

# The ESSEX FREE PRESS BUSINESS

## Small Business 101

### Small business and Government Customer Service

In 2005, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) released a groundbreaking study on government regulation and paper burden titled "Rated R: Prosperity Restricted by Red Tape". The study conservatively estimates the annual cost of regulatory compliance on Canada's business community at \$33 billion. In the report, CFIB members suggested an improvement in government customer service as one way to reduce "red tape".

New CFIB research shows the majority of small business owners in every province do not believe government understands the realities of running a small business, and the poor government customer service to business they receive reflects this. In an ongoing effort to help governments improve the service they provide to business, CFIB has made the following recommendations

to improve government customer service and reduce red tape:

- Create government-wide customer service standards and make them public.
- Incorporate customer service standards into departmental operations.
- Measure and publicly report on government customer service standards.
- Link customer service measures to government efforts to reduce the regulatory burden.
- Appoint an elected official to be answerable and accountable for government customer service.
- Inform businesses of the service they should expect when dealing with government.
- Adopt a principle of reverse onus to ensure adherence to government customer service standards.
- Provide ongoing customer service training for front-line staff.

• Consider small business knowledge when hiring front-line staff.

• Set up a customer service complaint process for businesses and citizens.

For business owners looking to improve their odds of a positive government service experience CFIB offers the following tips for dealing with government:

1. Check to see if the answer you are looking for can be found on the department's website.
2. Have all relevant documents on hand when talking to government.
3. Be clear on the information you are seeking.
4. Take the full name and telephone number of the person you deal with, in case you have additional questions.
5. Ask that a written document (guide, law, etc.) be provided so that you can refer to this in the future.
6. Keep a copy of documents for at least 7 years, as law may require.

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7. Respect timelines (e.g. remittances, taxes, renewal of licenses or permits, etc.).

8. Treat government staff with courtesy and respect.

9. Provide requested information in a timely manner and keep proof that you have sent it.

10. If you are unhappy with the service you receive:

- Ask to speak with a manager, noting names and your experience.
  - Request and fill out a complaint form and ask about follow-up to your complaint.
  - Members can also call or email CFIB so we can continue to raise service issues.
- To view CFIB research, please visit [www.cfib.ca](http://www.cfib.ca)
- Small Business 101 is an information service provided by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It is not intended to replace legal and/or accounting advice.*



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## Ontario government raises minimum wage

**TORONTO/CNW** – The Ontario government is raising the minimum wage on Feb. 1, 2007, for the fourth time since taking office, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced Jan. 3.

"We are providing Ontario's lowest-paid and most vulnerable workers with the fourth increase in the minimum wage in four years," said Peters. "It is to Ontario's economic advantage to see that our workers are paid a fair wage."

The general minimum wage will be raised to \$8.00 per hour on Feb. 1, 2007. This is the final increase in a four-year initiative that began Feb. 1, 2004, at which time the government undertook to raise the minimum wage for the first time since 1995. It was phased in over a four-year period to

allow Ontario business time to adjust and remain competitive.

Other minimum wage rates will also increase on Feb. 1. The minimum wage for:

- Students under 18 years old and employed for not more than 28 hours a week during the school year or employed during a school holiday, will rise from \$7.25 to \$7.50 per hour
- Liquor servers will increase from \$6.75 to \$6.95 per hour
- Hunting and fishing guides currently paid a minimum of \$38.75 for less than five consecutive hours in a day and \$77.50 for five or more hours in a day (whether or not the hours are consecutive) will also increase to \$40.00 and \$80.00 respectively.

## Funding to help Windsor attract more convention business

**WINDSOR/CNW** – The McGuinty government is helping to promote Windsor as a top meeting place through a new Convention Development Fund that will give the city up to \$250,000 to attract new national and international conventions and conferences, Tourism Minister Jim Bradley announced Jan. 7.

"Conventions contribute millions of dollars to Windsor's economy every year, creating jobs and stimulating our tourism industry," said Bradley. "The

Ontario government is pleased to support the growth of tourism in Windsor with this grant to secure new convention business."

Across the province, \$2 million has been allocated to the Convention Development Fund. The fund is based on matching funds and also supports convention development efforts in other Ontario cities.

Meetings and conventions have a significant impact on Ontario's tourism industry. Spending by business convention visitors in Ontario in 2004 reached \$779 million. The average convention attendee spent \$598 per visit, 312 percent more than what is spent by the average visitor to Ontario.

"We are thrilled that the Ontario government recognizes the positive economic impact of conventions and appreciate the support," said Gordon Orr, managing director of the Windsor, Essex County and Pelee Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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## Training agreement strengthens economic growth

**TORONTO/CNW** – Almost one million Ontario workers and businesses will benefit from close to \$1 billion in training and employment services through Employment Ontario as a result of the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement, announced by Chris Bentley, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Jan. 2.

The agreement, effective Jan. 1, 2007, transfers many federal training and employ-

ment programs, resources and staff to the province.

"Employment Ontario will now, more than ever, be the place to start for your employment and training needs - it will be a one-stop shop," said Bentley.

The transfer of programs means Ontarians will get \$525 million in transferred federal programming every year, which will combine with \$360 million in Ontario programs.

In addition, people and

businesses served yearly will grow from more than 500,000 to 900,000, and the number of third-party service providers will grow from 470 to 1200.

Employers will get expanded services to help them find the workers they need and to encourage their investment in skills development;

• Job-threatened or laid-off workers will benefit from better coordination and availability of services.



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