

An overview of the Economic Region 570, ranging from Windsor to Sarnia, includes the census division of Chatham-Kent, and the counties of Essex and Lambton. The Labour Market Monitor is a monthly report focusing on labour market information produced by local Labour Market Information Analysts. For further information contact:
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Labour Force Trends

Employment in the Windsor-Sarnia economic region declined by 6,300 from February 2009 to February 2010. The labour force fell by 7,700 as fewer people were working or searching for work. Job losses were in part-time employment. Declining employment caused the employment rate to drop by 1.3 percentage points to 55.2% and the participation rate fell by 1.5 percentage points to 62.3%. The unemployment rate decreased slightly to 11.3% from 11.5% a year ago. This is the highest unemployment rate among all eleven economic regions in Ontario. Over the same period, the provincial unemployment rate rose from 7.9% to 8.9%. For more information, visit the Statistics Canada website at:
<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/lfs05d-eng.htm>

Labour Market News by Industry

Agriculture

Leamington's Nature Fresh Farms, a large producer of greenhouse bell peppers, expanded into the cluster tomato business. Last month, Nature Fresh completed its fourth expansion in a decade, adding another 31 acres to its 67-acre greenhouse operation. The company expects its output this year to include 1.5 million boxes of tomato-on-the-vine cluster tomatoes, matching the 1.5 million boxes of peppers currently in production.

Agriculture Technology Inc., an agricultural recycler, expanded its facility in Kingsville, spending about \$700,000 on the upgrades. The new building will store organic matter that is waiting to be recycled, allowing processing to occur year-round. The company developed its own technology for removing and recycling greenhouse waste and turning it into compost.

Construction

Oscar Construction was awarded a \$32-million contract to build the new health science building at St. Clair College in Windsor. Work will begin this spring.

The Town of Petrolia received an infrastructure loan of \$871,000 from the federal government under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Municipal Infrastructure Lending Program (MILP). This loan will be used to complete the upgrade of its wastewater treatment and storm sewer systems.

Health Care and Social Services

The Windsor Regional Hospital expects that the expansion of the hospital's Western Campus will create hundreds of new permanent jobs. The completion of the new mental health hospital and renovations to its rehabilitation and continuing care facilities will require the hiring of a broad range of occupations including registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, housekeepers, food and nutrition workers, occupational therapists and recreational therapists. Hiring is expected to begin in late 2011.

Bluewater Health and four other regional hospitals in Sarnia have reorganized their purchasing departments into a new centralized organization called PROcure. This initiative, which could impact some jobs, will save the hospitals millions of dollars by buying supplies and equipment in bulk.

Nursing homes in Amherstburg and Woodslee will see multi-million dollar improvements as a result of a provincial funding announcement to

help nursing homes improve the space allocation for beds in Ontario. The expansion projects at Richmond Terrace in Amherstburg and Country Village Health Care Centre in Woodslee will give residents larger rooms, bathrooms and common areas, and eliminate ward rooms with single or double rooms. Construction at Country Village Health could begin as early as July 2010.

Manufacturing

Ontario announced this month that it will invest \$81 million in Ford's Essex Engine plant in Windsor to both retain and create jobs at the plant. These funds are in addition to the \$17-million investment by the province in 2008. Along with federal funding and investments by Ford, these monies helped reopen the plant and funded a research centre to study diesel and advanced power train technologies. This latest provincial investment is expected to maintain about 700 jobs at the plant over five years. Essex will be producing fuel-efficient 5.0L V8 engines for the 2011 Mustang GT. Production was scheduled to begin February 1 with the recall of 300 employees from the 991 laid-off Ford workers in Windsor.

RS Technologies Inc. plans to expand its current production facility in Tilbury and create more jobs. The company will double or possibly triple the size of its plant to meet the increasing demand for its product, resin composite poles. RS Technologies just received a major multi-year order from Hydro One. The Tilbury plant employs more than 80 workers.

A scheduled maintenance shutdown at Sarnia's Imperial Oil manufacturing site will provide significant temporary work for many local construction companies and tradespersons. The shutdown, which began late February, is expected continue for about six weeks.

A Sarnia-area business, Ershigs Inc., recently moved into a new facility in the Vidal Street Industrial Park to accommodate the growth in its business. The fibreglass piping company, which has grown from 8 to 60 employees in the last four years, has been primarily selling its product to coal-fired power plants in the United States for pollution control. The new clean air legislation in the U.S. is driving the demand.

Ground Effects Ltd., an auto parts supplier in Windsor, is expanding its production to manufacture prefabricated shelters. Last year the company began to produce modular shelters, a decision which has been timely in helping to house Haitians left homeless by January's earthquake. The company is hiring 90 new employees to meet product demand. The company is looking to fill positions from general labourers to welders and robotic technicians.

Trade, Retail and Wholesale

Sarnia will see a new home improvement store added to its retail sector. Lowe's Canada will be constructing a new store on Quinn Drive, and bringing more than 100 jobs to the city. The company hopes to begin construction in August 2010 and to open by Christmas.

Bluewater Health in Sarnia has named two new commercial tenants for the hospital. Compass Group Canada will look after the food court while The Book Keeper will operate a general store at the new Norman Street hospital site. The two operations are expected to hire 15 to 20 workers when the hospital facility begins to operate this summer.

Utilities

The LaSalle town council approved a \$1.65-million solar project that will install photovoltaic panels on the local arena roof. LaSalle will invest \$207,000 into this project with Essex Power by buying green shares in the power company. At the same time, the town will receive an annual return of 7% to 12% on its investment. The Town of Tecumseh also plans to put 2,640 panels on its arena roof in a \$3-million project. Essex Power hopes both can be built by the end of this year.

Note: In preparing this bulletin, Service Canada has taken care to provide clients with labour market information from reliable sources that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since the bulletin was published. Readers are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this bulletin does not necessarily reflect official policies of Service Canada.

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