

Jobless rate remains tops in Canada

By Dave Hall, The Windsor Star

July 7, 2012



Windsor's unemployment rate remains the highest in Canada.
Photograph by: File photo, The Windsor Star

While Windsor's unemployment rate fell for the third straight month in June, it still can't shake its ranking as the highest in Canada.

The jobless rate in June fell to 9.5 per cent from 9.9 per cent a month earlier and it's now well below the high-water mark of 15.2 per cent in July 2009.

Matt Marchand, president of the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said that while the slowly falling rate is positive news, the prospects for continued job growth lie in "seeking new opportunities and in continuing to find ways to diversify our economy and identifying new customers for our region's goods and services."

Marchand said that recent seminars staged by the chamber and the Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation involving government procurement and oil sands opportunities are two ways "we're helping introduce new customers to existing businesses in the region."

Marchand said that a number of chamber members are continuing to report a shortage of skilled trades workers, which is hindering their opportunities to take on more work.

"We're currently experiencing a skills mismatch in such areas as CNC machining, welding and other skilled trades," said Marchand. "If we can solve that, some of these companies could manufacture more and export more."

Despite the challenges facing the region, there's reason for optimism, according to the Conference Board of Canada.

Last month, a board report projected that Windsor's unemployment rate would fall steadily over the next four years and hit eight per cent in 2016.

The report said the local economy would benefit from construction jobs related to the Windsor-Essex Parkway and the new Windsor-Detroit border crossing and also to growth in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the automotive industry.

The WEEDC recently signed a co-operation agreement with an economic development organization representing Gunsan, South Korea, with the goal of finding ways to develop business relationships.

"We're optimistic that some opportunities will grow from this because both regions make things and grow things and we believe there are synergies that can be developed," said Ron Gaudet, WEEDC CEO, at the time. "Their primary sectors and ours are essentially the same - automotive, transportation, agriculture and logistics.

"We know where our strengths lie and focusing on those sectors will lead to more opportunities," said Gaudet. "There are already a number of Windsor companies doing business in world markets and we need to create opportunities so that more of them can follow."

Almost two years ago, the WEEDC identified 10 sectors that held potential for job growth in the region - advanced manufacturing, automotive, renewable energy, creative/digital media, agribusiness, health and life sciences, professional services, education, logistics/warehousing and tourism.

Other unemployment rates across Ontario include Toronto, 8.6 per cent; London, 8.5; Brantford, 8.4; Peterborough and Oshawa, 8.2; St. Catharines-Niagara, 8.1; Barrie, 7.9; Sudbury, 7.4; Hamilton, 7.3; Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, 6.9; Ottawa and Kingston, 5.9; Thunder Bay, 5.7 and Guelph, 5.1

The lowest rate among the 33 cities surveyed was recorded in Regina at four per cent.

The national unemployment rate fell from 7.3 per cent to 7.2 per cent.

dhall@windsorstar.com

© Copyright (c) The Windsor Star