

Windsor's median income has fallen by 6.4 per cent since 2005, says Statistics Canada

Windsor has had the largest decline in median income among Ontario metropolitan areas, says Statistics Canada — a drop of 6.4 per cent from 2005 to 2015.



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Windsor has had the largest decline in median income among Ontario metropolitan areas over the past decade — a drop of 6.4 per cent, according to the 2016 Census.

Statistics Canada analyzed income data (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170913/dq170913a-eng.htm?HPA=1>) and released numbers Wednesday which compared figures from 2005 to 2015.

The median household income in Windsor was \$65,983 while Chatham-Kent was \$58,264.

Among Ontario metropolitan areas, only Tillsonburg had a comparable decline in income over the same time period as Windsor — a drop of 5.7 per cent.

The numbers were somewhat surprising given that there has been signs of an improving economy in the Windsor area, said Frazier Fathers, manager of community impact at United Way Centraide Windsor-Essex County.

“The information is two years old, so there is a bit of a lag,” he said. “But these are concerning numbers. The reality is how it points to an income decline. It shows the community is struggling and there is a concern whether families can keep up with the economy.”



Frazier Fathers, manager of community impact and learning at United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County, speaks during a news conference in Windsor on Sept. 13, 2017. *JASON KRYK / WINDSOR STAR*

Statistics Canada noted that about a quarter of the workforce in both Windsor and Tillsonburg were involved in manufacturing in 2005.

“The decline in the manufacturing sector has played a role,” Fathers said. “Many of those jobs have been replaced by lower-income, precarious jobs such as call centres or temp agencies where you might be doing the same (manufacturing) work as a decade ago, but getting paid less for it.”

Windsor’s history on relying on the manufacturing sector “where you could graduate from high school into a good-paying job with pensions and benefits” has largely disappeared, he said.

“Those jobs are few and far between,” Fathers said. “Today in our economy is a question of diversification and shifting training opportunities. That has played a role why incomes are not thriving in our community.”

Good well-paying jobs are available across Windsor and Essex County, but there continues to be a “skills gap” to fill the available opportunities, said Matt Marchand, CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber.

Professional trades are where the gulf of job opportunities exist — but it’s not an area where youth in sufficient numbers are pursuing, he said.

“We have identified \$600 million in economic opportunity being left on the table in terms of demand for jobs not being filled,” Marchand said. “The chamber has identified we need to get people’s skills up to suit the jobs available today.”

Aside from that issue, the region needs to “collectively own the numbers” and do whatever ever is necessary to combat the personal income slide, he said.

“(The chamber) has spoken about this,” Marchand said. “We are not in the business to identify and blame. Everyone just needs to work together to raise income levels, improve skills and our economy. We need to show leadership so young people who want to get in the workforce understand what skills they need to have.”

Windsor’s numbers stand in contrast to the national trend: Canada households in general saw a rise in median total income, from \$63,457 in 2005 to \$70,336 in 2015 — a 10.8 per cent increase.

Fathers pointed to how the poverty rate in the Windsor area of 16.5 per cent remains among the highest in Ontario, with one in four children living in poverty.

Other factors impacting local income levels also include mental illness, addictions, multi-generational poverty and lack of pursuing adequate education, he said.

“We see there is a lag (locally) in post-secondary school education,” he said. “Children in their aspirations, if there is no role model who attained post-secondary education, that unfortunately can set the trajectory of what happens with the rest of their life.

“They are more likely to struggle in school, more likely to drop out and that falls into a cycle.”

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