

Province Appoints Members to U.S. Trade and Industry Competitiveness Council

Appointees to Lead Efforts to Help Protect Trade Agreements, Key Industries and Jobs

TORONTO — Jan. 24, 2022. Today, the Ontario government announced the ten members of the Premier's Council on U.S. Trade and Industry Competitiveness.

"The creation of this council comes at a critical time for the Ontario economy as certain players in the U.S. bang the drum of protectionism," said Premier Doug Ford. "At a time when our government is laying the groundwork to unleash the full potential of our economy, we have worked too hard to create a seamless and integrated auto industry that hugely benefits both our countries to see that destroyed by politics. I am proud to start working with these esteemed new members alongside Jerry Dias as we continue to protect an integrated economy that employs millions of workers on both sides of the border."

Premier Doug Ford announced the creation of the Council in December 2021, with Unifor National President Jerry Dias as the Chair, to provide advice and recommendations on the government's ongoing efforts to rally business leaders, elected officials and labour leaders to protect Ontario's rights under trade agreements and the workers across the province who depend on a secure, prosperous and integrated North American economy.

Since announcing the Council, Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and Council Chair Jerry Dias have worked to attract the following members:

- David Adams - President, Global Automakers of Canada
- Catherine Cobden - President & CEO, Canadian Steel Producers Association
- George Gilvesy - Director and Chair, Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers
- Maryscott "Scotty" Greenwood - CEO, Canadian American Business Council
- Goldy Hyder - President & CEO, Business Council of Canada
- Brian Kingston - President & CEO, Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association
- Craig McInnes - President, Teamsters Local Union 938 in Ontario and member of the Teamsters Canada Executive Board
- Veso Sobot - Former Director, Corporate Affairs at IPEX Management Inc.
- Flavio Volpe - CEO, Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association
- Michael Willick - President, M. L. Willick & Associates Ltd.
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There is a pressing need for the work this council will do. The U.S. government is considering protectionist measures that would threaten key industries across Ontario, including auto, lumber, steel, agriculture and more. Of particular importance, measures being debated by the U.S. Congress would impact auto agreements that began in 1965 with the Auto Pact, were solidified in 1994 by NAFTA and reaffirmed in 2020 with the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. These agreements have brought prosperity and high-skilled, well-paying jobs to workers and communities across Ontario and North America for more than half a century.

The Premier's Council Chair, together with the other Council members, will continue to build on work already undertaken to engage key allies and people with influence across the United States. The Council will work with partners, including the federal government, to ensure Ontario's case is heard loud and clear in Washington, D.C. It will also advocate and engage industry partners across the United States, particularly with Great Lakes states where existing supply chains are inextricably integrated with Ontario industries and vulnerable to disruption by protectionist measures currently being debated by the U.S. Congress.

"We cannot let new legislation in the United States jeopardize decades of cooperation and put workers on both sides of the border at risk," said Minister Fedeli. "Ontario is the third-largest trading partner to the United States, and a critical partner to more than half the states in the union. The new members of the Council, with the full support of our government, will continue to advocate for Ontario against unfair Buy American policies by highlighting the cost of protectionism to businesses on both sides of the border and promoting a Buy North American approach to our auto and other sectors."

"I look forward to beginning this urgent work with the new Council members who have a proven track record of finding real solutions to complicated problems," said Unifor National President and Council Chair, Jerry Dias. "We cannot underestimate the seriousness of the challenge and it will require a combination of stakeholders from all sectors of the economy to defend against U.S. isolationist measures that will hurt workers."