

# Moving Londoners Forward: A Call to Active Opportunity

Presentation to the Investment and  
Economic Prosperity Committee

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## **Perspective**

South Western Ontario is going through a substantial transformation of local economy. London's unemployment rate continues to remain high. Any decline seems to be the product of job seekers leaving the market and not necessarily securing new employment.

London CMA includes Middlesex, St. Thomas, and Strathroy. We must think and work regionally. Collaborative initiatives must leverage local strengths.

The strength of the local economy is and will be small and medium size businesses that deliver value and compete globally.

According to Government of Canada's Community Information Database ([www.cid-bdc.ca](http://www.cid-bdc.ca))

<b>Number of Business Establishments for London</b>					<b>Statistics Canada</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0-49</b>	<b>50-99</b>	<b>100+</b>	
2007	20834	20250	327	257	
2009	20517	19930	332	255	
2010	20829	20262	321	246	

The number of businesses has rebounded back to pre-recession levels but there has been significant loss in the large employer sector. Most of the gains have been made in the new business sector with 1-49 employees.

There will be a skill shortage in the future. It will be worse if we do not re-engage people in employment before their talent will be lost to the local economy. Newcomers will be critical to the future economic success of the city.

There are systematic barriers to people accessing new employment opportunities. Issues such as housing, transportation, child care and health care have direct and significant impact on employability. Vibrant local economy provides the best offence against a multitude of social challenges.

There are no silver bullet, or magic potion solutions. While there has been much discussion and debate over the situation, there needs to be a cogent call to action. There is much to be celebrated in London. There are many strong initiatives that bode well for the future. They must be encouraged, celebrated and supported.

Council has a strategic economic development plan. It must maintain focus while understanding it is the role of business to create jobs. Government can set the parameters and ensure that the climate is favourable

## **Local Empowerment**

The recent LEDC Local Labour Market Report ([EXECUTIVE SUMMARY](#)) indicates the importance of developing a local skills ecology whereby we bring the parties together to develop and execute employment strategies that have both short and longer term benefits (with inclusion). Asking what we can do locally...what we can affect. Much of the impact is about an attitude that we can change our local situation and building the confidence in the marketplace through action.

Transformation of local economy will focus on smaller enterprises. There is less certainty and greater volatility. Globalization is having a dramatic impact. The US giant to the south has woken up to the skills imperative. There is going to demographic challenges with an aging populations and skills mismatch. There will be high skill jobs vacant and others migrating to set up where skills available. There is the need for local concerted effort.

## **Three Audiences**

There are three critical audiences to be addressed.

**Job Seekers** need their confidence to be bolstered. They need assistance in re framing their skill sets for the emerging job market. There is a need for networking and the development of new skill sets.

**Interveners** London has lots working well – Employment Sector Council London Middlesex(ESCLM), London Middlesex Immigrant Employer Council (LMIEC) , Human Resource Professionals London Middlesex HRPLD), Fanshawe/ Western University and various funders. However, it continues to be challenging for to navigate the available resources.

The Ontario Works Employment Frame work 2013 – 2018 is being presented to Community Services Committee today. A robust network of supports focused on measureable outcomes and re-entry into the job market is essential.

**Employers-** There is a shift in size and mix which requires different approaches. The various supports for onboarding new employees are not clear or easily accessible. Wage subsidy programs often are challenging to access, either by virtue of the paperwork involved or ability to find information. Many small employers lack the HR expertise to effectively recruit, hire, orient and retain the needed talent.

## Achievable Actions: Recommendations

- Launch **Hire 1** initiative
  - Encourage each local business to create enough new business and opportunity that they can **Hire 1** new employee
  - Challenge numbers to match size (1:25, 2:50, 3:100 etc)
  - Track impact with measurable i.e. jobs, types, salary levels



- **Cheering You On!** To celebrate Model Employers who are hiring
  - Track and Celebrate hiring and growth
  - Harness the power of the media to tell the story
- **London Made**
  - Identify, Celebrate and Promote London & Area products
  - London Made would increase the visibility of unique products by increasing market share and customers
  - Through London Made, local businesses can help other local businesses by buying their materials and ingredients. When people see the fact that things are made here, they are receptive.
  - Build towards World Figures Skating

- Develop **Prosperity Centre** with concerted focus upon SME retention and growth
  - Leverage Ivey Business School Entrepreneurial program
  - Broaden Small Business Centre's focus and use Chamber of Commerce as outreach vehicle
  - Create and launch a small business development mentorship
  - Identify local B2B product sales opportunities highlighted through **London Made**
  
- Convene "**What Works to Work**" Forum- Meeting of Senior HR managers, HRPLD, recruiters and Workforce Development specialists
  - Examine barriers to re – employment and define solutions
  - Identify best practises to close gap between vacancies and hires
  - Develop a fast track guide to supports

### Next Steps

1. **Council to Endorse in Principle**
  
2. **Refer to City Manager and Workforce Development Officer of LEDC to develop a working plan**
  
3. **Establish Jobs First Steering Committee** -LEDC , LMIEC, City HR, Chamber, Techalliance, Small Business, Centre, HRPA-LD,ESCLM , Pillar, Fanshawe/Western, City to provide administrative support for **HIRE 1, Cheering You On** and **London Made**
  
4. Convene "**What Works to Work**" Forum in May 2012
  
5. Clarify timetable and work plan for **Business Prosperity Centre**

APPENDIX A:

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**W**hat started in 1985 with four unemployed London sprinkler fitters, has grown into a multi-faceted company with a bold vision – “to make a difference within the fire protection industry with a goal of being a positive influence in the local, regional and global community.”

Initially, Forest City Fire Protection grew slowly, gaining the reputation of trust and quality within the London community. Today, the Forest City Fire Protection team has completed projects in such diverse places as Newfoundland, the eastern United States, Mexico, the Bahamas, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Today the company is an exciting, dynamic, growing operation founded on the values of accountability, integrity and respect for customers, employees and suppliers.

Forest City offers installation, inspections, service and monitoring for fire sprinkler, fire alarm and security systems. As its reputation grew, so did job opportunities. “We expanded quickly into new markets based on the demand for our services,” says Dan Bird, founder and president of the company. “With growth happening so quickly, I realized I needed more support. That is when my son Randy and my son-in-law Mike Caslanette joined the company.”

In the last decade, it has expanded to Windsor, Cambridge and Mississauga, creating jobs along the way. This year, the company will open an office in Winnipeg with plans for an Ottawa office in the near future.



One challenge almost every growing fire protection company has is training and keeping good technicians. “We have been lucky to have a large number of our technicians and fitters stay with us for 10, 15, even 20 plus years,” says Randy Bird, vice president of operations. “We are proud of our family oriented culture where employees feel valued and want to stay with us.”

Even during the painful recession of the last few years, Forest City has increased its local workforce by nearly 10 per cent. “Demand for our services has never been higher,” says Chris Reynolds, sales and marketing manager. “One of the things we’re really proud of is that we’ve increased our workforce in London while there’s been a lot of bad economic and job news.”

“We have a talented and committed staff who have adopted our company values, and work hard every day to deliver for our customers,” says Dan Bird.

This year, Forest City has given all its technicians wireless tablets on which they receive and send their reports and work orders. “We are putting everything through



LEFT & BELOW RIGHT: SERVICE TECHNICIAN MATT KASTELEIN; ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: RANDY BIRD, VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS, DAN BIRD, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, FOREST CITY FIRE PROTECTION.

the tablets now,” Reynolds says. “The great thing is we’ve significantly reduced the turnaround time on getting inspection reports to our customers. We’ve also become more environmentally friendly by using less paper.”

From the beginning, Forest City has made charitable giving a priority. It matches employee contributions to support such institutions as Kids Alive International, International Canada. Locally, the company and its workers continue to support The Children’s Hospital of Western Ontario Foundation, Mission Services of London, Teen Challenge and a host of other organizations and events. “It’s a priority for us, something that’s part of being in this



community,” says Bird. Forest City Fire Protection strives to make a difference within the life safety industry, within the local community and around the world. “At the end of the day, I would like to think that Londoners see a company that gives back,” says Dan Bird. “Our mission statement is to make a difference and we try to do that each and every day.”

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