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*An overview of the London Economic Region including Oxford, Elgin and Middlesex counties. The Labour Market Monitor is a monthly report focusing on labour market information produced by Ontario Region, Service Canada Labour Market and Socio-Economic Information Directorate. For further information contact us at: [lmi-
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Labour Force Trends

From February 2010 to February 2011 employment in the London economic region fell slightly (-1,300). Even though the working-age population increased, there were fewer people looking for work and the labour force decreased by 3,600. The number of unemployed people fell by 2,300 from February 2010 to February 2011, decreasing the unemployment rate from 8.5% to 7.9%. Over the same period, the provincial unemployment rate fell from 8.8% to 7.8%.

For more information, please visit the [Statistics Canada](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca) website.

Labour Market News by Industry

Accommodation and Food Services

Obsidian Group Inc., a hospitality and real estate management firm, is opening Union Burger, a gourmet burger franchise, in Hyde Park, London, early this spring. A similar sized restaurant in Strathroy employs 12 staff.

Construction

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), there were 243 housing starts in the London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in January 2011. This compares to 82 in January 2010. Single-detached home construction declined by 33 on a year-over-year basis, but a 193-unit apartment building in the downtown core led to the increase.

Health Care and Social Services

The Government Access Information Network (GAIN) Centre in Kenwick Mall, Strathroy, is closing when its lease expires in June 2011, affecting six employees. The resource centre provides employment and career planning services. Many services at the resource centre will be integrated into other venues throughout the community. Changes to provincial funding for employment services have been cited for the closure.

Seasons Retirement Communities in Strathroy hosted a job fair in March to hire more staff for the facility. The number of new jobs is unknown.



Manufacturing

Hanwha Living and Creative Canada Inc. laid off eight workers at its countertop manufacturing plant in London. A seasonal decline in sales has been cited as the reason behind the layoffs.

The company has recently secured a contract to supply 1,600 Lowe's stores in the United States with countertops.

Hanwha hopes to recall its employees and possibly add more by June 2011 as it starts filling orders for Lowe's.

Atlantic Packaging Products Ltd. in Ingersoll, a manufacturer of corrugated packaging products, announced on March 4, 2011 that it is closing, affecting about 50 workers. The company cites a slow economy and the high Canadian dollar as reasons for the closure.

Utilities

The Town of Tillsonburg received \$487,167 from the Province of Ontario's Rural Connections Broadband Program. The funds will be used to expand high-speed Internet service to the town's two industrial parks, and more than 600 businesses, residents, and public institutions. This project is expected to create 12 jobs, as well as future spin-off employment opportunities within the community.

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.

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