the Family Responsibility Office governing legislation keeps pace with legislative changes in other jurisdictions, including recent improvements in the family law system by both the federal and provincial governments, these proposed changes will help drive efficiencies, and demonstrate Ontario's continued commitment to improving the lives of families and children.



Visit [Ontario.ca/redtape](https://ontario.ca/redtape) to share your red tape challenges or offer ideas on how the government can support recovery and make Ontario a more competitive place to work and live.

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