

## A look at Manufacturing in Chilliwack- August 2018

Chilliwack Manufacturing companies, City Officials, Council Members, MLA's and the University of the Fraser Valley gathered together to discuss the current trends, challenges and opportunities for growth in this industry in Chilliwack.

The overall vibe of the meeting was positive and optimistic; focusing on the strengths Chilliwack has to offer; local government is business friendly, lowest property taxes in the Fraser Valley, lease rates are good and for many the draw of the community feel that makes Chilliwack home.

This optimism shows us that even with the changing political landscape that has already demonstrated its effect on business that there is still a significant opportunity for growth.

Not all signs point to the growth for manufacturers this year, however. There are still significant challenges facing companies that could limit growth and diminish international competitiveness; To success and thrive in Chilliwack in the future the focus needs to be on;

- **Controlling and Reducing Costs:** Rising payroll and energy costs are just two ways costs are expected to rise. The BC Chamber is actively vocalizing their concerns accompanied by numerous local Chamber's around the recent hikes to minimum wage, the Employer Health Tax as well as Payroll taxes, loudly stating that these drastic changes hurt small and medium size businesses greatly and will drastically change the platform for business in many communities around the province.
- **Skills GAP:** Management and employees both require the right skillsets to grow manufacturing companies; there is a need for skills at both levels, not just in the shop on the floor. A commonality among many of Chilliwack's manufacturing businesses is a struggle to find skilled labor in an increasingly smaller labor pool. Drawing individuals in and keeping them in our beautiful city is challenging when the construction industry is booming, and wages are stronger in larger surrounding communities.
- Lack of industrial land for future expansion
- Cost competitiveness versus other jurisdictions (United States)

University of the Fraser Valley as well as GT Hiring Solutions have provided and are continuing to work and offer solutions to some of these challenges through programming, trades-based career fairs, mentorship/work experience programs for practicum students.

WorkBC (GT Hiring) also offers Wage subsidies for "On the Job training"

"Training on the job is also a great opportunity to bring in new applicants from other industries. They may not have the past experience but have some transferable skills or the right attitude. Wage Subsidies (50% of wage up to 6 months) could be available for qualified candidates. Training is also available for people that are new hires. If an employer has the right candidate but they do not have the certification required – WorkBC can offer that training to the person. "

The Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce thanks everyone who attended the meeting for their participation and contributions to the conversation. Please see an attached link to resources you may find beneficial with respect to labor. We look forward to hosting more like conversations and working with the business community on the challenges being faced advocating for change that will only make Chilliwack the best place to live and work.

