



Stratford – Bruce Peninsula Labour Market Monitor

~November 2009~

The Labour Market Monitor is an overview of the Stratford - Bruce Peninsula Economic Region. It includes the counties of Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth. This monthly report is produced by a local Labour Market Information Analyst. For further information contact:

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Labour Force Trends

In the economic region of Stratford-Bruce Peninsula, employment decreased by 4,600 from November 2008 to November 2009. All of the losses were in part-time employment (-6,200), while full-time employment rose (+1,600). The employment rate fell by 2.0 percentage points to 61.7%. Labour force participation remained stable and the number of unemployed increased by 3,500 to 11,500 people. As a result the unemployment rate rose from 4.8% in November 2008 to 7.0% in November 2009, one of the lowest rates among all economic regions in Ontario. Over the same period, the provincial unemployment rate rose from 6.2% to 8.4%.

For more information, please visit the Statistics Canada website at:

<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/lfs05d-eng.htm>

Labour Market News by Industry

Agriculture

Frost in mid-September, a lack of sunlight and a cool, wet season has affected local crops. Soybean and corn harvests have been below seasonal average and have been delayed by several weeks. While soy yields were average, organic soy were 25% below average. Likewise, only 60% of corn was harvested in November with organic corn in Bruce and Grey Counties 50% below normal. The late harvest has delayed farmers in soil preparation and the planting of winter wheat.

As part of Canada's Economic Action Plan, the federal government is providing \$4.4 million under the AgriFlexibility Fund and AgriMarketing Program for four projects. The projects are aimed at the international marketing of pulse crops such as lentils, chickpeas and peas. More information is available at: www.agr.gc.ca

Construction

The value of building permits in South Huron for 2009 are the lowest they have been in five years. The value of 137 permits issued to date in 2009 is \$6.6 million compared to 135 permits in 2008 valued at \$13 million. More than half of this year's permits were for agricultural purposes. Most of the remaining permits were issued for renovations, with 10 issued for new construction.

The value of construction permits in Meaford for the first 10 months of 2009 was \$19.5 million, compared to \$21 million last year. Permits were granted for eight new homes and a building centre.

Van Dolder's in Owen Sound received approval to build a student residence on the second floor of their kitchen and bath store on 16th Avenue. Residences for college students are needed in the city.

Education Services

The provincial government recently established a new College of Trades to promote skilled trades careers and improve the apprenticeship system. After a phased implementation, the college is to be completely operational by 2012.

The University of Waterloo's Stratford Institute and the University of Western Ontario recently signed a memorandum of agreement to partner on the new Stratford campus. The two schools will work together in planning, teaching and researching digital media.

Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing

The Grey-Bruce Owen Sound Real Estate board reported 222 house sales in October, an increase of 85% over October 2008. The average house price was \$215,000 in October, up 13% from the same month last year.

Health Care and Social Services

The Stratford General Hospital added three new intensive care neonatal beds to its paediatric unit. This addition allows the hospital to provide increased local care for infants rather than finding care elsewhere in Ontario or Canada.

Seven agencies in Huron and Perth created an EasyRide program to provide transportation for individuals with disability or mobility issues. The program received \$228,000 in funding from the Southwest Ontario Local Health Integration Network's (LHIN) Aging At Home Strategy.

Information and Culture

The Stratford Festival ended the 2009 year with ticket sales of 509,000 or 5% below the 2008 level of 534,000. Federal and provincial government grants totalling \$3.5 million were used to intensify marketing and improve sales. Although American ticket sales in 2009 were below average, ticket sales for the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and for first time attendees were significantly higher.

Koolen Fine Arts opened in Stratford on Downie Street. The three-story art gallery specializes in Canadian and European art.

Manufacturing

Construction is set to begin on Monforte Dairy's new gourmet cheese production facility. The new plant is located on Griffith Road in Stratford.

BI-AX International Incorporated in Wingham has increased production of APTRA, a

microporous film used in the manufacturing of specialty protective hospital uniforms. BI-AX produces the material for an American manufacturer of garments for hospitals, healthcare workers, researchers and disease control centres.

Public Administration

Bruce County non-unionized staff will receive a 1% salary increase. Benefits will not be affected.

Trade, Wholesale and Retail

Walmart Canada plans to renovate their Owen Sound store at a cost of \$1.2 million. The focus of the renovation is to enlarge the grocery section of the store and update the exterior appearance.

Utilities

Bruce Power has taken Bruce B Unit 6 offline due to a surplus of power generation in Ontario. The unit will be offline until further notice. Five units continue to operate online.

The first of two nuclear reactors currently being refurbished will not be in service until 2011. Originally, the first reactor was to have been in service late this year. The second reactor will come online at a later date.

Note: In preparing this bulletin, Service Canada has taken care to provide clients with labour market information from reliable sources that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since the bulletin was published. Readers are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this bulletin does not necessarily reflect official policies of Service Canada.