

Stakeholders Urge Feds to Help Attract Immigrant Investors to Windsor-Essex

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Matt Marchand, President and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce in March. Photo by John Liviero (Sooters), provided by WERCofC.

A proposal to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration aims to create a pilot project to bring Immigrant Investors and Entrepreneurs to Windsor-Essex.

The proposal, brought forward by the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce and the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc, and was presented by Chamber President and CEO, Matt Marchand; Gordon Moore, Chamber Treasurer; and Reza Shahbazi, Executive Director of the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc., to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Rick Dykstra M.P..

The presentation occurred in December 2011, and the presenters acted as representatives of the Windsor-Essex Global Attraction of Investors Network (WEGAIN).

WEGAIN's proposal would allow for the business community to partner with the federal government to help smaller communities in their pursuit to attract new immigrant investors and entrepreneurs.

Key stakeholders have supported the proposal, including the University of Windsor, the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

“Through a solid partnership between the region’s business community, key organizations and the federal government, the Chamber is confident we can ensure their success here in Windsor-Essex,” said Matt Marchand, President and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. “These would be investments made in our region that would not have happened otherwise and could be worth \$200 million over a ten year period,” added Marchand.

Marchand explained that the goal of the proposal is to “tap into immigrant and entrepreneur immigrants who come to Canada.”

“Right now most [immigrant investors] who come into Canada, don’t come to Windsor-Essex or other second tier communities,” explained Marchand, adding that the proposal suggests the Federal Government partner with municipalities and organizations to attract those type of investors to the Windsor Essex area.

“Those coming with money to invest, generally go to the big centres: Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal... What we’d like to see is some of those people come to Windsor Essex.”

Marchand explained that over the past 10 years, a handful of immigrant investors invested in Windsor, and according to Marchand, had more chosen to invest, it would have provided access to capital to continue to investment dollars into our region.

“AMO supports WEGAIN in getting its fair share of investor immigrants and entrepreneurs to under serviced areas in Ontario, such as Windsor-Essex which has the highest unemployment rate in the country,” said Gary McNamara, President of AMO and Mayor of Tecumseh.

“This is another opportunity for the Windsor-Essex region to bring new investment and jobs to help build our local economy,” said Ron Gaudet, CEO WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation.

The Chamber claims that over the past 10 years, roughly 25,000 newcomers immigrated to Windsor-Essex, and “if Windsor-Essex were getting its proportional share of individuals entering Canada under the Investor and Entrepreneur Immigration Program, about 35 such individuals would have settled in Windsor-Essex in 2011.”