

[Previous Story](#)
[Next Story](#)

Article rank | 15 Oct 2013 | The Windsor Star | DAVE WADDELL | The Windsor Star

Designing tomorrow's education

Ministry seeks inputs

"MONEY IS CERTAINLY A BIGGER CONSIDERATION NOW."
LARRY GLASSFORD

Ontario's Ministry of Education wants to know what Ontarians want in the future from their education system.

Billed as 'Building the Next Phase in Ontario's Education Strategy,' the online survey is seeking feedback to help it craft education policy beginning in 2014.

The survey is available at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/survey.html> until Nov. 15.

"I'll give the government credit for trying to change on the fly," said University of Windsor professor Larry Glassford, who teaches in the Faculty of Education.

"They're trying to keep the best of their 10-year vision, but they're admitting it needs a tune-up.

"It's good education policy attempting to adjust to change, but it's also part of a hope it'll help them get re-elected or not get quite as decimated depending on the mood of the voters."

Glassford, who counts among his course load studies of the history and politics behind Ontario's education policies, lauds the government for attempting the online survey.

However, he feels it also hints at a government "that has run out of steam."

"In addition to their previously stated goals of the past 10 years (achievement, equity and public confidence), what they're trying to add is a cost-effective goal," Glassford said.

"Money is certainly a bigger consideration now.

"They're attempting to do more with less without undermining their agenda. They're preparing the ground for some tough choices."

There are certainly plenty of groups prepared to engage in that discussion.

Perhaps no group has a greater stake in the discussions than the business community in the opinion of Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce president Matt Marchand.

Marchand said the chamber has already publicized and urged its membership to participate in the survey.

Among the issues the area's business community would like to see addressed are solving the skills mismatch, fostering more of an entrepreneurial environment and the introduction of a financial literacy course.

"We have 350 jobs that have been sitting open and are still open for the past four or five months because of the skills mismatch," Marchand said.

While the skills mismatch problem requires a longer-term solution, Marchand believes financial literacy and teaching business skills earlier are easy to implement.

"Understanding how interest rates work, basic balance sheets and accounting — these are skills everyone can use even in handling their own budgets," Marchand said. "It just makes the transition to employment much easier."

Tanya Antoniw, executive director of Workforce WindsorEssex, said the business community wants more than technical and academic skills.

Increasingly, local business leaders have been preaching about the value of soft skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, responsibility, problem solving and initiative.

"Those skills are transferable across all sectors," Antoniw said.

"Employers are really advocating for the expansion of internships or co-op programs. As students develop technical knowledge on the job, they're also acquiring soft-skill training in a real workplace environment."

Erin Kelly, director of education for the Greater Essex County District School Board, said the survey has already sparked widespread discussions within the board.

"I think it is a genuine attempt to better education to meet the needs of the labour force, provide a pathway plan for students," Kelly said.

"It may validate some things we do and expose other areas that need some work."

City Coun. Fulvio Valentinis, who has experienced careers in law, teaching at St. Clair College, politics and municipal government, said education must avoid being too focused working inside its own silo and attempting to be overly innovative. In discussions with employers, he's heard that learning style isn't as important as having the ability to get the job done.

"We've got to stop falling into the latest fad," Valentinis said. "Some of the old methods had higher demands of students.

"I'm not trying to stifle creativity, but recent studies of countries scoring high (in education) tend to require higher levels of discipline from students. Discipline translates into things like reliability and responsibility.



"That's what employers are saying they desire."

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect | www.newspaperdirect.com | Copyright and protected by applicable law.

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)