

Torch passed to new chamber chairperson



Carolyn Brown says one of her priorities is addressing the current shortage of skilled tradespeople. (Postmedia News files)



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With career experience on both sides of the Windsor-Detroit border in both the public and private sector, Carolyn Brown seems ideally suited for the position as she takes over as chairperson of the board of the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.



Carolyn Brown

After spending a dozen years with the City of Windsor, Brown has spent the past 15 years with the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel LLC, most recently as vice-president of administration.

“When I first became involved with the chamber, it was as a member of its transportation committee and as you spend more time becoming more involved, this is ultimately where you end up,” said Brown, a

Tecumseh resident. “To me, it’s more than just a line on a resume because you actually have a chance to effect change.

“We can shape the political debate, which is what we’ve tried to do by becoming more pro-active rather than reactive on behalf of our members,” said Brown, a graduate of both Kennedy high school and the University of Windsor. “I see my role as continuing the momentum built by my predecessors in this position.

“We have an excellent board which is constantly turning over so we can remain as fresh and dynamic as possible,” said Brown, who’s expected to serve a two-year term.

In recent months, the chamber has released a series of positions papers on transportation, taxation and finance and energy. It has also lobbied for passage of a single sports betting bill which has been bogged down in the Senate for more than a year.

Other initiatives include encouraging further growth in the local agri-business sector and beginning preliminary consultations with the federal government designed to encourage more immigrant investor opportunities in the region.

Brown credited chamber president Matt Marchand with increasing the organization’s pro-active role in the business community.

“He was hired to raise the chamber’s profile in the community and he’s knocked it out of the ballpark,” said Brown.

Brown believes one of the major challenges facing chamber members is the much-publicized shortage of skilled trades workers in the region and that it remains one of the major impediments to economic growth.

“I believe we need to raise the profile of the skilled trades opportunities that exist locally and work with educational institutions and students to link them with those job opportunities,” said Brown. “I know that even here at the tunnel corporation, we’ve had trouble finding electricians, mechanics and welders.”

Brown also praised the University of Windsor and St. Clair College for making investments in Windsor's downtown and "helping infuse the core with life, augmented by decisions by the mayor and city council.

According to surveys conducted by the chamber, its members include government spending and accountability, energy costs and economic growth among their priorities.

"Our role is to advocate on behalf of our members and try as much as we can to shape policy in those areas so that our members can continue to thrive," said Brown.