



The Ottawa Partnership

Overview

Formed in 1999, The Ottawa Partnership (TOP) is a multi-sector organization that strives to provide the City of Ottawa with strategic leadership and advice on strengthening and growing Ottawa's economy. The organization acts as a steward of Ottawa's economy by targeting a vision, identifying supporting initiatives, and monitoring progress to ensure that Ottawa maintains a high-performing economy.

Regional Priorities

Rather than engage in many small regional projects and initiatives throughout the region, TOP's leadership tends to focus on the macro-level issues directly affecting the regional economy.

For example, in the short time that the organization has been around, it has focused on three major issues. First, TOP released a report in 2000 that was very influential in shaping the future direction of Ottawa's economy. The report "Choosing a Future: A New Economic Vision for the City of Ottawa" or more commonly known as the Economic Generators Initiative, provided a guide for developing the key economic clusters that drive Ottawa's economy. The study identified seven export-based clusters that are critical to the region's economic growth: software and communication services, microelectronics, life sciences, professional services, photonics, tourism and telecommunications equipment. (See box on next page for more information.)

The report also recommended three strategies for developing Ottawa's innovation economy. First, the report urged Ottawa to accelerate cluster development by adopting a cluster-based economic development strategy. Second, the report urged the public and private sectors to enhance the economic foundations that support building an innovative economy. In other words, the public sector needs to adequately fund education, job training, and other workforce investment while the private sector ought to provide financial capital for start-up companies. The third and final recommendation called for balanced economic growth with social equity and environmental sensitivity.

In addition to supporting Ottawa's regional economy through cluster-based development, TOP has worked tirelessly to urge the federal and provincial governments to support a "new deal for cities". TOP has called on the senior levels of government to increase the amount of funding the City of Ottawa receives for infrastructure improvements and activities that support industries critical to the City's economic growth.

Many leaders credit TOP for commissioning a study conducted by KPMG LLP in October 2000. The study estimated the amount of selected tax revenues generated by economic

THE COMPETITIVE INSTITUTE

Ottawa was selected to host The Competitiveness Institute's 7th Annual International Conference in the fall 2004. The Competitiveness Institute (TCI) is based in Barcelona, Spain and is a not-for-profit alliance of cluster practitioners. TCI's mission is to improve living standards and local competitiveness of regions throughout the world by fostering cluster-based development initiatives.

The title of this year's conference in Ottawa was "Building Innovative Clusters for Competitive Advantage-Ottawa 2004." The conference focused on how firms can be grown in a cluster, how clusters can be branded and get products to market, how clusters interact, and how an active strategy can either grow or stunt the future prospects of a cluster.

For more information, see www.competitiveness.org

activity in the City of Ottawa and received by the provincial and federal governments. According to the report, Ottawa generates significantly higher levels of tax revenue for the Ontario and federal Governments than it receives back. This prompted TOP leaders to travel to Queen's Park in Toronto to meet with provincial elected officials to discuss a new financial deal for Ottawa.

Third, TOP was the catalyst behind the City of Ottawa's 2020 Economic Strategy Plan. TOP helped guide the development of the City's economic strategy by extensive consultation with several business-civic organizations, industry clusters and related city steering committees in the region. Leaders feel that Ottawa's economic strategy will help Ottawa develop a world-class competitive economy and quality of life.

Structure and Operations

One of the interesting aspects of TOP is that it is not a membership group but rather a 19-member voluntary advisory group consisting of some of the region's top leaders representing the academic, government, business and nonprofit sectors. TOP's Board includes the Mayor of Ottawa; a representative from City Council; the Chairs of OCRI, Ottawa Tourism and Convention Authority and the Ottawa Life Sciences Council; the Chairs of the Greater Ottawa Chamber of Commerce and the Regroupement des gens d'affaires; representatives from postsecondary institutions; private-sector representatives; and ex-officio members.

Moreover, TOP has no budget, bylaws, or its own full-time staff; instead the City of Ottawa's Business Development Branch is the secretariat to TOP. However, TOP relies on the expertise and time of its members to accomplish most of the organization's work.

FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES FOR BUILDING AN INNOVATION ECONOMY

The Economic Generators Initiative recommended nine flagship initiatives that, if implemented, would help the Ottawa region build a competitive economy and maintain a high quality of life:

- Build a 21st century telecommunications infrastructure.
- Position R&D institutions to play a key role in developing Ottawa's innovation economy.
- Raise the region's visibility worldwide.
- Establish programs and facilities to position Ottawa as a place of learning for the world.
- Build an array of capital financing, business acceleration mechanisms.
- Develop a growth-oriented, cluster-based infrastructure plan.
- Devise new approaches for meeting job skill requirements of employers.
- Use advanced Internet technology to link the world to Ottawa.
- Provide on-going strategic planning and action.

Source: The Ottawa Partnership, Economic Generators Initiative