

Ontario more open for business

By Dave Hall, The Windsor Star

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Hon. Harinder Takhar, left, minister of government services, shakes the hand of Pete Nielsen of Jahn Engineering during a business roundtable with local businesses hosted by Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce and local MPP Teresa Piruzza Thursday.

Photograph by: Nick Brancaccio, The Windsor Star, The Windsor Star

Streamlining processes to make it easier for local small and medium-sized businesses to win a piece of Ontario's \$6.3 billion annual spending pie was met with positive reviews Thursday at a provincial government procurement roundtable.

"It was a very positive session," said Ed Bernard, who attended as a representative of both Crest Mold and the Canadian Association of Moldmakers. "I was familiar with the federal procurement model, but I wasn't aware the provincial model was as user-friendly.

"I'm not sure where Crest fits within this process but, after today, I'm going to find out."

More than 20 representatives from area businesses in a variety of sectors attended the meeting hosted by the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The meeting was designed to gather input from Ontario businesses and determine which processes worked and which needed improvement.

"The main purpose of these sessions is to make sure the procurement process is one and accessible to all businesses across the province," said Harinder Takhar, minister of government services. "We do business everywhere in the province and we buy everything including pencils, paper and automobiles.

"This is a deliberate attempt to make sure that our process is more accessible to small and medium-sized business because that is what drives the economy," said Takhar. "That's not to say that large companies are not important because they feed the smaller ones, but our goal is to make the process as open as possible to as many businesses as possible."

Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the Chamber, said the meeting was a "tremendous opportunity for local businesses to engage the province in a meaningful discussion about procurement processes.

"We have a very strong business community in this area and the more aware they are of the opportunities, the better it is for businesses across our region."