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## Multimodal Region to host Major Logistics Conference

BY CHERYL VIGH *The Business Executive*

**WINDSOR-ESSEX** — Economic leaders in Windsor-Essex are seeking opportunities to secure a prosperous future and a key part of that is positioning the region as a multimodal logistics centre of excellence.

The WindsorEssex Development Commission (WEDC), in partnership with the Windsor Port Authority, the Windsor Airport and Ontario Research Chair in Cross-Border Transportation Policy University of Windsor, is hosting the first-ever local international multimodal logistics conference May 5 and 6 at Caesars Windsor. The conference will feature industry experts including renowned author and economist Jeremy Rifkin and a transportation futurist to be announced. With several panels of experts planned the conference will help participants better understand multimodal today, learn what it may look like in the near future and identify what people can do to participate in future economic success of their community.

"It's exceptionally important to find out what the multimodal industry is going to look like 20 to 25 years from now and gain a better understanding of our assets. Those two things have to be merged and we can only learn that from industry experts," says Remo Mancini, chair of the WindsorEssex Development Commission. Mancini hopes the conference will draw up to 200 delegates from across Canada and neighbouring states. "The conference will help all who attend better understand what all of us have to do to be participants in that success."

The provincial and federal governments have announced plans to spend billions of dollars on major infrastructure improvements for this region and throughout Canada making it crucial at the local level, that stakeholders know the region's assets and understand how they can be better utilized, says Mancini.

"The Government of Canada is going to be spending money on infrastructure and it is their responsibility to ensure those scarce dollars are invested where it will have the biggest return on investment for the country. We believe we are just so perfectly located for such an investment and we have so many assets that haven't been fully maximized," says Mancini. The Windsor Airport for example, is surrounded by 2,000 acres of developable land that could be used for aviation, distribution, cargo facilities, etc., he explains.

Hit hard by the global shift in the manufacturing sector this region must find prosperity in other burgeoning sectors. Logistics is an exciting prospect, says Mancini.

"We in Windsor-Essex already believe we are a multimodal centre. We already have significant multimodal infrastructure in Windsor. We have major border crossings, a major port; Windsor has one of only 14 airports in Canada to be designated as a federal international transshipment point; we have rail crossings that go from one country to another ... to us that is a major advantage," adds Mancini.

"If we become a hub for multimodalism that means the Port Authority will be better utilized; that means that new activity will take place at the airport; that means that our rail system will be improved; our border crossings will be improved and Windsor-Essex will become a centre of excellence in transportation and logistics. We've done this for decades but it was mostly road, some rail and some port but now we want to ratchet that up and make it airport, road, rail and see how we can get all of these parts working together. From an investor's point of view if you're interested in the multimodal business Windsor is prepared."

World-class transportation infrastructure in Windsor-Essex exists but requires improvement to support regional and national economic diversification in such areas as aerospace maintenance and repair operations and other high performance manufacturing operations that may consider locating here or nearby.

Upon the reconstitution of the local commission two years ago, much activity has occurred in response to the global economic change. The WEDC has created four external sector committees and a board of directors led by local experts to focus on the areas of manufacturing, agri-business, life sciences and education. The WEDC will launch a fifth committee to focus on innovation, research and commercialization.

Conference itinerary information is available at [www.hub09.com](http://www.hub09.com). TBE

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