

Tourism and Hospitality Sector Leaders Hope for a Stronger Future

Workforce WindsorEssex has just completed an in-depth study of the Tourism and Hospitality sector in our region to find out if there is hiring going on, what skill sets are needed and what direction the sector is moving in relative to economic growth.

Christine Melnyk, active in the Tourism and Hospitality sector locally for many years and currently serving on the board of the Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association (ORHMA), interviewed sixty-seven leaders of local tourism and hospitality organizations and operators and asked them:

Do you have the level of skilled individuals you require to support your current business operations?

Do you have any current human resource requirements?

What direction do you see your sector moving in relative to economic growth?

Do you have the skilled individuals required to support this growth?

Tourism Sector Survey Windsor Essex Summary July 2010

Summary of Research Results

- 67 interviews (4 education, 4 government, 8 association, 51 operator)
- Operators include accommodations (hotel, motel, campground), restaurant, bar, retirement residence, travel service, indoor recreation (arcade, cinema, bowling), gaming (casino, raceway, bingo), cultural (art gallery, symphony), festival, heritage, outdoor recreation & natural attraction, adult entertainment, conference & banquet venue, winery, spirits, transportation, supplier
- Challenged industry, but hope for a stronger future
- Some operators interviewed are hiring due to new or expanded operations or a change from contracting out work
- Strongest growth segment is retirement living, followed by natural resources and wineries
- Consensus that stakeholders need to work better together
- Marketing should be targeted and we shouldn't completely abandon our U.S. markets

- One respondent rightly stated "Tourists judge cities by their encounters with service personnel." If we believe that, then it's in everyone's best interest to nurture this industry.
- Barriers include limited budgets for training and marketing and low wages compared to other industries. This results in an inability to attract and retain personnel from other higher paid sectors. There is a lack of respect for the industry and lack of awareness of career opportunities.
- Operators struggle with slim profit margins, demand for higher wages, increases to the minimum wage and the decreased difference between adult and student minimum wage, which may negatively impact student employment
- Operators expressed concern with recent graduates' unrealistic expectations and lack of preparedness for the world of work. In some cases, there is a lack of work ethic and willingness to work hard to succeed.
- Many operators are unaware of wage subsidy and other supportive government programs.

Recommendations

- Increase awareness of our region's assets among front line employees, possibly through the development of an educational DVD.
- Increase awareness of our region's assets among area residents since visiting friends & relatives is the #1 reason to travel.
- Encourage partnerships for visitor referrals and packaging of experiences and to coordinate sharing of human resources where beneficial.
- Encourage industry associations to meet on a regular basis to share resources and strategies.
- Consider packaging of experiences and social media marketing campaigns.
- Source affordable, high-quality training options, including online delivery methods for ease of access.
- Promote the industry as career-worthy.
- Better prepare students for careers in the industry.
- Increase awareness of the transportation sector and specifically aviation in secondary and post-secondary education.
- Work with government to train Employment Insurance recipients lacking hospitality experience to work in more collaborative and service-focused environments.
- Offer industry refreshers for full-time college faculty and strengthen stakeholder relationships.
- Expand college co-op placements into sectors not currently included (night clubs, cultural attractions, retirement residences).
- Amend hospitality management programs to include courses related to retirement living and festival and event planning.

- Promote courses within corporate training and continuing education programs on a proactive basis.
- Develop a mentorship program.
- Invite more guest speakers into the classroom at the secondary and post-secondary levels.
- Take advantage of opportunities through college program advisory committees and industry associations to ensure relevance.
- Introduce a youth learner-training level wage structure below the student minimum wage.
- Invest in customer service training for all who deal with the public, especially with visitors.
- Create greater efficiencies in serving the needs of business owners.
- Research what makes the top 100 employers the best and share this information with employers.

Training Topics Suggested

- Customer service training
- Enhanced customer service (fine dining, wine knowledge, 5 star establishment)
- Communication and computer skills (Excel)
- Awareness of tourism assets (possibly in a virtual format)
- Marketing including website creation, social media and viral and guerilla marketing, up-selling
- Games dealer
- Festival & event planning
- Leadership skills including communication & negotiation
- Fundraising
- Management skills
- Leadership training (strategy, business management in tough times)
- Health & safety
- WHMIS
- First Aid & CPR
- Safe food handling
- Smart Serve
- Safety, liability, crime prevention
- Security personnel training to meet possible licensing needs
- Ice rink maintenance
- Business management skills including sales & marketing for not-for-profit and creative operations, entrepreneurs and independent operators
- Employment preparedness skills training including self-presentation, how to interview, manage expectations
- Understanding of business profitability challenges

- Aviation (electrical, airfield maintenance & operations, aircraft maintenance, aviation related training for firefighters)
- Develop a system to better manage the aging in place process (CCAC, VON and nursing education personnel could develop & deliver)
- By-law enforcement, load limits and other expectations re: serving of liquor (especially for festivals & events) – delivered by fire dept./AGCO

For more information on training for the Tourism sector go to <Ontario Tourism Human Resource Council (OTEC) <http://www.otec.org/site/about/index.asp>>

For OTEC courses offered locally go to <Unemployed Help Centre <http://www.uhc.ca/>>.

Find out about 50 different tourism and hospitality occupations at <www.Emerit.ca
http://emerit.ca/en/free_downloads/occupational_standards.aspx>

In its study <Future of Canada's Tourism Sector http://cthrc.ca/en/cthrc_news/2010/economic%20recession%20only%20a%20temporary%20reprieve%20from%20labour%20shortages.aspx> the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council predicted that labour shortages in the sector will re-emerge as the economy recovers. Between 2006 and 2025, the potential demand for tourism labour in Ontario is expected to grow from 645,000 jobs to over 872,000. However, the potential supply of labour is projected to grow more slowly, from the equivalent of about 635,000 full-year jobs in 2006, to 774,000 by 2025, a gap of almost 100,000 workers.