



# WORKFORCE 2020

**SARNIA LAMBTON'S  
WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN**

*fuelling tomorrow's talent*



## ABOUT THE SARNIA LAMBTON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board (SLWDB) is one of 25 local planning boards mandated through the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to conduct and disseminate local labour market research and engage community stakeholders in a planning process that supports local solutions to local issues.

***We are catalysts for labour market change.***

## THE PROJECT TEAM RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WORKFORCE 2020 REPORT INCLUDES:

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# Fuelling tomorrow's talent in Sarnia Lambton



# STRATEGIC INSIGHT + COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

While this report lays out what it will take to *fuel tomorrow's talent*, the Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board extends sincere thanks to those whom helped to *fuel this project*.

## Steering Committee

Workforce 2020 and its companion research document – *Sarnia Lambton's Labour Market: Where our talent works today and where it will work tomorrow* – was guided by a steering committee of Sarnia Lambton community leaders.

- **Joel Adams**, Executive Director, The Research Park – University of Western Ontario, Sarnia Campus
- **Doug Ball**, Manager, Social Planning and Program Support, County of Lambton
- **John Barnfield**, General Manager, Sarnia Lambton Industrial Educational Co-operative
- **Ray Curran**, Labour Relations Chair, Sarnia Construction Association
- **Vicky Ducharme**, Executive Director, Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board
- **Jeff Kinsella**, Rural Business Consultant, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- **Garry McDonald**, President, Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce
- **George Mallay**, General Manager, Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership
- **Andy Pilat**, General Manager, Sarnia Construction Association
- **Tony Hanlon**, President, Lambton College of Applied Arts and Technology
- **Jim Wodham**, Business Manager, Millwrights Local 1592 and Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board's Labour Co-Chair

## Expanded Leadership Team

In January 2010, an expanded leadership team was formed to compliment the expertise of the original steering committee, and bring their frontline perspectives as employers, educators and business developers to our 'decision-making' process.

- **Mike Banovsky**, Principal, MPB Industrial Ltd.
- **Christine Bregman**, Manager, Grand Bend Chamber of Commerce
- **Shelley Brown**, Team Leader, Business and Program Development, Sarnia Lambton Industrial Educational Co-operative, and SLWDB Business Co-Chair
- **Shauna Carr**, Project Coordinator, Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board
- **Colleen Cook**, Director, Human Resources, Bluewater Health
- **Luciano Corbo**, Human Resources Manager, OLG Point Edward Charity Casino
- **Janet Doyle**, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program Coordinator, St. Clair Catholic District School Board and SLWDB Board Member
- **Geoff Eisenbraun**, General Manager, The Holiday Inn Point Edward
- **Ralph Ganter**, Senior Director, Planning and Integration, Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network
- **Ryan Gervais**, Sales Representative, Re/max and Sarnia Connects Co-Founder
- **Mike Gilfoyle**, System Coordinator, Student Achievement – Secondary, Lambton Kent District School Board and SLWDB Board Member
- **Don Hewson**, Managing Director, Industrial Liaison, The Research Park – University of Western Ontario, Sarnia Campus
- **Maike Luiken**, Dean, Applied Research, Business Development and Innovation, Sustainable Development of Technology, Lambton College and SLWDB Board Member
- **Ron MacDougall**, Representative, Lambton Federation of Agriculture
- **Sandy Marshall**, President and Managing Director, LANXESS
- **Judy Morris**, Vice-President, Academics and Student Success, Lambton College
- **Scott Palko**, President, CCI Studios and Sarnia Connects Co-Founder
- **Tom Thompson**, General Manager, NOVA Chemicals
- **Ted Zatylny**, Project Leader, New Resident Attraction and Retention, Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sarnia Lambton is not unique in facing broad demographic and skill development issues. Communities across the country are attempting to describe and address the workforce challenges they face. **What can be unique about Sarnia Lambton however is in how we respond to these broader issues, by building on and continuing to distinguish our talent pool right here in Southwestern Ontario.**

Sarnia Lambton's unique talent pool – highly skilled in the trades, engineering, and chemical and refining operations – must prepare for a rapidly changing future in which alternative energy sources and bio-industrial processes grow in importance. At the same time, much of Sarnia Lambton's future employment growth is anticipated to occur in service-based industries such as health care, social assistance and education.

**Workforce 2020: Sarnia Lambton's workforce action plan** is our community's strategic response to a changing economic landscape – from a *talent development perspective*. It puts forward six core strategies that address three key priorities: entrepreneurship, workforce quality and economic diversity. But the plan is not focused on pursuing new economic opportunities; Sarnia Lambton already has an economic development strategy in place that receives broad community support. Rather, this plan bridges workforce development with economic development by focusing on issues that are relevant and connected to both spheres. It signals awareness among our leadership that it is no longer good enough to think solely about the industries and companies that make up a local economy; it is essential that we understand the occupations, the skills and the talent that sustain our core industries, recognizing that talent and knowledge lend Sarnia Lambton a competitive advantage.

*Workforce 2020* is, if anything, a community plan. Nearly 30 community leaders – whose names are listed at the front of this report – shaped the plan's strategic direction and identified our community's most significant and actionable workforce priorities. These leaders attended retreat-like, 'decision-sessions' over the course of three months; they debated and discussed the issues that are most important to ensuring that our current and future talent base has the necessary skills and knowledge to support a growing and prosperous economy. Their respective organizations – in industry and business, education and training, government and economic development – will play a critical role in the plan's implementation, demanding collaboration between many different stakeholders.

## FAR-REACHING IMPACT

This workforce action plan is intended to help a number of community stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Existing companies and businesses considering locating in Sarnia Lambton
- Economic and workforce developers
- Education and training stakeholders, including local labour unions
- Community-based organizations that support job seekers
- Government and policy makers concerned with strategic workforce investments

## DATA-DRIVEN FOUNDATION

This plan, and the strategic planning process, was informed by a new, data-driven report called “*Sarnia Lambton’s Labour Market: Where our talent works today and where it will work tomorrow.*” The report, which was released in April 2010, is available online at [www.slwdb.org](http://www.slwdb.org). It provides in-depth workforce analysis and employment projections for 11 key economic sectors – ranging from health care and higher education to the petrochemical industry and heavy equipment manufacturing. Many of the sectors examined – including emerging energy generation and bio-industry – are strategically aligned with Sarnia Lambton’s economic development priorities. The report was informed by extensive secondary research analysis as well as by an employer survey, focus groups and interviews conducted in fall 2009.

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

In designing a vision for our future talent base, our leaders wanted to emphasize how Sarnia Lambton will prepare workers to meet the labour market needs of key economic driver industries as well the growing local service industries. This vision relies on the economy continuing its transformation by building on its unique economic strengths, particularly in energy-related activities:

***Sarnia Lambton’s skilled and entrepreneurial workforce will power a prosperous economy led by its globally unique renewable bio-chemical and energy sectors.***

We can realize this vision by embracing, striving towards and ultimately achieving the goals set out in our plan. These goals include:

- **Having an “entrepreneurial” mindset**

The most successful companies will be those whose managers and workers are continuously innovative in the development of new products, the identification of new markets, or the design and implementation of new processes.

- **Strengthening and enhancing a quality workforce**

Successful companies will be those that realize that their unique talent must be continuously improved by investing in efforts to upgrade skills to ensure that workers are increasingly more productive and creative.

- **Preparing workers for a more diverse set of economic drivers**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and local trade unions can play an integral role in fostering economic transformation in emerging sectors, and our unique education and training assets could become business resources to businesses outside of Sarnia Lambton.

How will our community achieve these goals? Turn the page to learn how Sarnia Lambton will **fuel tomorrow’s talent...**

# AT-A-GLANCE: 3 KEY PRIORITIES + 6 STRATEGIC ACTIONS

PRIORITY		
ENTREPRENEURSHIP	QUALITY WORKFORCE	ECONOMIC DIVERSITY
STRATEGY		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a culture of entrepreneurship in Sarnia Lambton companies</li> <li>2. Develop a pipeline of students who can become Sarnia Lambton's next generation of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial workers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Promote career opportunities to Sarnia Lambton's current and future workforce</li> <li>4. Expand participation of Sarnia Lambton students and incumbent workers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Find opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses, and trade unions to access more customized education and training</li> <li>6. Expand national and international awareness of Sarnia Lambton's specialized training and education resources</li> </ol>
<p>Increasing Sarnia Lambton's capacity to conduct continuous economic and labour market research and analysis will be critical in supporting all of these strategic actions.</p>		

Each of the strategies is described in detail starting on page 9.

In implementing these strategies, and hence achieving the action plan goals, the Sarnia Lambton workforce in 2020 will:

- Have gained technical proficiency and be capable of quickly adapting in a variety of science, technology, engineering and math disciplines related to the work required to succeed in existing and emerging industries;
- Value entrepreneurial behaviour among all workers – from company owners and managers to front-line workers or skilled trades professionals;
- Be much more demographically diverse – attracting and retaining younger educated adults and people with different cultural backgrounds; and
- Appreciate Sarnia Lambton's place in a global community in which its companies and workers compete effectively for economic prosperity.

# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

## BACKGROUND

Sarnia Lambton began its workforce strategic planning process in January 2010. This process was actually the third and final phase of a three-phase project called the “Labour Market Partnership Project” (LMPP). The project, managed by the Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board (SLWDB), was a community-driven research initiative aimed at preparing Sarnia Lambton to meet its current and anticipated talent and training needs.

A steering committee of senior community decision-makers guided the project development; these leaders are identified at the front of this action plan. The funding for the project, and the resulting workforce action plan, was provided by Employment Ontario through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Centre for Spatial Economics (C4SE) and the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC) were retained to support the project steering committee by providing expert analysis and technical assistance on various aspects of the project.

Overall the LMPP was organized into three phases:

- **Phase One** – Quantitative labour market analysis
- **Phase Two** – Interviews and survey research
- **Phase Three** – Strategy development

The first two phases resulted in the data-driven report already mentioned, “Sarnia Lambton’s Labour Market: Where our talent works today and where it will work tomorrow.” The report provides the necessary quantitative baseline analysis to benchmark future employment growth in 11 key industry groups. The trends and projections were based upon secondary data sources, such as Statistics Canada, but were also complimented by a series of employer interviews, focus groups and survey responses. The consulting team solicited input about the state of individual business efforts to attract and develop qualified employees, as well as insights about Sarnia Lambton as a competitive location for doing business.

## IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND DRAFTING STRATEGIES

The transition from data analysis and research to workforce development strategy involved three ‘decision-sessions’ held between January to March 2010. An expanded leadership team was assembled to compliment the insight also provided by the original steering committee to include employer and next generation leadership perspectives; these leaders are identified at the beginning of this action plan.

The purpose of the ‘decision-sessions’ was for our local leaders to develop, identify, and prioritize the strategies that Sarnia Lambton needs to implement to overcome its labour market challenges. To kick-start this process, an issues briefing paper was drafted to highlight key opportunities and challenges that Sarnia Lambton leaders face in preparing a competitive workforce. The first decision- session involved identifying the three most critical issues facing Sarnia Lambton’s labour market. The second session had leaders brainstorm strategies that could be used to address the priority issues as well as prioritize six strategies that should be implemented to address these issues. The third decision-making session focused on developing the initial implementation plans for each of these strategies. All of this consultation, debate and discussion resulted in this workforce action plan.

# MOVING FORWARD

## A CALL TO ACTION AND PARTNERSHIPS

While the strategy development process is completed on paper, implementation is only beginning. In the absence of concrete action on this workforce development plan, opportunities to strengthen Sarnia Lambton's talent base will remain untapped and benefits to the economy under-realized.

Sarnia Lambton has a strong history of collaboration and partnership; there are numerous recent examples of local organizations working together to garner results. All those involved in this workforce action plan thus far would likely agree that moving the needle forward will be in execution. The last thing anyone wants is for this action plan to be dusted off in a year with little progress made.

Translating goals into results needs to be a priority of Sarnia Lambton's stakeholders in workforce development. It will take leadership, resources and accountability. It will require political will to make these strategies a funding priority. It will require the collective vision and belief of leaders to align efforts and resources. It is imperative to build upon the momentum of the last four months to turn intention into action so that good ideas yield real results.

# AT-A-GLANCE: LABOUR MARKET ISSUES CONFRONTING SARNIA LAMBTON

- *The petrochemical industry's changing role* – For decades, the petrochemical industry has been Sarnia Lambton's primary economic driver. Even though the petrochemical industry remains a vital component of Sarnia Lambton's economy, there is a recognition that it will likely not serve as the source for new jobs on the same scale as it once did.
- *Impact of economic shifts on the trades* – Future demand in trades-related occupations depends on broader corporate decisions about whether or not to invest in Sarnia, but few experts anticipate growth much beyond current levels. There may not be a sufficient number of jobs created locally for these new workers despite the need to replace workers expected to retire or to fill significant maintenance plans scheduled in 2010.
- *Rising importance of the "entrepreneurial" mindset* – Sarnia Lambton's economy has long been dominated by large refineries and manufacturers making "mature" products. Sarnia Lambton not only needs more entrepreneurs, but also managers and workers who operate more entrepreneurially.
- *Search for new economic drivers* – Anxiety about Sarnia Lambton's future arises from the uncertainty about what opportunities might be explored to supplement the existing economic base. Sarnia Lambton's current economic development strategy includes the pursuit of a variety of alternative business opportunities. However, these sectors remain nascent, and job creation has been relatively small.
- *Growing importance of service-based employment* – Recent employment growth has occurred in the services sector. Some of that growth is directly tied to services provided to the community's basic industries, such as engineering and hospitality. Others related more to broader demographic and economic trends, such as the increased demand for health care workers.
- *Balancing the petrochemical industry and the Blue Water economies* – To many in Canada, Sarnia Lambton's image is tied to the petrochemical industry and many perceive (whether accurately or not) that the area has not always been a healthy place to live or work. Ultimately, the key will be to strike the delicate balance between ensuring the petrochemical industry's on-going success and creating new opportunities for an emerging economy that builds on the area's Blue Water/Lake Huron heritage.

# BROAD EMPLOYMENT TRENDS\*

# POPULATION TRENDS\*

- Current baseline projections indicate that jobs are expected to increase from 53,515 in 2006 to 58,212 in 2016; a 0.9% growth rate over a 10-year period.
  - Most net new job growth is anticipated in education, health care, social assistance, and public administration – driven in part by Sarnia Lambton’s aging population
  - Manufacturing, retail trade, health care and social assistance account for the majority of employment in Sarnia Lambton.
  - Occupations in chemicals, petroleum and coal account for half of the area’s manufacturing jobs.
  - During the recent economic downturn, Sarnia Lambton experienced lower unemployment rates than neighbouring Windsor Essex and Chatham Kent because the local economy is not dependent upon the automotive industry.
  - Unemployment surpassed 10% in 2009, which is a whole point higher than the rate in the rest of Ontario.
  - Long-term data indicate that employment growth in Sarnia Lambton has been substantially slower than Ontario during the past two decades.
  - 18.7% of the workforce is over the age of 55; 10,000 current workers will be above retirement age by 2016.
  - Greatest potential attrition is to occur in senior management occupations and skilled occupations in primary industries.
- Sarnia Lambton’s 2008 population was 7% higher than it was in 1976; for the same period, Ontario’s population was 51% higher.
  - Sarnia Lambton has a tight labour market; 85% of jobs are filled by local residents.
  - Several factors have slowed population growth – an aging population, younger adults (aged 25 to 39) seeking education and employment opportunities elsewhere, and difficulty attracting and retaining highly-skilled immigrants.
  - Employers are demanding greater post-secondary credentials; Workers aged 25 to 39 have higher levels of educational attainment than those aged 40 to 54.
  - Many older workers are skilled in traditional occupations, but fewer of these workers have been needed as local companies invest in new technologies and shed traditional, lesser-skilled jobs.
  - The area’s younger, educated workers are often available only in small numbers due to the limited local demand for these workers and out-migration to find professional opportunities elsewhere.
  - The demand for higher education is increasing; Lambton College currently has 3,900 students, an increase of 17% since 2009.

# LABOUR MARKET DEMAND\*

- Agriculture is nearly twice as concentrated in Sarnia Lambton's workforce as it is Canada-wide.
- Manufacturing as a proportion of the area's workforce is about 27% greater than Canada's share of manufacturing employment.
- Petroleum and chemicals account for 50% of Sarnia Lambton's manufacturing employment compared to only 5% for Canada as a whole.
- One out of every 11 Canadian petroleum processing workers is employed in Sarnia Lambton.
- Within the petrochemical industry, declining employment has been due in large part to extensive investments in technology.
- The petrochemical industry also drives activities in several other key industries including the skilled trades, engineering services and accommodations.
- The Sarnia Construction Association reported registration for the trades in May 2009 at about 5,300 workers, including slightly more than 1,000 apprentices.
- Sarnia Lambton expects to need more than 200 net new engineers and drafting specialists between 2006 and 2016.
- Steamfitters and pipefitters account for almost one in six workers within the traditional energy generation industry.
- The agricultural sector generates about \$400 million annually from approximately 2,400 local farms.
- Due to the seasonality of work, many agricultural jobs pay below local average annual earnings of \$43,500.
- The service industries are playing an increasing economic role, and they are more likely to need workers or offer new employment opportunities.
- Service industry workers at all levels often need strong computer literacy and a customer service mindset.
- As the area's population ages, it will demand greater health care services and the increased need for community and residential health care services.
- Bluewater Health reports that the average age of its nursing staff is 48, and nurses are eligible to retire at age 55.
- Attracting people to occupations such as nursing, personal support workers, dieticians and similar fields will be vital to ensure the overall wellness of the community and its aging population.
- Educational services developed in Sarnia Lambton are being delivered beyond local boundaries, as Lambton College has nearly 4,500 students enrolled at four campuses in China.
- Travel and tourism employed almost 1,500 workers in 2006.

\* Unless otherwise stated, the reference year is 2006.

# WORKFORCE 2020 IN DETAIL

*Priority One:*

## RISING IMPORTANCE OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

Sarnia Lambton's major petrochemical and refining employers are increasingly subject to corporate decisions made elsewhere. The industry has become dominated by large refineries and manufacturers making "mature" products. Many 'linked' industries, such as engineering firms, operate as branch facilities, or even in some cases as 'outposts,' of larger firms that target their services to the local operations of global petrochemical enterprises. Traditionally, these 'linked' firms generated sufficient business from local clients so they did not need to find new clients elsewhere or develop new capacities. These suppliers operated as if they were part of a larger corporate enterprise within the petrochemical industry – awaiting headquarters' decisions about whether new projects would be pursued and how much would be contracted to local vendors. Unfortunately, this approach to doing business is becoming less sustainable in Sarnia Lambton as the petrochemical industry continues to evolve and transform, relying less on local refinery production.

In this environment, economic diversification is paramount, but that requires risk-takers to seek new market opportunities, improve existing processes and develop new ones. Sarnia Lambton not only needs more such entrepreneurs, but also managers and workers who operate more entrepreneurially. We also need talent who has the skills to win over potential new customers or the aptitude to recognize potential new product opportunities. Getting current and future workers to think more entrepreneurially will involve many local organizations to stimulate creative thinking and support new ventures. This issue pervades not only in companies directly tied to the petrochemical industry but also in other economic sectors. Global competition demands that firms become more aggressive in developing new products and new markets.

### WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

Enhancing Sarnia Lambton's entrepreneurial capabilities must ultimately incorporate an intentional talent development strategy. Businesses seeking new opportunities must rely on their workforce to help identify new opportunities as well as leaders willing to implement business plans designed to serve new markets or customers. Managers and front-line workers alike must be prepared for a different kind of work environment. For managers, the goal is to help their workers become more productive and identify ways that the firm can produce greater value-added products or services. This necessitates front-line workers to accept greater corporate responsibility and become more directly involved in new product and service development. In Sarnia Lambton, this may require broader exposure to new management principles among current middle management leaders – a potentially invaluable workforce intervention.

For most other production or service workers, the goal is to go beyond performing their jobs' duties as assigned. These workers must seek out greater responsibilities and prepare themselves for work that may be very different from what they are currently doing. Workers need to be willing and able to perform increasingly complex tasks in order to enhance their employability. Certainly, firms need workers who are experts in a particular field, but they also need workers who continue to upgrade and broaden their skills to meet new and evolving challenges. Additionally, companies have also found that experienced workers cross-trained with multiple skills make much more effective front-line supervisors, a vital need for firms as they innovate to take advantage of process improvements, design or make new products, or serve new customers.

## Strategy #1:

### CREATE A CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SARNIA LAMBTON COMPANIES

*By implementing this strategy, Sarnia Lambton will...*

Develop an entrepreneurial mindset among local talent that pervades all aspects of the economy. This mindset will make workers more capable of exploring new innovations, developing new products and identifying new markets.

#### ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Engaging and organizing to support entrepreneurship by defining what an entrepreneurial company is and engaging these companies. This will involve local organizations championing the issue and creating opportunities for entrepreneurs from all sectors of the economy to work together.
- Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation by highlighting the entrepreneurial and innovative practices of management and workers, and marketing Sarnia Lambton's entrepreneurial workforce characteristics both inside and outside of the community.
- Training workers and managers in key entrepreneurial skills by designing and delivering innovation-related training courses and business supervisory educational programs.

#### THIS STRATEGY'S SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF:

- Employee-led innovations reported to the media
- New product lines offered by local companies
- Enterprises recognized as "entrepreneurial"
- Media stories on entrepreneurship and the need for entrepreneurial talent
- Nomination for entrepreneurial companies and worker award programs
- Entrepreneurship-related events and training courses as well as attendance at these events
- Entrepreneurs utilizing local entrepreneur assistance services

#### POTENTIAL CONVENERS AND OTHER LEADERS FOR THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

- The UWO Research Park – Sarnia Campus
- Industrial Educational Co-operative
- Lambton College
- Local businesses
- SLEP Business Enterprise Centre
- Chambers of Commerce
- Entrepreneurial Council – to be established
- Labour unions

## Strategy #2:

### DEVELOP A PIPELINE OF STUDENTS WHO CAN BECOME SARNIA LAMBTON'S NEXT GENERATION INNOVATORS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL WORKERS

*By implementing this strategy, Sarnia Lambton will...*

Develop a future workforce with a more innovative and entrepreneurial mindset, and help them learn skills associated with creating new economic opportunities – whether in a business they own or one in which they work.

#### ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Cataloguing and analyzing existing programs to identify gaps in existing programs and research national and provincial best practices to address these needs.
- Formulating new ways to train students – through dual-credit programs in high school or college, extracurricular programs in high school or college, as well as pilot programs for adults – to become more innovative and entrepreneurial.
- Promoting the importance of innovation, ingenuity and entrepreneurial skills and attitudes among current and future students.
- Strengthening existing programs that engage youth and adults in entrepreneurship and innovation.

#### THIS STRATEGY'S SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF:

- Students receiving entrepreneurial and business education
- Participants in entrepreneurship programs
- Students interested in entrepreneurial opportunities
- Business leaders and young professionals participating as mentors and/or resources to support these educational programs

#### POTENTIAL CONVENERS AND OTHER LEADERS FOR THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

- Lambton College
- Sarnia Lambton school boards
- SLEP Business Enterprise Centre
- Sarnia Lambton Business Development Corporation
- Chambers of Commerce
- Junior Achievement
- Young professionals groups
- Other professional organizations
- Labour unions
- Goodwill Industries

## Priority Two:

# STRENGTHENING & ENHANCING A QUALITY WORKFORCE

Across our talent base, the knowledge and skill sets required to remain competitive are constantly evolving. Industries, from petrochemical to health care, are increasingly demanding workers with a wide range of science, technology, engineering, and math – or STEM – skills. Addressing these issues will be important to Sarnia Lambton’s economic success.

## MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Within the manufacturing sector, particularly in the petrochemical industry and related trade contractors, the large companies that drive much of Sarnia Lambton’s economic growth fully recognize they must continue to up-skill workers to remain competitive. More skilled workers will be needed to implement the techniques necessary to increase overall productivity. For the past decade, many manufacturing firms have proactively planned for a significant turnover due to an aging workforce reaching retirement.

Companies are using this turnover as an opportunity to enhance the capabilities of their newer workers. Workers who are being hired have a greater amount of formal training and technical education. New workers are much more likely to have three-year applied technical diplomas in fields such as engineering technology. This shift occurred during a period when companies were also making significant investments in equipment modernization. Semi-skilled workers or workers unable to adapt to economic realities are finding it more difficult to find good-paying manufacturing employment in Sarnia Lambton.

## SERVICE SECTOR

Some of Sarnia Lambton’s recent employment growth in the service sector is directly tied to services provided to the community’s basic industries, such as engineering and hospitality. But the other is accounted for by broader demographic and economic trends, such as an aging population’s demand for more and different kinds of health care. Attracting talent to sometimes overlooked fields such as community and residential health care will be vital to ensure the wellness of the community and its aging population. The career pathway for some of these service industries may often begin at lower skill levels, but some of the best-paying careers require workers to attain post-secondary education after the worker has entered the labour force.

For certain basic service jobs, the challenge facing workers is the relatively low wages that many entry-level positions offer. For instance, certain growth occupations such as cleaning, retail and customer service are relatively low-skilled and command near-minimum wages. These jobs provide entry-level work for people in need of experience, but they also offer a stepping stone for professional careers when employment is combined with related training and educational opportunities designed to help the individual move on toward higher skill, higher wage occupations. Whether those jobs are in marketing, accounting, education or engineering, they will be important to Sarnia Lambton’s future.

## WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

Many of these skills are rooted in basic science, technology, engineering and mathematics – or STEM – disciplines, but they also rely on “softer” skills such as communications, critical thinking and problem-solving. New jobs in almost every industry require more extensive computing skills. Call centres are shifting from telephone interaction with customers to working with clients through instant messaging. Within health care professions, increased use of electronic medical recordkeeping requires many caregivers and other health care providers to record and manage data. Also, production workers seeking employment must demonstrate greater inter-personal and leadership skills, and an ability to manage and maintain increasingly sophisticated production equipment. As current jobs become obsolete or as new occupations emerge, flexible workers with basic technical skills will be able to adapt to an environment in which a career involves shifting among jobs – even within the same company.

## Strategy #3:

### PROMOTE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES TO SARNIA LAMBTON'S CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE

*By implementing this strategy, Sarnia Lambton will...*

Continuously upgrade its workforce's technical skills to meet the ever-changing demands of current and future jobs.

#### ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Conducting research about existing programs to identify curriculum requirements for key occupations and to assist people to access the training required for growing and in-demand occupations.
- Planning and implementing promotional activities that inform students, teachers, parents, guidance counsellors, young adults, incumbent workers, and laid-off workers about the opportunities in emerging occupations and the technical skills required for these occupations.
- Strengthening existing programs including [www.LiveinLambton.ca](http://www.LiveinLambton.ca), Lambton College's Technology Information Night, the Virtual Trade Fair, and the Passport to Prosperity (P2P) to help individuals explore and identify potential career paths.
- Increasing business involvement in support of student achievement through mentorships, presentations, business representation in the Specialist High Skills Major Program, and more student internships.

#### THIS STRATEGY'S SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF:

- Employers participating at Lambton College's Technology Information Night
- Students receiving promotional materials
- Students participating in experiential opportunities with local employers
- Mentors available to area students
- Website visits for site promoting job opportunities

#### POTENTIAL CONVENERS AND OTHER LEADERS FOR THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

- Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board
- Sarnia Lambton school boards
- Business groups and organizations
- Lambton College Program Advisory Councils (PACs)
- SLEP's Business Enterprise Centre
- Labour unions

## Strategy #4:

### EXPAND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND INCUMBENT WORKERS IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING IN THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) DISCIPLINES

*By implementing this strategy, Sarnia Lambton will...*

Enhance and expand worker skills in STEM disciplines.

#### ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Conducting background research to identify the STEM requirements of in-demand occupations and the curriculum options for delivering these programs.
- Organizing stronger partnerships between secondary schools, post-secondary schools, and trade unions to facilitate the effective delivery of STEM educational programs.
- Delivering STEM programs, in experiential as well as classroom settings, to provide critical knowledge economy skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, digital information management, etc).

#### THIS STRATEGY'S SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF:

- Students taking STEM-related classes
- Students participating in STEM-related externships and job shadowing programs
- Companies providing STEM-related externships and job shadowing opportunities
- STEM-related jobs profiled
- Sector specific career pathways developed
- Students taking STEM-related dual credit courses in consultation with local secondary school Student Success team personnel
- Students enrolled in STEM-related Specialist High Skills Major pathways program

#### POTENTIAL CONVENERS AND OTHER LEADERS FOR THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

- Lambton College
- Sarnia Lambton school boards
- Local sector councils
- Chambers of Commerce
- Labour unions
- Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board

## Priority Three:

# PREPARING WORKERS FOR A MORE DIVERSE SET OF ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Everyone agrees the large petrochemical companies drive much of today's local economy, but the anxiety about Sarnia Lambton's future arises from the uncertainty about what other opportunities might be explored to supplement the existing economic base. Many in the community recognize the need to diversify the local economy. The economic development strategy does just this, with an emphasis on emerging sectors such as sustainable energy and value-added agricultural products. However, these sectors have not yet begun creating a significant number of new jobs.

To develop these sectors as potential future economic drivers, Sarnia Lambton must overcome several key obstacles. First, existing companies and workers must succeed in identifying new products or markets. Furthermore, companies must identify new opportunities that take advantage of potentially underused regional assets. For instance, in what ways can the area take advantage of its location on Lake Huron and the U.S.-Canada border? Are there opportunities to better support the shipping industry or further develop the area's tourism and hospitality industry? Are there spin-off products or related market opportunities building on the area's current petrochemical industry? How can the area's entrepreneurial higher educational sector be turned into a source for growing its capacity to produce local talent or generate additional related curriculum to serve the Chinese market (where Lambton College is developing a unique presence)? What other assets are potentially underutilized or could serve as the foundation for activities that bring economic revenue into the community?

In the short term, none of these new activities alone may create a sizable number of jobs. Instead, the area's future will likely rely more on modest jobs being created by a wide array of small industries, rather than a few firms creating a large number of jobs (such as the current case with petrochemicals). Moreover, industry success should be measured over a relatively long time horizon (i.e., 10 to 20 years) – not based on the success of one or two small enterprises in the short term. It will take significant time for new industries to take root and become dependable job generators in Sarnia Lambton.

## WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

Most jobs that will ultimately be associated with emerging industries have not yet been created, making it difficult to prepare workers for jobs that do not yet exist. The smaller companies that are creating jobs will typically require one or two new people per year – not a sufficient number to fill a training class. Most want on-site training, but it is too expensive to do so in such an environment, thus education and training providers will have to be increasingly creative in organizing networks of companies (in similar form to the Industrial Educational Co-operative) to serve smaller companies in other industries. Likewise, strategies may also involve greater use of simulation centres or e-learning technologies to deliver curriculum.

Many of the newer jobs will require greater engineering and technological skills. The curriculum for many of these programs is not yet developed because the jobs do not yet exist. For instance, 15 years ago there were no web design jobs, but workers have adapted to fill those positions. This example reinforces the point that there will always be a need for workers with diverse, flexible skills who are willing to learn and grow in their fields. As a result, future jobs will require workers with basic technical skills and the ability to learn as work requirements change.

## Strategy #5:

### FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES (SMES) AND TRADE UNIONS TO ACCESS MORE CUSTOMIZED EDUCATION AND SPECIALIZED TRAINING RESOURCES

*By implementing this strategy, Sarnia Lambton will...*

Have a workforce capable of supporting new industries and firms that will help drive its future economic growth.

#### ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Gathering information about SME and trade union training needs to identify custom training opportunities for education or training providers.
- Communicating the importance of lifelong learning through a coordinated outreach plan that connects local SMEs with training providers.
- Developing targeted SME training programs by organizing a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) at Lambton College.

#### THIS STRATEGY'S SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF:

- Available on-line or local training and education options
- SMEs and trade unions accessing training and education

#### POTENTIAL CONVENERS AND OTHER LEADERS FOR THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

- Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board
- Sarnia Lambton Economic Partnership
- Lambton College
- Chambers of Commerce
- Industrial Education Co-operative
- Industry associations
- Labour unions
- Other regional colleges and universities

## Strategy #6:

### EXPAND NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS OF SARNIA LAMBTON'S SPECIALIZED TRAINING AND EDUCATION RESOURCES

*By implementing this strategy, Sarnia Lambton will...*

Have education and training institutions that are recognized and employed throughout North America.

#### ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Conducting background research to compile a list of education and training courses that can be exported to other targeted national and international markets.
- Providing expanded outreach and marketing to leverage [www.LiveinLambton.ca](http://www.LiveinLambton.ca) and other resources to market training programs, local co-ops, and the expertise of the trades across North America.
- Expanding program capacity by developing an integrated supervisory training program that focuses on management, communication, entrepreneurship, safety and related skills.
- Utilizing Lambton College's expertise to expand local efforts to develop North American style curriculum for the Chinese and Indian markets.

#### THIS STRATEGY'S SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF:

- Recognized specialized higher education and training programs in Sarnia Lambton
- College students placed in companies in target regions
- Markets in which Sarnia Lambton's specialized higher education programs/courses of study are recognized
- People coming to Sarnia Lambton to receive specialized training and/or degrees
- Access points for people outside the community to enroll in Sarnia Lambton's specialized higher education and training program
- Local job placements for Lambton College graduates

#### POTENTIAL CONVENERS AND OTHER LEADERS FOR THIS INITIATIVE INCLUDE:

- Lambton College
- Industrial Educational Co-operative
- Industry leaders
- Labour leaders
- Area colleges and universities
- "Standard setting" organizations in other provinces



SARNIA LAMBTON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
CATALYSTS FOR LABOUR MARKET CHANGE

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