

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 a local Labour Market Information Analyst. For further information contact: [mary.toffanello@servicecanada.gc.ca](mailto:mary.toffanello@servicecanada.gc.ca)

### **Labour Force Trends**

Working-age population in the Windsor-Sarnia economic region remained steady at 527,000 from March 2009 to March 2010. The labour force fell by 6,200 as fewer people were working or searching for work. The participation rate dropped by 1.3 percentage points to 62.0%. Net employment fell by 1,500. Full-time employment gains of 4,100 jobs were offset by a 5,600 decrease in part-time jobs. As a result, the unemployment rate improved 1.2 percentage points to 11.6%. This is the highest unemployment rate among all eleven economic regions in Ontario. Over the same period, the provincial unemployment rate rose from 8.9% to 9.2%.

For more information, please visit the Statistics Canada website at:  
<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/lfss05d-eng.htm>

### **Labour Market News by Industry**

#### **Accommodation & Food Services**

The Spitfire & Firkin, a new pub franchise, opened last month on Tecumseh Road in Windsor. The business hired 33 employees.

#### **Agriculture**

The mild weather this spring means that farmers in Leamington were able to plant some of their spring crops about 10 days earlier. The area is usually first in the province to plant carrots and onions followed shortly by beets, potatoes and peas. This may give local farmers an edge on price for the initial part of the season. However,

the rising Canadian dollar has the farmers worried about commodity prices this summer.

#### **Arts, Entertainment & Recreation**

Caesars Windsor eliminated 45 full-time positions at the casino this month. As part of cost-cutting measures, the company is shifting 65 full-time unionized positions to 23 new part-time positions. Three full-time non-union staff also lost their jobs. The poor economy, new U.S. passport rules, and the rising value of the Canadian dollar were cited as reasons for the drop in business.

#### **Business, Building & Other Support Services**

Minacs, a call centre in Chatham-Kent, held a job fair this month to recruit another 25 workers. The company re-started its operation in mid-January with about 100 employees, after being closed for a year.

#### **Construction**

Via Rail will build a new \$6.3-million train station at the Walkerville stop in Windsor. The project is funded by the federal government under its \$923-million commitment to make passenger rail improvements across Canada. Construction will begin in June and be complete by fall 2011.

The \$3.8-million reconstruction project in Windsor to construct underground utilities on Wyandotte Street East between Walker Road and Monmouth Road, was underway at the end of the month.

In Sarnia, Bot Construction Ltd. is continuing work on overpasses at Christina Street, Colborne Road and Front Street as part of a reconstruction and widening of Highway 402 project on westbound lanes from Modeland Road to just west of Front Street. The west span over Christina Street should be complete by early fall. The \$59.4-million project will also add two westbound highway lanes from the Blue Water Bridge to Mandaumin Road.

The former Airport Motor Inn in Sarnia is being converted into a Howard Johnson Inn by a Cambridge-based company. It is investing \$1

million in the hotel, which it expects to re-open in June 2010. About 30 to 40 new jobs will be created at the 50-room operation including front desk, housekeeping, food and beverage and security positions. Pro-Built Construction of Sarnia is the lead contractor on the renovation project.

The Conference Board of Canada is predicting housing starts in Windsor will increase in 2010, topping 400 this year, with the trend continuing longer term. With housing sales up 33% over a year ago, and listings up only 12%, upward pressure on the demand in new home construction is forecasted.

The housing market in the Sarnia and Lambton County area shows continuing improvement. February 2010 sales were just under \$24 million, a five-year high, and up 47% over the lowest month of last year. The number of new housing starts in the area has doubled over last year at the same time. Sarnia's construction permit values in 2010 stand at \$11.2 million, up from \$2.8 million at the same point last year.

### **Forestry, Mining, Oil & Gas**

Mooncor Oil and Gas Corporation, an Alberta-based company, has acquired drilling rights to 23,000 acres of land in Lambton and Chatham-Kent. It intends to start drilling for shale gas this summer using a method called hydraulic fracturing. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has been encouraging further expansion of the oil and gas industry in Ontario by distributing completed aerial magnetic tests.

### **Health Care & Social Services**

Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network announced that Lambton County will receive \$3 million in new annual funding to help deal with its shortage of 150 to 200 long term care beds. The funding will add 36 beds at both Vision Nursing Home in Sarnia and Fiddick's Nursing Home in Petrolia. In addition, each facility will need to hire another 40 to 50 workers. Personal support workers, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, dietary aides, cooks, housekeepers and laundry staff will be required. Construction is expected to start later this year with the facilities ready for new residents as early as June 2011.

The Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities have awarded Goodwill Industries - Essex Kent Lambton Inc. the contract to deliver

employment services in Sarnia. On July 31st, 2010, it will assume the delivery of a wide range of employment assistance services currently provided by a number of organizations including Lambton College, the YMCA of Sarnia-Lambton and Lambton County Human Resource Administrative Services.

### **Manufacturing**

Resistance Welding Products Ltd., a small Blenheim machine shop, has secured new work to manufacture robotic copper arms for car plants in Mexico, Brazil and Italy. Much of the new business is for Fiat Automobiles. In the past the company has dealt mostly with North American firms. The company currently employs 24 workers and hopes to eventually hire more staff. The company cites new technology for providing increased flexibility and a faster-turnaround from prototype to production.

Butcher Engineering Enterprises and its 145 employees in Windsor, learned this month that the Ford Motor Company is ending its auto parts packaging contract with the company. Starting June 2010, Ford is planning to consolidate packaging and service work into its US operations. Ford is the plant's largest client, so the decision will mean significant job loss, although the exact number has not been determined. The company hopes to acquire new clients.

The owners of the 3Gyros restaurant in Amherstburg have developed some unique salad dressings and are now distributing them in Wal-Mart Superstores across Canada. The salad dressing will be bottled in a location in Oldcastle. Owners expect the facility to be up and running in April 2010, producing 1,200 bottles per hour. The company also supplies the No-Frills store in Amherstburg.

### **Public Administration**

Windsor will host an international aerospace conference in June 2010 with \$250,000 in funding from the province of Ontario. The conference, organized by the Ontario Aerospace Council, aims to connect local manufacturers with leaders of the aerospace industry. Organizers hope to attract major companies such as Embraer, Airbus and Boeing.

The Pinery, a provincial park in the north part of Lambton County, received \$8.8 million in federal and provincial stimulus funding this month. It will

be used to upgrade the park's trails and to renovate some buildings including sanitary facilities, administration centres and gatehouses.

### **Trade, Wholesale & Retail**

The only grocery store in Thamesville closed this month. The Foodland store was likely affected by poor economic conditions in the area, including the recent closure of a few factories.

### **Utilities**

Several green energy projects were approved in Windsor and Essex County this month as part of 510 renewable energy projects approved by the Ontario Power Authority. Most of the local projects involved solar rooftop panels, including a \$3-million solar project for rooftop panels for the Tecumseh arena and 250-kilowatt solar project for the Pelee Island Winery. Loblaw Companies Limited also received approval for rooftop panels for 136 of its stores including stores in Windsor, LaSalle, Tecumseh, Leamington and Kingsville. Eight solar power

projects, mostly rooftop solar panels, were also approved in Chatham-Kent and Leamington.

Chatham-Kent Energy is planning to invest more than \$10 million over the next several months in the field of green technology. At the "Careers in Green Energy Summit" at the University of Guelph, a company spokesperson reported that the company had advertised 60 full-time job positions in the last 60 days.

*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.*