

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, October 20, 2017

LOCAL NAFTA WORKING GROUP CONCLUDES SURVEY, OFFERS ADVICE

NAFTA is more than a trade agreement; it is a way of life for Windsor-Essex

Windsor, ON – Workforce WindsorEssex, in partnership with WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation, the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Cross-Border Institute and the Institute for Border Logistics and Security, wants to ensure that Canadian NAFTA Negotiators understand our border community's interests, following the completion of 151 local [NAFTA surveys](#).

The group plans on sharing their survey findings and advice with federal and provincial officials in hopes that a front-line perspective of sharing a major international border will have an impact on their negotiation considerations.

- 1) **Promote Canada-US Trade Interdependence.** The Windsor-Detroit trade corridor is the busiest commercial border crossing in the world with an estimated \$450 million in goods crossing daily. The local survey confirms that business interests are mutual. Local businesses are buying and selling raw materials, production parts, finished goods and services from/to both the USA and Mexico. The survey also found that 56% of business respondents said that 50% to 100% of their Canadian output is exported to the US and/or Mexico. The survey also revealed that 51% of businesses are importing 26-100% of their business inputs from the United States or Mexico.
- 2) **Expand Labour Mobility.** Nearly 7,000 individuals commute across the border to work in either Windsor-Essex or Southeastern Michigan. The bulk of this traffic – about 88% – live in Windsor-Essex and work in the USA. They are employed in healthcare, manufacturing, education, consulting as well as scientific and technical professions, which are providing value to American employers, customers, citizens and government in the form of work and taxes. These commuters rely on rules and processes that promote their ease of movement across the border. Among business and commuter survey respondents, 94% said that the list of eligible professions who can acquire a TN Visa should be maintained or expanded. Also, 100% of commuters said the recognition of educational equivalencies should be maintained or improved.
- 3) **Reinstate cross-border experiential learning opportunities.** Canadian, American and Mexican students can benefit from International experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, co-ops and placement. It is unfortunate that it is a lot easier to get an

educational placement in another country separated by an ocean than it is for students in Windsor-Essex to apply their learning in an American business or health care facility on the other side of the Detroit River.

- 4) **Local confidence in our ability to compete Internationally.** Although a majority of respondents (54%) were unsure, slightly more businesses supported the idea of using a 'negative list' approach to including services trade under an expanded NAFTA with 27% in favour and 19% opposed. About 63% of business respondents believe that all services and goods should be included in a renegotiated free trade agreement without special protections; however, a meaningful number of respondents still preferred to see special exemptions for two key sectors: Finance and Insurance (26%) as well as supply-managed commodities (22%). Only 8% of respondents felt that digital services should be excluded from NAFTA.

5) **Key NAFTA issues were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 (not important to very important) using a weighted average, resulting in the following prioritization:**

Modernizing customs and border processing and controls	4.48
Strengthening provisions to defend against illegal subsidization and dumping of goods	4.16
Streamlining the movement of business professionals	4.15
Maintaining an effective and enforceable dispute-resolution mechanism within NAFTA	4.15
Expanding market access within NAFTA	4.09
Eliminating non-tariff barriers to trade (licensing requirements, etc.)	4.00
Improving the transparency and coordination of regulatory measures	4.00
Ensuring cross-border servicing of equipment & machinery by the original equipment manufacturer	4.00
Administering the assessment of the rules of origin in a clear and consistent manner?	3.99
Improving the recognition of educational equivalencies	3.90
Expanding the range of services covered under NAFTA	3.84
Ensuring reciprocal access to government procurement opportunities	3.83
Improving intellectual property protection and anti-counterfeiting measures	3.80
Expanding the list of NAFTA-exempt occupations permitted to work in signatory countries	3.74
Strengthening and enforcing labour and environmental obligations	3.72
Reducing barriers to digital trade in goods and services	3.69
Changing the NAFTA Rules of Origin qualifying rules	3.40
Preserving Canada's system of supply management in dairy, poultry and eggs	3.30
Preserving Canada's existing restrictions on foreign competition and investment in certain services industries (financial services, telecommunications, domestic airline services)	3.16
Eliminating other agricultural subsidies and protections	3.00

QUOTES:

“The impacts of a renegotiated NAFTA will be felt first in Windsor-Essex, which is why I am proud to be working closely with other community organizations on this critical issue. As far as we know, we’re the only community undertaking this kind of work. Our goal is to help federal and provincial trade officials understand border community issues and opportunities as we experience them.”

- Michelle Suchiu, Executive Director, Workforce WindsorEssex

“The Windsor-Essex region is truly on the front lines of the NAFTA negotiations. As an economic development practitioner, who has lived and worked in both countries I personally and professionally appreciate the importance of maintaining and strengthening the trading relationship between Canada and the US. No other community in Canada is as integrated socially, culturally and economically with the US as is the Windsor-Essex Region.”

- Stephen MacKenzie, President/CEO, WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation

“Working together to ensure local businesses are represented in NAFTA discussions is important for the region. We have the busiest commercial border crossing and one of the most beneficial trade relationships with the U.S.”

- Matt Marchand, President/CEO, Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

“People in Windsor-Essex are knowledgeable about NAFTA because it affects their well-being and their lifestyle. Their opinions are valuable not only locally but also nationally. The information provided by this survey is an important input into Canada’s effort to modernize NAFTA while preserving its benefits.”

- Dr. Bill Anderson, Director, Cross Border Institute at the University of Windsor

BACKGROUND:

- Download a copy of the NAFTA Survey Results here:
<http://workforcewindsoressex.com/nafta-survey-results>
- On July 21, 2017 several local organizations announced that they were working together to support the Windsor-Essex business community throughout the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation, the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Windsor-Essex, St. Clair College, the Cross-Border Institute, and the Institute for Border Logistics and Security, along with provincial and federal partners continue to be committed to providing a collective voice on local matters of importance.

- The next round of NAFTA discussions is scheduled to take place in Mexico on November 17, 2017. Where possible, the Windsor-Essex NAFTA Working Group has been providing information with the goal of advocating on key NAFTA issues that are important to Windsor-Essex Region and its business community.
- To better understand the importance of NAFTA on local trade and labour mobility, a local survey was conducted asking businesses, commuters, and other stakeholders about what they see as the biggest issues, concerns, and opportunities as part of the NAFTA renegotiations. The survey, the only one to be conducted at a community level in North America, closed on September 30, 2017. In total, 151 respondents took the time to provide their views, including 76 businesses, 32 commuters and 43 other interested organizations or individuals.

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