

Executive Summary

For 34 years, the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce has represented the interests of business within the City of Vaughan. Our vision is to be a responsive and respected organization delivering unique business development services. From the largest corporations, to mid-sized businesses and emerging entrepreneurs, the Chamber provides its members with the support they need to both grow and maintain their business success.

A prime purpose of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce is to proactively and constructively advocate for and represent the interests of our members to all levels of government. As such, the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to participate in pre-budget consultations.

The impact of the changing world economic reality has had a profound impact upon industry in Vaughan, as it has across this country. The loss of manufacturing jobs within Vaughan has seen a decline from 49,833 in 2006 to 39,415 in 2010. In a city with a population of just over 300,000, the loss of over 10,000 jobs in just four years has a profound impact.

Fortunately, the directed economic development efforts of the City of Vaughan have continued to attract new business. One of the emerging success stories from these new businesses is the growth of companies on the leading edge of the green energy industry - with a particular emphasis on solar. Within the region of York, we have gone from about 10 companies to 100, which is very rapid to say the least. A significant number of these new businesses are in the city of Vaughan.

In attracting these businesses, Vaughan has competed against other business clusters both within and outside of Canada. For the past several years, the combination of economic incentives and business opportunity have made Canada an attractive venue to build a global business that serves the enormous potential of the solar industry.

Recent initiatives of government at all levels have given great encouragement to the usage of green energy sources within this country. This potential for growth here can support the development of innovative Research and Development initiatives and sophisticated manufacturing operations to serve this market as well as world-wide markets. With continued attention and nurturing of research opportunities we can lead in innovation. With focused attention on implementation, we can prove and demonstrate our evolving technological accomplishments for the world market.

We have a good foundation for the future – one with a thriving fledgling industry that needs to overcome a number of barriers to succeed. That is where our concern lies for the solar industry – we require a body who can pull together the diverse players and set the standard for the future so that the rapid growth does not become uncontrolled and uncontrollable.

We see several issues which are creating barriers to the maturing of this industry. They include:

- The need for more support for coordinated research programs that bring industry and universities together to drive the future of the innovation driven competitiveness for this industry
- The need for standards and certification for the implementation and installation of solar projects. Today, everyone from electricians to general contractors claim to have the capability to install solar projects. The user cannot rely upon a standard of implementation that brings confidence in a substantial investment.

- The need to develop qualified engineers, technologists, service technicians and installers is not being met by our college system with a standardized curriculum
- The consumer does not have ready access to information that can educate and be convincing towards their adapting a solar solution
- Feed-in-tariff programs that were intended to motivate small users to create generating capacity and alleviate the electrical distribution challenges have not met with great support from many utilities

Recommendation

We believe that Canada will be well served by the funding and establishment of an industry association that serves the following objectives:

1. Recognize the opportunity for Canada to be a world leader in the Solar industry
2. Promote multiple business opportunities associated with the solar industry
3. Mobilize and consolidate the resources for a successful solar industry
 - a. Coordinate academic research and development funding in support of innovation
 - b. Stimulate college curriculum that shall develop the knowledge workers for this industry
4. Develop accreditation standards for production, installation and maintenance of solar products
 - a. Coordinate industry input to the development of standards with the Canadian Standards Association and other standards organizations
 - b. Ensure the adequate certification of trades
5. Explore opportunities for public/private sector partnerships to further the solar industry
6. Provide consumer education through the industry

This industry association could evolve from existing organizations or, if more appropriate be established as a new entity charged with the future of Canada's solar businesses.

We believe that successfully overcoming the challenges that exist within this young industry through the association described above, is good for Vaughan, is good for Canada and is a worthy investment for the Government of Canada.

Respectively submitted

Policy Committee

Vaughan Chamber of Commerce