

NEWS RELEASE

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Friday May 12, 2017

WORKFORCE SUMMIT TACKLES UNEMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS SHORTAGE

Attendees map existing and missing training pathways for 50+ in-demand jobs

Windsor, ON – Workforce WindsorEssex, the region's Local Employment Planning Council, wrapped up their Workforce Summit today which brought together local employers, employment service providers, educators, trainers, and government representatives to tackle the issue of people without jobs and jobs without people.

Windsor-Essex's unemployment rate has fallen from 9.7% to 4.9% in eighteen months and the Conference Board of Canada recently said that they expect Windsor-Essex to show the second biggest growth in the Country – right after Toronto. As a result, many employers are finding it difficult to fill vacancies and new positions, even though 8,200 people are looking for work locally.

Presentations from United Way/Centraide and Chamber of Commerce CEO Matt Marchand addressed the size and scope of the mismatch issue, while 6 out of town speakers shared what they're doing on a wide variety of topics, including: training ICT workers faster, developing employer responsive continuing education programs for University, providing language and job-ready training program for newcomers, implementing strategies for Michigan employers to fill vacancies, coordinating economic and workforce development, and training skilled workers in Germany.

The luncheon keynote was delivered by Jim Estill, the CEO of Danby, who helped settle more than 50+ Syrian refugee families in Guelph with his own money, while building a support network of more than 800 volunteers.

In the afternoon, a local Workforce Panel moderated by Shelley Fellows of Radix took the stage to discuss workforce development. Following the panel, attendees were divided into 6 sector tables (agriculture/agri-food, construction, ICT, manufacturing, transportation and logistics and retail) to identify how people get trained locally for the top 50+ in-demand jobs, and what gaps, if any, exist.

Moving forward, Workforce WindsorEssex plans to continue working with its partners in business, government, employment, education and training, citing the need to make the list of in-demand jobs and it's related training pathways more easily accessible to young people and those considering re-training.

Workforce WindsorEssex would like to thank all of the attendees, speakers and sponsors who helped make the Workforce Summit a productive event. Gold level sponsors included: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation, St. Clair College and the New Canadians Centre of Excellence Inc.

Quotes:

We chose to tackle the issue of people without jobs and jobs without people through a very practical approach – what are the most in-demand jobs and how do we, as a community, get people, who lack the skills and qualifications, job-ready? Through a combination of research, innovative training and education, employment services, and good will, our community can work together to bridge the skills gap.

- Michelle Suchiu, *Interim Executive Director, Workforce WindsorEssex*

The Windsor-Essex Chamber estimates that we are leaving approximately \$500 million of lost economic opportunity on the table. We have a skill shortage and at the same time we have a 15-year low of people engaged in the workforce. The Chamber is working hard with its community partners to offer ideas and solutions.

- Matt Marchand, Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

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About Workforce WindsorEssex

Workforce WindsorEssex (legally Workforce Development Board Windsor Essex) was created as an independent, community-based board in October 2008 as a result of significant foundation work by the City of Windsor, County of Essex, WindsorEssex Economic Development Commission and Province of Ontario.

In December 2015, through funding provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Workforce WindsorEssex became the Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) Pilot for the Windsor-Essex region. Learn more at www.workforcewindsor.essex.com.