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## Strong Windsor needed for Canada's economy: finance minister



Ontario's Finance Minister Charles Sousa speaks during a media conference Monday, Aug. 26, 2013, in Windsor, Ont. (DAN JANISSE/The Windsor Star)

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Ontario Liberals say Windsor will play a key role in boosting the provincial economy.

“It’s not just Ontario that benefits from a strong Windsor,” Ontario Minister of Finance Charles Sousa said Monday. “Canada benefits as well because the manufacturing base of Southwestern Ontario is huge and right now everyone’s looking at Ontario to try to make up the difference that’s occurring in other provinces because of the commodity reliance that exists.”

Sousa was in Windsor to launch consultations before the provincial spring budget and [announce \\$1.5 million toward the \\$15.7-million retooling of Nemak Canada’s assembly plant.](#)

The minister said he and other members of government hope to incorporate Windsor’s needs into an auto strategy and the provincial jobs plan. Sousa met with representatives from automotive, finance, agriculture and consulting industries at the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.



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"It's very heartening," said Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the chamber. He said the minister spent about an hour and a half listening to ideas and concerns of local industries and discussing approaches to growing the local economy, not just in the automotive sector but also in agriculture and other industries.

"He made it very clear that he wants to work as closely with us as he can to ensure that success," Marchand said. "Our success is critical for Ontario's success."

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens said he was unable to meet with Sousa since Monday was the launch of the municipal budget. He did speak with the minister at the announcement of the Nemark investment.

"This area is heavily reliant upon manufacturing and I know from my conversation with him today that's not something that is foreign to him. He understands," Dilkens said. "I do hope he takes away (from this) the need for a comprehensive strategy that all mayors across Ontario and certainly in manufacturing cities can get behind and support."

Former finance minister Dwight Duncan said the visit is a sign that the provincial government would look favorably to working with Windsor on a longer-term economic strategy.

"We still need to attract manufacturing but we also need to diversify our economy. Our failure to do so will set us back relative to other communities," he said, adding that Windsor is lagging in finance and health industries that are growing rapidly in other areas of the province.

"There's certainly more demand for (funding) than there are dollars to go around and unfortunately not only do we not have a government member, we don't even have anybody in the official opposition at the legislature," Duncan said.

Sousa said Windsor will not be left out.

"We need Windsor to thrive and succeed," he said. "What affects Windsor affects Ontario, and Windsor's prosperity and its improvement will benefit the rest of the province as well."

He said that means focusing on promoting research and development and improving training to get youth engaged in high-tech roles in the auto sector.

"Many will ask us to go back to the glory days of the past of smokestacks and assembly lines, of low-cost wages. We're not going to be able to compete in that anymore. That's not what we're at. We're losing out to Mexico and South Asia," he said. "We have to look at the new economy. The new form of manufacturing."

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