

Chamber, labour leaders look to collaborate



Matt Marchand, president and CEO of Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, is pictured in this 2012 file photo. (NICK BRANCACCIO/The Windsor Star)



[Dave Hall](#)

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Windsor labour and business leaders took early steps Tuesday toward collaborating to change the city's image, attract outside investment and create jobs.

“We need to create partnerships that will convince the rest of the world Windsor is open for business and we need to send that message loud and clear,” said Alfie Morgan, a retired University of Windsor business professor and a member of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

“It's not enough for the chamber, for the development commission and for city government to send that message. We all need to send it.”

Members of the chamber board and the local labour community met Tuesday afternoon in what Morgan characterized as “very informal, initial exploratory discussions to see if there's some common ground we can agree on to help change the outside perception of Windsor.”

Matt Marchand, chief executive officer of the chamber, said the meeting was “a first step, a positive step in seeking ways to discuss the region in a positive way.”

While strikes and lockouts receive most of the attention, Morgan and Dino Chiodo, president of the Windsor and District Labour Council, both said that more than 90 per cent of labour disputes are resolved at the bargaining table.

“As a city, we've lost less production time because of strikes than any comparable manufacturing sector city in Canada,” said Chiodo. “In fact, we've lost more manufacturing production time from lockouts in recent years than we have from strikes.”

According to Statistics Canada, time lost because of labour disputes has dropped from 10.6 hours per employee in 1976 to just one hour per employee in 2011, which suggests Canadian unions are becoming less militant than in the past.

In Windsor, the most divisive strike in recent years pitted the city against its inside and outside workers which are represented by CUPE.

“Even public sector strikes, which have nothing do with outside investment, can have an affect on a city’s perception to the outside business world,” which is unfortunate, Morgan said.

“I’ve spoken with people from outside Windsor when there’s a public sector strike here and they say: ‘Of course. What do you expect? It’s Windsor.’ It’s that image we have to work on changing.”

Chiodo said labour unions have “worked diligently to not come across as militant.”

“But we are all still working towards the same goal of creating good-paying jobs for people in the Windsor area,” he said. “We understand companies have to make money in order to provide these jobs.

“We need to continue sitting down and devising ways of collaborating so that business and labour can bring those good jobs to Windsor.”



Windsor and District Labour Council president Dino Chiodo is seen in this file photo. (Nick Brancaccio/The Windsor Star)