

Chamber of commerce wins provincial support for policy initiatives



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



[Don Lajoie](#)

May 06, 2013 - 5:00 PM EDT

Last Updated: May 06, 2013 - 11:13 PM EDT

Alleging that loose enforcement at border crossings is costing the Ontario economy “billions of dollars” each year, the local chamber of commerce has won support in its campaign for increased enforcement of duty and tax collection.

Matt Marchand, president of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said Monday the resolution was one of three the chamber received support for at the annual general meeting of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in Chatham.

He said the chamber also won provincewide support for motions calling on the Ontario government to adopt a more accountable labor arbitration system and to create a more competitive energy system in Ontario.

“We understand the importance of trade,” said Marchand. “However, we do have rules and all we ask is that they be followed. Billions of dollars worth of goods are being brought into this country, Canadawide, and no duty is being applied.”

The resolution says cross-border shopping has increased 53 per cent in the last 10 years, costing retailers in border communities millions of dollars.

According to the Bank of Canada and an analysis done for BMO capital markets, cross-border shopping accounts for less than two per cent of all consumer spending. But only half of that is ever accounted for in official government estimates.

Anecdotal evidence, the report states, suggests the numbers are even higher.

The provincial government is being urged to pressure the federal authorities to enforce duty and tax collection with more vigor, while eliminating “outdated tariffs on finished goods entering Canada.”

The local chamber also succeeded in getting the provincial chambers to support a resolution calling on the Ontario government to adopt a more accountable and transparent arbitration system, arguing that municipalities are increasingly challenged by rising costs resulting from arbitrated settlements for essential services.

Marchand said that the decisions of arbitrators often do not “adequately reflect the municipality’s ability to absorb those additional costs.” He said the resolution calls for arbitrated settlements to take into account local economic conditions, to protect municipalities and their taxpayers.

“The economy of Windsor is different than Toronto’s,” said Marchand. “In determining wage settlements the local situation must be taken into consideration.”

The chamber also succeeded in gaining acceptance for a resolution calling on the Ontario government to create a “transparent and accountable energy system in the province to ensure reliable, modern and efficient supply of electricity at competitive prices.”