

Ottawa chamber pushes sustainability measures



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Initiatives require no new government funding, local officials emphasize

When delegates from across the country gather in Gatineau later this month at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's annual general meeting, they'll vote on a series of environmental policy recommendations drafted in Ottawa.

Topics : [Ottawa Chamber of Commerce](#) , [M.P. Lundy Construction](#) , [Canadian Chamber of Commerce](#) , [Ottawa](#) , [Canada](#)

The five proposals were written by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce's environment committee and have already been endorsed by the national body's board of directors.

Local officials say government funding is not required to implement any of the recommendations, which are predominately focused on creating more energy efficient and environmentally friendly buildings.

They do, however, require a significant amount of "leadership" from the federal government, says Don Anderson, who chairs the chamber's environment committee.

"These simple steps will accelerate Canada's sustainability capabilities," says Mr. Anderson, who is also vice-president of business development at M.P. Lundy Construction.

One of the recommendations is for the federal government to guarantee private-sector loans for building retrofits. Mr. Anderson says some contractors already offer guaranteed energy performance contracts, which promise their work will reduce a building's energy consumption.

Some building owners opt to finance the capital project, knowing their investment will pay for itself over several years.

If the federal government guarantees those "green" loans from private financial institutions, building owners would be charged a lower interest rate and have an even greater incentive to upgrade their buildings, says Mr. Anderson.

"We're asking the federal government to provide an insurance position under accepted performance guarantees and measurements," he says.

Other related recommendations include aggregating existing incentive programs offered by different levels of government by, for example, harmonizing and standardizing application procedures so businesses only have to prepare a single application that can be submitted for multiple grants and incentive programs.

“If it works for taxes, why not sustainability?” asks Mr. Anderson.

Along with reducing greenhouse gases, investments in green buildings offer significant lifecycle savings and a commercially acceptable return on investment, he says. And he's not alone in arguing that environmentally sustainable buildings makes good business sense.

James McNeil, who leads the green practice group at commercial real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield Ottawa, says the better air quality in environmentally friendly buildings leads to improved worker productivity and reduced absenteeism.

“Green buildings directly contribute to a better bottom line,” he says.

Mr. Anderson says officials with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce communicate regularly with federal policy makers, meaning the Ottawa recommendations are far more likely to become part of the legislative agenda if they are adopted by the national business association.

FACT BOX: Getting green for going green

A 2008 study by Deloitte and Charles Lockwood, cited by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, surveyed several organizations that had undergone at least one retrofit that was certified under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, program. It found:

- » **93%** of respondents reported a greater ability to attract talent
- » **81%** reported greater employee retention
- » **87%** reported an improvement in productivity
- » **75%** saw an improvements in employee health
- » **51%** saw an increase in property values