

# Warden predicts slow economic growth for region



Essex County Warden Tom Bain speaks at the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce Friday, April 5, 2013, at the Ciociaro Club. He talked about the region working together to build prosperity. (MONICA WOLFSON/The Windsor Star)



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Collaboration and sharing is key to the region's prosperity, Essex County Warden Tom Bain said Friday to business and elected leaders.

Bain asked the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce crowd at the Ciociaro Club in Tecumseh to seek out non-traditional partnerships and even collaborate with competitors to help make the region an attractive place for investment.

As an example he cited the group of Windsor and county politicians, veterinarians, horse owners and farmers who banded together after the Windsor Raceway closed. The group expects to hear in the next two or three weeks whether it can open the Leamington Fairgrounds raceway for 10 races this season. If successful, the group wants to access orphaned raceway money to build a new horse racing facility off Highway 401 in Lakeshore.

“I’m an optimistic guy at heart,” Bain said. “I start each day pulling on my rose-coloured glasses.”

Despite the recession and periodically having the highest unemployment rate in Canada, Bain said he sees slow economic growth in the region’s future. “There is no quick fix,” he said.

Bain’s message of collaboration was embraced by his audience.

“I think it’s vital for the future,” Coun. Drew Dilkens said. “I think (the city and county) have been working together for years. There’s a lot we’ve done and there’s more we can do.”

Tecumseh Deputy Mayor Cheryl Hardcastle said the region is interconnected through family and employment. Many residents in Tecumseh work in Windsor or Lakeshore.

“It means a lot to have the city here,” Hardcastle said. In addition to Mayor Eddie Francis at least four of the city’s 10 councillors were at the Warden’s Lunch including Couns. Percy Hatfield and Jo-Anne Gignac.

Pelee Island Mayor Rick Masse said his small island was hard hit after the Census said his community lost 40 per cent of its population from 2006 to 2011 and is down to 171 full-time residents. Masse appealed the count because he thought it was inaccurate. As a result, he’s lost provincial and federal funding, had to reduce town staff by two, cut tourism advertising and stopped all infrastructure projects, he said. He’s particularly interested in Essex County being prosperous, he said.

“If the region does well, automatically Pelee Island will do well,” he said. “We are tied with an umbilical cord to this region.”