

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**April 17, 2014**

### **Windsor-Essex Chamber Releases Regional Agri-Food Paper**

**Windsor, Ontario** – The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce has released its Regional Agri-Food Paper (AFP), its fourth comprehensive research paper since February 2013 focused on Windsor-Essex business priorities. Other released papers are the Regional Transportation Paper (RTP), the Regional Energy Paper (REP) and the Municipal Finance and Tax Paper (FTP).

#### **Key recommendations:**

- In order to be globally competitive and meet the Premier's challenge of doubling Agri-food exports by the year 2020, the Ontario greenhouse industry has to operate year-round rather than the current 9-10 months. This can be accomplished in part by improving the energy infrastructure and access to its electricity grid for the Agri-food sector and ensuring a reliable, modern and efficient supply of energy at competitive rates. The Chamber appreciates the recently announced improvements to the region's power infrastructure.
- The governments of Ontario and Canada can improve the overall regulatory environment by properly costing out new proposed regulations in consultation with stakeholders relevant to the Agri-food industry. The Chamber recommends continuous review of the regulatory environment and simplifying regulations. The Chamber welcomes government initiatives, such as the recent Ontario Open for Business initiative, that continue to reduce the regulatory burden and red tape for business.
- The growth and competitiveness of the Agri-food industry in our region in large part depends on the long term stability of its workforce. The industry would benefit from investment in new post-secondary programs and training opportunities directly related to the needs of the Agri-food businesses in our region. The Agri-food industry also needs improved access to foreign workers and internationally trained professionals.
- The Chamber is calling for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to provide more comprehensive information and support regarding the evolving regulatory framework. Stakeholder information sessions are one way to help address business concerns. The Chamber is prepared to facilitate potential CFIA stakeholder meetings.
- Windsor-Essex wine producers need a more economically viable access to the Ontario Marketplace. Any modernization of the wine system in Ontario, including the LCBO and the VQA, should among other things lift restrictions in the areas of distribution, warehousing and be more adept in providing representation by all wine producers in the Province.

# WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL Chamber of Commerce

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Carolyn Brown, Chair of the Board for the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber expressed her appreciation for the work of the Agri-food Committee. "I would like to congratulate the Agri-food Committee on a job well done. The Agri-food paper shows what we can accomplish when we use our talents and dedication for our common benefit. It also shows the strength of our business community."

Matt Marchand, President and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber reflects on the motivation and the importance of the Agri-food paper. "The Agri-food paper is a foundation document for the Chamber's advocacy going forward. It shows the support for the Agri-food industry but it also shows its increasing importance for our economic future. The industry is the number one or number two economic sector for Ontario and a \$1 billion dollar industry right in our region. It was important that we recognize that and ensure it has a bright future in our region."

John Fancsy from Viewpointe Winery says "The chamber has validated the concerns that we as a wine industry have as it relates to our current issues."

Cole Cacciavillani from the CF Group agrees with the Chamber's recommendations: "The Chamber represents the prevailing views of the greenhouse sector where access to the Ontario electricity grid will make a difference and lead to a more competitive greenhouse sector."

Katie Facecchia from Workforce WindsorEssex says: "More investment in education and training to reflect the needs of the Agri-Food sector in Windsor-Essex will be important for the future growth of the sector."

The background document is attached to this media release. The Chamber's AFP is also available at the Chamber's website at: <http://www.windsorchamber.org/policy>.

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