



# WindsorEssex

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021

# Q1

- ▶ This report highlights business development accomplishments by the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation (WE EDC) from January to March 2021 and provides an overview of regional economic development interactions that include, but are not limited to, outreach, consultation, trade shows, performance metrics, entrepreneurship, marketing, and international outreach by the Business Development team.

**Through these and other activities, the team focuses on five key areas:**

**Investment Attraction**

**Small Business & Entrepreneurship Centre**

**Business Retention & Expansion**

**Automobility & Innovation**

**Marketing and Communications**



Quarterly reports are provided to funders, stakeholders and the general public and are posted on the Corporation's website [www.choosewindsoroessex.com](http://www.choosewindsoroessex.com)



## | From the President and CEO's Desk

Welcome to our first Quarterly report for 2021. It was this time one year ago, at the onset of the pandemic, when I sat down to write this letter for 2020. My first sentence in that letter reads "The COVID-19 pandemic has, and will continue to, impact many aspects of life for all citizens of our region, province, country and world." As they say in French, 'plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose.' The province has just entered lockdown again, and schools have just been closed indefinitely.

On the positive side, having also been covered in previous issues, the response of our regional companies and all levels of government over the past year has been remarkable. Thankfully, the vaccines are being administered to the public. There are still [programs available to businesses](#) to help mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19. In addition, businesses can access the [Business Benefits Finder](#) provided by the federal government.

Moving forward, the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation and partners Workforce WindsorEssex and St. Clair College have developed a [business conditions survey](#) in conjunction with International Economic Development Week. This is an annual survey that identifies the needs of businesses and helps develop strategies that will support businesses to stay, grow, and become more competitive. The survey also provides an inside view of the Windsor-Essex workforce landscape and many other important metrics published by WFWE.

This year, the survey also includes questions pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic including the impact on business operations, the effectiveness of government support programs and any new product lines developed. Your response will inform our efforts in developing economic recovery plans for the region as well as broader programming for Windsor-Essex businesses.

In closing, I'd like to recognize the resiliency and strength of the businesses in the Windsor-Essex region. We will continue to support you as we move forward toward better days. I would also like to recognize the extraordinary efforts of the WE EDC team members and ecosystem partners who have all worked tirelessly to assist our companies and entrepreneurs navigate these difficult times, while still delivering core programs and services. I feel very fortunate to work with such a dedicated professional and passionate regional network.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Stephen MacKenzie". The signature is stylized and fluid.

C. Stephen MacKenzie  
President and CEO,  
WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation

## Simplify Healthcare opened Windsor office



The Investment Attraction team assisted Simplify Healthcare in opening their Canadian office in the City of Windsor. Simplify Healthcare is a rapidly growing software company offering digital platforms for the health insurance sector. The company is the leading player in benefit plan management solutions, leveraging end-to-end technology-driven and forward-thinking solutions to help health plans automate processes.

## IT Solutions Company – Research Into Internet Systems Inc. chooses Windsor-Essex



Michigan-based IT solution provider RIIS is establishing a Canadian headquarters in the Windsor-Essex region. The company specializes in delivering AI-based drone mobile applications, web development and IT professional services to financial institutions, agribusiness, automotive, healthcare and other industries. Their plan is to hire up to six interns from the University of Windsor and grow their workforce to 15-20 employees in the next four years.

▲ RIIS is continue looking for talent to join the team.

## Small Business Centre supports 379 southern Ontario women-led businesses through RE3 program



The Small Business Centre (SBC) has successfully concluded its delivery of nearly \$1.8 million in COVID-19 relief funding to businesses through the RE3: Rebuild, Reopen, Revive program. RE3 is a Government of Canada funded program that provided non-repayable performance-based contributions of up to \$5,000 to assist women-led SMEs to rebuild, reopen and revive their businesses. SBC approved funding to 379 small and medium-sized women-led businesses in Southern Ontario, under its service area from Windsor to Toronto. Twenty businesses from

Windsor-Essex were approved for RE3 funding, representing \$89,863.94 in investment. The program drew 806 applications from businesses looking to rebuild, reopen and revive their operations. Funding was used by businesses for the acquisition of required/mandated Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), workspace reconfiguration to accommodate physical distancing and hardware/software upgrades to enhance online capacity, client servicing and accessibility.

## Digital Main Street extension provides greater assistance to area businesses

SBC continues to offer business supports through its Digital Service Squad, a program of Digital Main Street (DMS). The Digital Service Squad provides one-on-one assistance to main street businesses to help them grow their digital presence and adoption of new technologies. The Digital Service Squad covers the BIAs or commercial districts in Windsor, Tecumseh, Amherstburg, LaSalle, Essex and Kingsville. During the first quarter of 2021, 10 main street business in these areas of Windsor-Essex received Digital Transformation



Grants through DMS totaling \$25,000. The squad also reached out to 56 businesses with information about DMS programs and provided 58 complimentary one-on-one consultations and digital assessments to businesses. DMS supports have been extended; more grants will be awarded to businesses, and the SBC's Digital Service Squad will be available to local companies in the community through to June 2021. Since the launch of Digital Transformation Grants 2.0 in July 2020, 70 local businesses in SBC's service area have received funding representing a \$175,000 investment in the community.

## Jumpstart Recovery Program provides \$125,000 to Windsor-Essex businesses



The SBC adapted its Starter Company PLUS program, funded by the Province of Ontario, to offer Jumpstart Recovery Program, a new program to support local small businesses to adapt their business models to thrive during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was open to early stage, independent small businesses located within Windsor and Essex County that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic and were able to submit a viable project to sustain, grow or pivot their operations.

SBC accepted 26 Windsor-Essex businesses into

the Jumpstart Recovery program and awarded each a grant of up to \$5,000. Jumpstart recipients include businesses in various industries, such as food services, retail, finance, education, professional services, construction, manufacturing, healthcare and personal care services. The SBC team is working individually with business owners to track the progress of their Jumpstart project, provide business continuity planning resources and mentorship, offer training opportunities and make referrals to expert professionals to help businesses enact their business continuity plans. Businesses are using the grants to enhance their digital tools, including purchasing computer equipment, software and redesigning their website; conduct advertising campaigns; do leasehold improvements to bring their storefront into compliance with COVID-19 health and safety regulations; augment costs for commercial leases and mortgages, and support employee payroll costs.

## RISE & Resilience Summit celebrates women in Windsor-Essex



RISE Windsor-Essex held its inaugural RISE & Resilience Summit on Feb. 11. Over 400 people registered for the virtual event which celebrated women entrepreneurs and women in STEM in Windsor-Essex. The summit featured 15 local women who discussed topics around work-life balance, diversity and inclusion and making your money work. Speakers included Danielle Campo McLeod, Canadian Paralympic gold medal swimmer; Heather Chauvin, leadership coach and author; Irene Moore Davis, educator, historian, author and activist; Kavanaugh Boismier, chief financial officer at WaveDirect Telecommunications and president and founder of the Women of Windsor Mentorship Collaborative and Christine Colautti, Executive Director at Erie Shores Health Foundation. A highlight of the summit was the release of 180 limited edition RISE Experience Boxes for attendees. The boxes featured a curated collection of local products from over 40 women-led businesses. [Watch the recording.](#)

## Emerging Technologies Speaker Series: Recover & Thrive

### Part 9: Forming New Habits for a Healthier, Wealthier You!

The final event of a nine-part series called Emerging Technologies Speaker Series Recover & Thrive took place on January 14, 2021. This virtual journey of entrepreneurship, skills for success, technology and community was attended by over 200 entrepreneurs. This program received support from the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario and was in partnership with the WindsorEssex Small Business Centre and RISE WindsorEssex.



## Emerging Technologies in Automation Virtual Conference



The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation, National Research Council of Canada: Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), Automate Canada and Innovation Guelph invited SMEs and entrepreneurs to take part in the first. Held on Monday, March 22, the participants heard from renowned speakers and women entrepreneurs who shared their journeys to success and showcase the technologies, skills and solutions they developed and implemented. The lifelong entrepreneur and

former CBC “Dragon” Bruce Croxon and Paul Zikopolous IBM’s VP, Technology Group Skills Vitality & Enablement, professional speaker and author shared their wisdom, advice and experience. The five inspiring women pioneers from across Canada include Karen Lai, CEO of KPM Power Inc. (Toronto), Andrea Descargar, Business Development and Sales of Green City Plastics (Windsor), Madison Guy, Founder and CEO of GrantMe Education Consulting Inc. (Vancouver), Pooja Viswanathan, CEO of Braze Mobility Inc. (Toronto) and Nancy Campana, Owner of Nouveau Event Planning (Windsor). Two hundred and twenty attendees were enlightened with stories of their journey to success including all the ups and downs along the way.

This program is being offered as part of the region’s Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, funded by the Federal Government and in partnership with IRAP, Automate Canada and Innovation Guelph. This strategy, in collaboration with five partners (EPICentre, Workforce WindsorEssex, WEtech Alliance, WECAN Investors, Build a Dream) encourages and promotes women entrepreneurs to start and grow emerging technology businesses.

## The Emerging Technologies Virtual Coffee Hour hosted by Lora Crestan



As part of the speaker series, there were two unique channels for the attendees to implement the challenges presented by the speakers. Lora provided a workshop to help the group tap into their potential and strengthen their business by unpacking the information that was shared in the series. Complementing the event was a dedicated SLACK workspace where attendees could interact with each other and the speakers and ask questions. With over 1400 interactions the space provided a chance for community development under the restrictive COVID-19 protocols.

## Emerging Technologies Speaker Series: Community Cybersecurity



The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation in partnership with Libro Credit Union invited businesses and entrepreneurs to join us for a community-focused webinar on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. This cybersecurity event was designed to provide a local, regional, and global review of how the problems solved by new technologies and the internet of things can create new security risks and complexity for business and the community.

Particularly since companies are navigating the “new normal” brought about by COVID-19, the global pandemic has shifted the way companies do business and that opened the doors for greater reliance on technology platforms to effectively carry out our day-to-day interactions. Expanding how we do business requires that we build stronger security systems. Over 80 participants heard from world-class speakers on the topic of cybersecurity covering a broad range of information from necessary technologies to global trends.

## Project Arrow Supplier Identification



As part of WE EDC’s overall support of APMA’s Project Arrow all-Canadian zero emission vehicle, the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) team assisted in the development of a supplier RFP intake portal. APMA expected over 200 companies to express interest in supplying the thousands of parts required for the vehicle and they did not yet have a

streamlined intake system. The BRE team worked with local company YQG Technologies who developed a customized data portal to manage the complex procurement process. The portal has many potential future applications for other projects across multiple sectors.

## Doing Business with Government and Innovation Information Forum

### Webinar: Doing business with government

March 30, 2021

Hosted by:



Government  
of Canada

**WindsorEssex**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
Our Location. Your Advantage.

On March 30, 2021, WE EDC's BRE team, along with their federal and municipal government partners, hosted a virtual webinar "Doing Business with Government" for the Windsor-Essex business community. Public Services Procurement Canada and its Office of Small and Medium Enterprises, the City of Windsor, and the County of Essex, provided details on how each level of government does its purchasing, from the fundamentals of the procurement process, bidding on opportunities, to how small and medium sized businesses across many sectors, can include these groups as their customers. This virtual information session was well attended by 55 people, who gained insight into accessing a multi-million-dollar marketplace that offers many opportunities to diversify their customer base and build a relationship with a known stable entity to help grow their business. These are important resources that can help our companies transform the way they do business, as they adjust to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the "Doing Business with Government" session, we also supported an "Innovation Information Forum" hosted by WEtech Alliance and the Office of Small & Medium Enterprises within Public Services and Procurement Canada. Attendees heard from representatives from federal departments and agencies on what the Government of Canada is doing to bolster innovation and how their programs and services are available to support our businesses to grow and succeed.

## Project Arrow visualized using WE EDC's VR CAVE



▲ Akash Charuvila, Engineering Analyst, VR and Optics showcases the work done to bring the high-fidelity Project Arrow model to life in the VR CAVE.

The VR CAVE team is proud to be supporting the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association's (APMA) Project Arrow initiative to create a zero-emission concept vehicle that is designed, prototyped, and built in Canada. As the official simulation partner for the project it allows us the opportunity to show the digital twin of the vehicle and work to support the virtual prototyping efforts moving forward.

WE EDC produced [two videos](#) that were premiered at January's virtual Consumers Electronics Show that unveiled the high-fidelity 3D model of the concept vehicle in the VR CAVE. The team also had the only

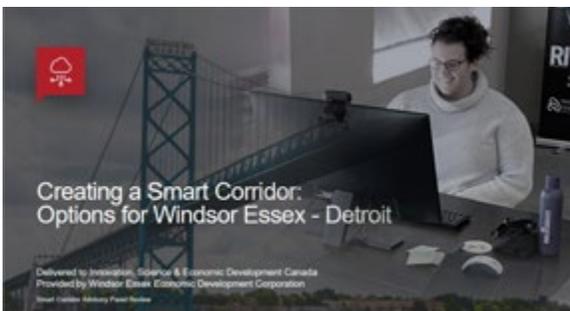
replica of Avro Arrow interceptor aircraft lidar scanned and is now deployed alongside the Project Arrow vehicle as a tribute to Canada's past in creating such a revolutionary machine that was ahead of its time. Seeing the two vehicles side by side in the VR CAVE certainly builds excitement around the importance of this project and highlights the importance of utilizing simulation technologies as a valuable tool in the creation of this next generation prototype.

## WE EDC partners with WinHacks to host largest Hackathon yet



The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation supported [WinHacks 2021](#) – the region's signature mobility hackathon. The virtual event took place from March 26 to March 28, 2021 and was their largest event yet. This year the hackathon featured challenges focused on mobility, cybersecurity, blockchain, entrepreneurship, health and more. The hackathon included pre- and post-content such as networking and recruitment opportunities and a plan to support the participants after the event.

## WE EDC completes a Smart Corridor Feasibility Study for ISED and Transport Canada



▲ WE EDC's Automobility & Innovation team Mackenzie Habash, Economic Policy Researcher and Matthew Johnson, Executive Director, present the findings of the feasibility study.

The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation was contracted by Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED) to conduct a feasibility study for a proposed cross-border smart corridor. The study was completed in March of 2021 and outlined the economic opportunities for a Windsor Essex -Detroit smart corridor and presented information to help determine smart corridor options to support the vehicles of today and the future.

Both Canada and the U.S. have ambitious automotive policy agendas that promote the deployment and adoption of innovative technologies, including connected and automated vehicle (CAVs) and

smart-roadway infrastructure. Windsor, Essex County and Detroit's combined regions serve as an ideal location for cross-border testing of the smart vehicle, roadway, and infrastructure planning. The Windsor-Detroit trade corridor is the busiest commercial border crossing between Canada and the U.S. and is built upon strong existing ties and partnerships across various sectors.

## Corporate Marketing & Communications

The Marketing department focuses on creating strategies that support business development initiatives within the areas of Business Retention and Expansion, Investment Attraction, and Entrepreneurship as well as, provides client support. Advertising strategies are aimed at enhancing business development and promoting the Windsor-Essex region.

### Strategic programs and activities include the following:

Integrated marketing and advertising campaigns, event management, sponsorships, media and public relations, collateral materials, and communication through social media channels including video and corporate websites. Marketing maintains corporate brand standards and brand image across all media.

### Website Analytics

**Choosewindsor.essex.com**

**Users** - 13,702

**Pageviews** - 25,124

**New Visitors** - 82%

**Returning Visitors** - 18%

### Top Site Visitors



Canada



USA



China



India



United Kingdom

### Social Media Analytics

#### WE EDC

-  @WindsorEssex
-  /windsor.essex
-  @weecdev
-  @weecdev

#### SBC:

-  @SBCWindsorEssex
-  /sbcwindsor.essex
-  @sbcwindsor.essex
-  @sbcwindsor.essex

**Total Fans** - 18,514

**Total Impressions** - 317,000

**Total Engagement** - 13,808

## Advertising

The Marketing and Communications department supported the Automobility and Innovation department by developing an invitation targeted to mobility companies in Windsor and Detroit. This partner event with Detroit Mobility Lab was an exclusive by invite-only discussion around the future of mobility. Participants included Detroit Mobility Lab Consortium members and special guests from the private sector, local, state/province, and federal governments of both the US and Canada.



### International Women's Day – 2021

International Women's Day is a global event to celebrate the economic, cultural, social and political achievements of women. The Marketing and Communications department developed a robust marketing campaign with the following elements:

- Supported the annual Womens Enterprise Skills Training's (WEST) International Women's Day Gala with the sponsorship of the "Innovation Award: A forward thinking youth" and award presentation made by Sabrina DeMarco, Executive Director of the Small Business Centre.
- Supported WEST's #ChooseToChallenge campaign with a video from Stephen MacKenzie, President and CEO of WE EDC that highlighted what equality meant to him and a photo doing the #ChooseToChallenge pose.
- Developed social media assets for RISE Windsor-Essex celebrating local women entrepreneurs.
- Developed a RISE Windsor-Essex advertisement featuring 12 local women entrepreneurs for the Windsor Star's International Women's Day supplement that highlighted stories of women in our community and how they make a difference.





- ◀ RISE Summit  
The Marketing and Communications department developed the branding as well as social media and event assets for the RISE and Resilience Summit held on February 11, 2021.

**Tech Week powered by WE EDC**

Tech Week is a week-long showcase of all things tech that brings together tech leaders, academic institutions and the community to build a unique experience for entrepreneurs, tech lovers, researchers and investors. The week was spearheaded by WEech Alliance and powered by WE EDC.

The Marketing and Communications department developed marketing assets and a social media campaign for three events during this week including:

- [Emerging Technologies in Automation Virtual Conference](#)
- [Emerging Technologies Speaker Series: Community Cybersecurity](#)
- [Automotive Cybersecurity](#)

**Videos**

The Marketing and Communication department worked with the Automobility and Innovation department and Suede Productions to create two videos showcasing the launch of APMA's Project Arrow. As the Official Virtual Simulation Partner for this national project, WE EDC deployed Project Arrow's digital design in the Virtual Reality CAVE for the unveiling. These videos were launched during the 2021 CES virtual conference in January. The footage demonstrated Canadian ingenuity in the automobility sector and elicited excitement toward the development a fully Canadian designed and produced zero emission vehicle. The videos also exhibited WE EDC's VR CAVE and the advanced technology and growing automobility sector in Windsor-Essex. [Watch the videos](#)

**Corporate-wide rebranding**

The Marketing and Communications department have been busy in the first quarter of 2021 developing a new brand for the corporation. Stay tuned for a launch in late April!

## Media Relations

The following media releases were prepared by the Marketing and Communications department to communicate corporate initiatives.

[Windsor the First Canadian City with Ford Safety Insights Platform](#)  
[IT Solutions Company – Research into Internet Systems Inc. Chooses Windsor-Essex](#)

## Media Coverage

[APMA launches AI-Enabled RFP for Project Arrow at CES 2021](#)  
[Canada's Project Arrow zero-emissions vehicle to begin its journey in Windsor](#)  
[Windsor and Ford Mobility team up for road safety](#)  
[Smart city: Windsor is first Canadian city to launch Ford Safety Insights Platform to reduce crashes](#)  
[City partners with Ford to create safer roads](#)  
[Improved traffic flow one of goals of Ford Mobility, Windsor collaboration](#)  
[Windsor becomes first Canadian city to partner with Ford Motor Co. on traffic safety pilot](#)  
[Ford traffic safety](#)  
[Windsor becomes Canada's first city to test-drive Ford's traffic safety platform](#)  
[Edison Financial looking to double Windsor workforce by year's end](#)  
[Windsor pushes for pilot project to improve cross-border flow of essential workers](#)  
[Local Small Business Supports Available In COVID-19 Recovery](#)  
[Local development corp pursuing \\$2B battery manufacturing plant](#)  
[Windsor pursuing \\$2B battery plant that would employ 2,000](#)  
[Trudeau prepared to financially back Windsor battery plant bid](#)  
[Windsor-Essex bidding on battery plant that could bring thousands of jobs](#)  
[Windsor, Ont., eyes \\$2B EV battery plant as province aims to be electric 'hub of the future'](#)  
[Vying for Canada's flagship battery manufacturing facility: proposals brewing in Quebec, B.C. and Ontario](#)  
[New recovery program launched to help Windsor-Essex businesses with COVID-relief](#)  
[Small businesses benefit from COVID-19 relief efforts](#)  
[Competitors no longer: Windsor companies team-up to build domestic PPE industry](#)  
[RISE Windsor-Essex helping women be what they can see](#)  
[Job market heating up \(14:09\)](#)  
[Auto groups, U.S. politician want border partially open by May 21](#)  
[Finding the positive, a year after COVID-19 pops up in Windsor, Ont.](#)  
[OneLedger's International Health Passport Aiming to Get People Moving Again](#)  
[Virtual reality CAVE in Windsor creates virtual twin of Canadian-made Project Arrow concept vehicle](#)  
[A New Business Program Aims to help 'Foodpreneurs'](#)  
[New program launched to support entrepreneurs in food and beverage sector](#)

## What We Do

The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation advances economic development and prosperity in our region. We are the region's lead economic development agency and a dedicated catalyst for business growth and expansion. We attract new businesses to our region, help strengthen existing businesses and support entrepreneurship in three key ways:

### INFORMING

We provide the most current and relevant information and data on site selection, market research and available government funding.

### GUIDING

We provide answers and advice on general business practices, expansion planning, multi-national branch planning and exporting, as well as training and educational resources.

### CONNECTING

We help organizations cutthrough red tape and we connect them directly with key decision makers, potential partners and funders.

[choosewindsor.essex.com](http://choosewindsor.essex.com)

## New Invested Facilitated

**\$1,300,000 (BA/BRE)**  
**\$1,196,134 (SBC)**

Total amount of new investment to the region, through both public and private investment streams.

**27** Expansions Facilitated  
(BA/BRE) 5 | (SBC) 22

**186** New Jobs Facilitated  
(BA/BRE) 55 | (SBC) 131

**14** Priority Files

**30** Business Startups

**2** Funding Applications and Joint Papers Developed

## Business Support Sessions

**36 Sessions**  
**715 Attendees**



## Top Economic Priorities

as reported by Windsor-Essex Businesses

1. Canada-U.S. border closure: limited cross-border business travel; "new" COVID testing requirements; mandatory quarantine orders (all heavily impacting the manufacturing sector)
2. Increased COVID compliance protocols and enforcement in the workplace
3. Uncertainty of economic climate impacting business investment and project planning
4. Labour challenges - unintended consequences of COVID supports to employees leading to labour shortages
5. Navigating government resources, support programs, uncertainty of rotating Provincial COVID-19 colour-coded tiers and public health measures
6. Business sustainability

## Regional Economic Indicators †



**Population 15+**  
**373,300 (up 0.3%)**



**Labour Force**  
**217,500 (up 5.5%)**



**Employment**  
**197,900 (up 6.1%)**



**Unemployment**  
**19,600**

**Unemployment Rate**  
**9.0% (down 0.5%)**



**Participation Rate**  
**58.3% (up 2.9%)**



**Employment Rate**  
**53.0% (up 2.9%)**



**Building Permits\***  
**\$29,004,617**

\*Totals do not include all building permit values for Amherstburg or Essex.



† Notes: The above figures reflect all of Windsor and Essex County, Q4 2020 to Q1 2021. Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey custom tabulation. Please note: A revision by Statistics Canada has altered the Q4 2020 labour market statistics for Windsor-Essex. The Q1 2021 numbers above are compared to the revised Q4 2020 numbers.