

WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL Chamber of Commerce

MEDIA RELEASE

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Small Business Too Big to Ignore: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber

Nearly 3 million Ontarians are employed by small businesses of 100 or less employees, but the rising cost of doing business in the province is stunting their growth

Windsor, ON – The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce (WERCC), in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), is launching Small Business Too Big Too Ignore, a six month campaign that will highlight the important contributions of small businesses to our communities and investigate the top barriers to small business growth. Coinciding with the launch of this campaign, the OCC also released its report, Top 3 Obstacles to Small Business Growth, aimed at starting a conversation about the underlying challenges that are weighing on small businesses and stifling job creation.

In the report, the OCC cites the rising cost of doing business as a major impediment to small business growth. In fact, OCC survey results show that one in twenty businesses in the province expect to close their doors in the next five years due to rising electricity prices. In addition, 38 percent will see their bottom line shrink, with the cost of electricity delaying or canceling investment in the years to come.

“Rising electricity prices is just one of the many elements adding to the cost of doing business in the province,” said Matt Marchand, WERCC President & CEO. “The WERCC is launching this campaign to take a look at how we can mitigate these types of costs by engaging both government and business leaders in a productive conversation.”

In addition to the rising cost of doing business, the report also lists key infrastructure gaps and a lack of access to skilled workers as the top three obstacles weighing on small business. According to a recent OCC survey, 39 percent of employers have had difficulty filling a job opening over the past year and a half - an increase of 11 percentage points since 2014. In the Windsor-Essex/Sarnia region, this has gone from 26 to 51 percent.

“Building a 21st century workforce has been a cornerstone of our advocacy efforts for quite some time,” said Marchand. “We recognize the need to foster greater connections between skilled workers and employers.”

Over the next six months, local chambers of commerce and boards of trade will hold consultations with small business owners throughout the province to identify the barriers that they face.

“Small businesses of 100 or less employees are the core of our membership and employ nearly 3 million Ontarians, which is why we’ve decided to undertake the Small Business Too Big Too Ignore campaign,” said Allan O’Dette, OCC President and CEO. “The insights gained from the local chamber consultations will inform an upcoming OCC report to be released during Small Business week in October 2016. We’re really looking forward to the feedback.”

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For more information contact:

Lindsey Rivait

Communications Coordinator

Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

lrivait@windsor-essexchamber.org

(519) 966-3696 ext. 228