

TECHNATION^{CA}

Industry Insider Newsletter

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TECHNATION recommends bold action to Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

On Friday, August 21, 2020, Vice President, Policy, Nevin French presented on behalf of the Association and its members at the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. At his appearance, he discussed the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the tech industry, and in particular, workforce development and small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Nevin also noted the following to the Committee: “This is the time for bold action. This is the time to invest in Ontarian businesses and technologies. This is the time for the Province to demonstrate vision and leadership to further enhance Ontario as a global leader in tech.”

During his appearance, Nevin offered three key areas of recommendation to the Committee, on policies the Government of Ontario can deliver to both support the tech industry *and* grow the broader economy. He also noted that as part of its recovery plan, the Province of Ontario should leverage its purchasing power to invest in digital government and services and develop the technological infrastructure and workforce to support growth.

Digital Government and Procurement

TECHNATION has shared its [Innovation Adoption Program](#) (IAP). In it, we encourage all levels of government to think about technology procurement as a key pillar of the economic recovery plan. The program should involve four main components:

1. Defined Needs
2. Dedicated Funding
3. Transformed Procurement
4. Executed Projects

The best way government can support tech SMEs is to be a smart, prudent customer. SMEs need sales to both stay afloat and to grow. The end result should be a modernized, service-oriented digital government, but by improving procurement, the side-benefits will be supporting our Ontario tech SMEs.

Virtual Health

How to leverage SME technology is a long-standing conversation in virtual healthcare and to help stimulate the health-care SME community and provide the highest levels of care to Ontarians, TECHNATION calls on the Government of Ontario to continue virtual healthcare practices post-COVID – well into the future. This has massive potential, for example to help keep seniors in their homes as long as possible and out of long-term care facilities, as well as the essential ongoing role it will continue to play in future pandemic outbreaks.

Workforce Development

SMEs across industries often struggle to find the talent they need to help them migrate to the digital economy. COVID has exacerbated this challenge as demand for some qualified professionals has

increased with the explosion of remote work and digital services. As such, TECHNATION calls upon the Government of Ontario to:

- Work closer with industry to identify workforce gaps.
- Identify and communicate 'low friction' learning and career pathways helping displaced workers explore the potential of tech; and
- Leverage existing career and employment services to help assess and guide displaced workers into these pathways.

Finally, investments in high speed internet infrastructure in rural communities can also help local economies thrive. SMEs in rural communities have been hit particularly hard as a result of the pandemic. While there is a potential pool of talent in these communities, they have limited awareness of the opportunities to train for and be employed in tech work or remote employment. We also call on Ontario to:

- Continue to work with industry and engage the Federal government to expand high speed internet services to rural communities;
- Work with rural SMEs to identify opportunities to expand/enhance their ability in the digital economy; and
- Conduct outreach and work with academic institutions to identify remote learning opportunities that will help those affected by COVID-19 reskill/upskill into remote work opportunities while remaining within their communities.

