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Economic strategy to be developed

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Referring to economist David Birch's categorization of businesses as "elephants" (large industry), "mice" (small business), or "gazelles" (high growth companies) – Fischer said that Essex County needs to attract "gazelles".

"The gazelles have growth rates of 20 per cent. They are growing in leaps and bounds," he said, noting that these companies create jobs, while "elephants" like the Big 3 are rapidly "shedding jobs".

"We have to look for the innovative entrepreneur in our own backyard," he said.

Fischer said the Windsor-Essex region is overly dependent on the auto industry, which represents about 23 per cent of the jobs and 83 per cent of the manufacturing. Many business opportunities are missed in such growing fields as health, tourism, and education, which is now the area's third largest employer, he said.

"Communities can support big growth companies, the gazelles, by providing information, infrastructure and connections," Fischer said.



Matthew Fischer, CEO of the Windsor-Essex County Development Commission, was the keynote speaker at the economic summit held by the Shores of Essex Resource Corporation on Saturday.

Gordon Orr, managing director of the local Convention and Visitors Bureau, spoke about the importance of tourism to the region. Windsor-Essex County gets five million vis-

itors annually, he said, generating about \$500 million for the local economy.

"There are a lot of good things going on in our community," said Orr. "Package yourself and work collec-

tively." Orr called the growing number of wineries in the area a "very, very powerful" attraction.

Participants at the summit were divided into discussion groups for workshop sessions designed to collect input and ideas that will help boost and nurture the local economy and tourism.

Each group discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats found in the community, and concluded the morning with a session called "the idea generator".

"How can we promote economic diversity and stimulate tourism?" said Tim Stewart, who helped facilitate the workshops.

"It is about ideas," said Stewart, who asked the groups to list five major ideas that would benefit the economy and tourism of the municipality and region.

Baker thanked all the participants at the summit for taking an active part in helping build a stronger community.

"We have identified our strengths and weaknesses, and now we will compile all the data and put them into action," he said.

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