

Moving Londoners Forward: A call to action

Presentation to the Investment and
Economic Prosperity Committee

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Paul Hubert, M.A.

Councillor Ward8,

President, Pathways Skill Development

Perspective

- SW Ontario is going through a substantial transformation of local economy.
- London CMA includes Middlesex, St. Thomas, and Strathroy. We must think and work regionally.
- The strength of the local economy is and will be small and medium size businesses that deliver value and compete globally.

Number of Business Establishments

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

- Levels have returned to pre recession levels
- Most of gains are in the small 1-49 employee size

Government of Canada's Community Information Database (www.cid-bdc.ca)

Perspective

- o 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.
- o There are no silver bullet, or magic potion solutions
- o There are systematic barriers to people accessing new employment opportunities.
- o Vibrant local economy provides the best offence against a multitude of social challenges.
- o Council has a strategic economic development plan. Maintain focus.
- o Businesses create jobs; Government set the parameters and ensure conducive climate

Three Audiences

- o Job Seekers
 - o Interveners
 - o Employers
- o Often disconnects occur between the audiences. This creates dissonance, frustration and a lack of confidence.

Achievable Actions

- o All of the recommendations can be implemented in near term
- o Existing resources can be leveraged to make it happen with little additional dollars
- o This is about confidence vs. learned helplessness
- o This is about positive vs. negative
- o This about moving from a 91% employed labour force to a 94% employed

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.),
- Measure impact



Cheering You On!

- o To celebrate Model Employers
 - o Track and celebrate hiring and growth
 - o Harness the power of the media to tell the story

Cheering You On

celebrating workday success

What 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 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 Castanetta 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

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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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Identify, Celebrate and Promote London & Area products

- o London Made would increase the visibility of unique products by increasing market share and customers
- o 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.
- o (build towards World Figures Skating)

Business Prosperity Centre

- o Develop **Prosperity Centre** with concerted focus upon SME retention and growth
 - o Leverage Ivey Business School Entrepreneurial program
 - o Broaden Small Business Centre's focus and use Chamber of Commerce as outreach vehicle
 - o Create and launch a small business development mentorship
 - o Identify local B2B product sales opportunities highlighted through **London Made**

What Works to Work Forum

Convene 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 including government wages subsidies, financing etc.

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 implementation **for Prosperity Centre**