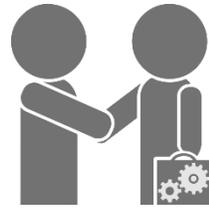


# Maximize Your Workforce by Attracting and Retaining Older Workers

## A Resource for Sarnia Lambton Employers



Sarnia Lambton has an older population. There may be a relatively small supply of potential workers who could fill jobs that become vacant from retirements. Fortunately for employers, there are an increasing number of older workers remaining in or re-entering the workforce.

This resource examines the growing number of older workers in the workforce in Sarnia Lambton and discusses how you, as an employer, can engage older workers as part of your workforce planning strategy.

For the purpose of this resource, “older worker” is defined as anyone in the labour force aged 55 and over.

### Resource Highlights:

- An overview of labour force trends for older workers in Sarnia Lambton
- Benefits of hiring and retaining older workers
- Possible challenges associated with older workers
- Considerations for attracting and retaining older workers

### Information in this resource comes from:

- SLWDB research for this project, including
  - survey responses of 51 local older workers and job seekers
  - survey responses of 13 staff of local Employment Ontario Service Providers
  - consultations with 48 local employers
- SLWDB’s research (e.g. EmployerOne Surveys, Research Reports, etc.)
- Research from other sources
- Statistics Canada data



[www.slwdb.org](http://www.slwdb.org)  
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## Aging Population:

Canada's population is aging. Reasons for this include: <sup>1</sup>

- An aging baby-boom generation (those born between 1946-1965)
- Continuous low fertility rates since the 1970s
- An increase in life expectancy

The median<sup>2</sup> age of Sarnia Lambton's population was 46.1 years in 2016, up from 42.8 years in 2006.<sup>3</sup>

## Aging Workforce:

One in four workers were 55 years or older in 2016 in Sarnia Lambton.<sup>4</sup>

Older workers increased their presence in the local workforce by 22 percentage points from 2006, as shown in the table below. Most of this increase is from a higher number of employed older workers; however, the number of unemployed older workers has also grown.

	2006	2016	Percentage change
<b>In the labour force</b>	12,175	14,805	22%
<b>Employed</b>	11,675	14,025	20%
<b>Unemployed</b>	495	785	59%
<b>Not in the labour force</b>	24,990	31,640	27%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. 2006 Census.

Notes: In the labour force includes those employed and unemployed (persons who either have a job or are actively looking for a job). Not in the labour force includes persons who are neither employed nor actively looking for work (e.g., retired, given up looking for work, unable to work for health reasons, etc.).

An increasing number of older workers in the workforce is not specific to Sarnia Lambton. Statistics Canada reports that the retirement age of the Canadian population has been on the rise.<sup>5</sup>

- Median retirement age of Canadians was 61.2 years in 2006 and 64.1 years in 2017.
- Median retirement age for self-employed Canadians was 64.8 years in 2006 and 67.1 years in 2017.
- Median retirement ages were 64.8 years among private sector employees and 61.4 years among public sector employees in Canada in 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. (2017). "Age and sex, and type of dwelling data: Key results from the 2016 Census." The Daily, released May 3, 2017 p.5

<sup>2</sup> The median is a way to measure the average in a way that is not heavily influenced by really high or low numbers. The median takes the middle number of a group of ranked numbers.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. 2006 Census.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. 2016 Census.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0060-01, retirement age by class of worker, annual

Retiring out of the labour force is not necessarily a single transition; some people may prefer to gradually transition out (e.g., changing from full-time employment to part-time) or re-enter after their initial retirement.

## Reasons Older Workers Remain In or Re-Enter the Workforce:

### 1. Legislative Changes:

The removal of mandatory retirement from Ontario legislation in 2006 and from federal legislation in 2012 has made it possible for individuals to continue working past age 65.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Labour Market:

Employment opportunities: the state of the economy and whether there is a high demand for workers.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Personal Circumstances:<sup>8</sup>

- Personal and family health  
Being physically and mentally able to work. Research has shown that some older workers continue to work because they consider work to be linked to their physical and mental well-being (e.g., they may fear that stopping work will lead to a decline in health).
- Financial considerations  
Private savings, pension plans, health and dental benefits, other family members' income may not be sufficient for retirement.
- Quality of the work experience  
Work is satisfying (e.g., find the work interesting and/or challenging, have access to flexible work arrangements, supportive environment, etc.).
- Skills development and recognition  
Desire for ongoing personal and professional growth. Interest in trying new or different types of work (may depend on acknowledgment of existing skills and training, i.e. education level achieved, experience, etc.).

The chart on the next page shows the education levels of local persons 55 years and over by labour force status.

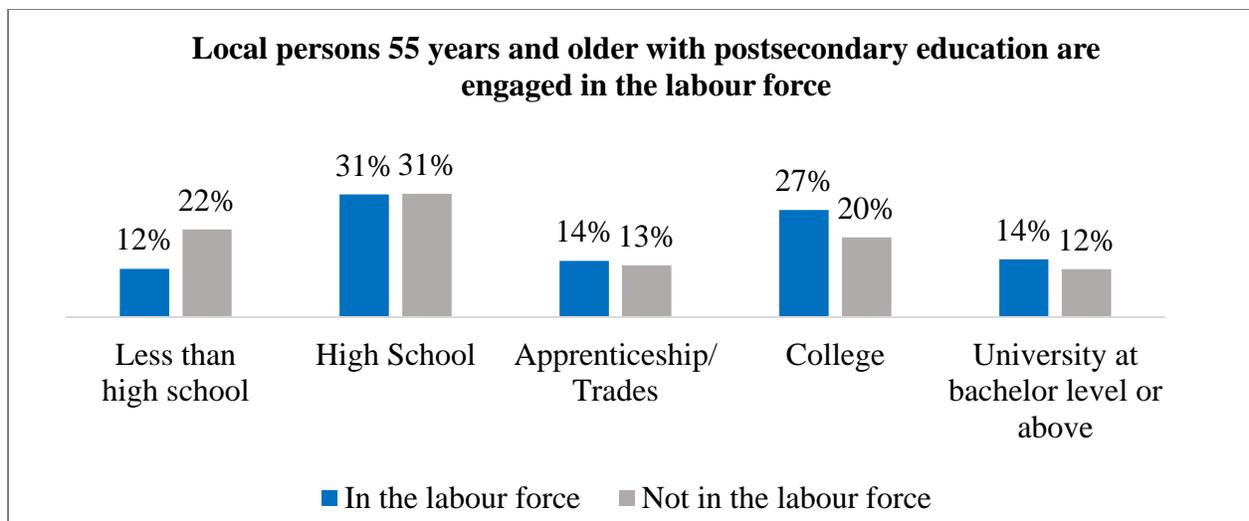
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<sup>6</sup> Research Brief Series. (March 2015). Changing Work, Changing Skills: Challenges & Opportunities for Older Workers in the Modern Economy. Second Volume in an Occasional Series. Presented by Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy p.2

<sup>7</sup> Fields, A., Uppal, S., LaRochelle-Cote, S. (June 2017). "The impact of aging on labour market participation rates." Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 75-006-X. p.8

<sup>8</sup> Human Resources Skills Development Canada, (2011). HRSDC Consultations with Older Workers and Employers Summary of What We Heard. SP-1008-08-11E p. ii, iii and p.9.-19.

[http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2011/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-109-2011-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-109-2011-eng.pdf)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census, custom table.

As the nature of work continues to change (more knowledge and technology-based work), literacy and learning capacity become even more essential as workers need to continuously upgrade their skills.<sup>9</sup> Research has shown that the willingness among some older workers to obtain further training or education is linked to their existing educational attainment; those with higher education are more likely to search for and receive training compared to those with lower education.<sup>10</sup> In Sarnia Lambton over half of older workers in the labour force have postsecondary education (apprenticeship, college or university). Presumably, many of the local educated older workers are life-long learners.

SLWDB asked older workers and job seekers in Sarnia Lambton, as well as local service providers (those who work with job seekers to find employment) why older workers and job seekers are working or looking for jobs. Answers were similar to the reasons provided on the previous page. Some of the most common answers include:

- Financial reasons (e.g., to supplement Canadian Pension Plan, no company pension plan, cost of living increases)
- Boredom/want to keep busy
- Enjoy work/job satisfaction
- Stay engaged in the workforce and with the community
- Desire for life-long learning

<sup>9</sup> Research Brief Series. (March 2015). Changing Work, Changing Skills: Challenges & Opportunities for Older Workers in the Modern Economy. Second Volume in an Occasional Series. Presented by Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy p.3

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

## Employed Older Workers in Sarnia Lambton:

In 2016, there were 14,025 employed older workers in Sarnia Lambton. Data in this section show how and where older workers are employed.

Below, older workers are shown by type of employment held in 2015.

In Sarnia Lambton, among individuals 55+ who worked for an employer in 2015:

8,185 (74%) individuals worked mainly full-time weeks

2,830 (26%) individuals worked mainly part-time weeks

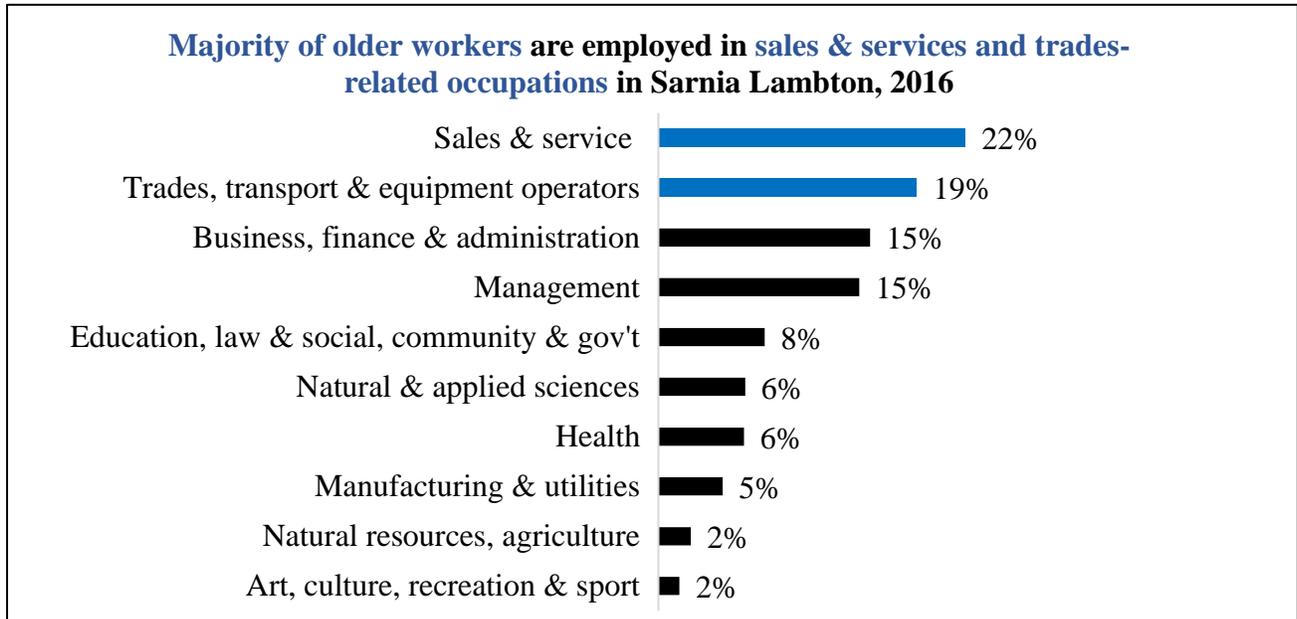
2,775 individuals aged 55 and over were self-employed.

This represents almost half of all self-employed people in Sarnia Lambton in 2015.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census, custom data.

Note: Numbers do not add up to 14,025 because the two Census questions had different reference periods.

The chart below shows the presence of older workers (aged 55 and over) for each occupational category in Sarnia Lambton.



Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census, custom table.

In Sarnia Lambton, the top three job titles held by older workers include managers in agriculture, transport truck drivers and retail salespersons. See table below for a partial list of jobs with a relatively high number of older workers.

<b>1 in 3 older workers are employed in the jobs listed in this table</b>	
Managers in agriculture	655
Transport truck drivers	545
Retail salespersons	455
Retail and wholesale trade managers	380
Janitors, caretakers and building superintendents	365
Administrative officers	275
Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses	260
Light duty cleaners	255
Cashiers	250
General office support workers	235
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	225
Administrative assistants	195
General farm workers	185
Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations	185
Elementary school and kindergarten teachers	160
Accounting technicians and bookkeepers	160

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census, custom table.

### **What does this mean for employers?**

- A possibility that more workers could be retiring soon in these occupations and, as such, you need to ensure you have a workforce strategy factoring in replacement planning.
- A possibility that older workers may be working longer or returning to work in greater numbers in these occupations as compared to others. As such, understanding the benefits and challenges of retaining and hiring older workers (discussed below) can help you maximize your workforce potential.

## Benefits of Older Workers:

**Older workers can fill possible skill or labour shortages.**<sup>11</sup> Recall that not all older workers retire or take a complete retirement; many continue working. Their skills and experience can help to fill current or upcoming gaps or shortages. In consultations with local service providers, SLWDB heard that several local employers report having a difficult time filling certain jobs. In SLWDB's 2018 EmployerOne Survey, participating employers reported that the #1 reason for jobs being hard-to-fill was not enough applicants. The second most reported reason was lack of qualifications (education levels/credentials). Engaging older workers may be a way to increase the number of applicants, including applicants who are qualified and have experience.

### **Qualities that older workers possess can make them ideal candidates for certain positions.**

A consultation report by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada outlined several instances where a number of employers said they would prefer to hire older candidates, provided they demonstrate the required job-related skills, knowledge, capacity; examples include:<sup>12</sup>

- Positions requiring self-confidence and interaction with the public (e.g., sales)
- Businesses whose target market is older individuals (“boomers serving boomers”)
- Highly skilled work where experience is equally or more important than theoretical knowledge
- Leadership roles
- Subject matter experts (including advisors or mentors)

SLWDB asked local employers what benefits they saw in hiring and retaining older workers. Responses include:

- Strong work ethic
- Reliable, dependable
- Committed, loyal
- Human capital (retention – tend to stay)
- Experience and knowledge
- Problem solving skills
- Strong customer service skills
- Leadership skills & mentoring

**“Hiring nearly seniors (older workers) is a true benefit to the industry. They are interested in the experience and engagement with patrons. They have fun. In many instances nearly seniors have their own transportation and are less concerned about wage ranges and want flexibility.”**

**- Joy Sim-Robbins, Tourism Sarnia-Lambton**

<sup>11</sup> National Seniors Council. (March 2013). Older Workers at Risk of Withdrawing from the Labour Force or Becoming Unemployed: Employers' views on how to retain and attract older workers. p.17

<sup>12</sup> Human Resources Skills Development Canada, (2011). HRSDC Consultations with Older Workers and Employers Summary of What We Heard. SP-1008-08-11E p. 30.

[http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2011/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-109-2011-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-109-2011-eng.pdf)

## Challenges Associated with Older Workers:

Possible challenges associated with older workers and an aging workforce include:<sup>13</sup>

- Discomfort with new technologies
- Reluctance to accept change/new ways of doing things
- Health issues associated with age
- Tension between older and younger workers
- Higher wages (due to seniority or experience)
- Reluctance on the part of employers to train older workers

SLWDB asked local employers to identify challenges they felt exist when hiring and retaining older workers. Responses included many of those from above; some employers added:

- Difficulties performing physical duties (i.e., speed, energy, etc.)
- Requests for flexible or reduced work schedules

SLWDB asked older workers and job seekers in Sarnia Lambton about the challenges they face while working or seeking employment. Several of the same concerns were reported, including:

- The need to update skills or education
- The need for training on technology (e.g., computers, new equipment, etc.)
- Health-related concerns
- Rigid work schedules
- Generational differences and perceptions

The most frequent barrier or challenge reported by participants was “age”. It is important to note, Human Rights legislation protects older workers (among others) against discrimination when it comes to decisions around hiring, promoting or terminating.

Research indicates that many perceived challenges of hiring and/or retaining older workers (e.g. older workers are less productive, less receptive to training and that training older workers is not cost effective because they are likely to leave or retire, etc.) are misperceptions or myths.<sup>14</sup> In general, the perceived qualities of older workers, such as strong work ethic, loyalty and the desire to work in challenging environments, helps to counter these myths.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hettiararchchi, Heather. (October 2017). “Older Workers – benefits and challenges”. Integritas Workplace Law Corporation. <https://integritasworkplacelaw.com/dealing-with-an-ageing-workforce/>, accessed April 26, 2018

<sup>14</sup> Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors. (2012). “Age-Friendly Workplaces: Promoting Older Worker Participation”. HRSDC. p. 2,3 [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

## Considerations for Attracting and Retaining Older Workers:

### 1. Legislation:

Ensure your policies, procedures and practices comply with all relevant legislation, including but not limited to: The Canadian Human Rights Act, The Ontario Human Rights Code, Employment Standards Act, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, etc.

### 2. Recruitment:

Recruitment methods should strive to reach the greatest number of potential candidates regardless of age.

SLWDB's EmployerOne Reports (visit [slwdb.org/publications/employerone](http://slwdb.org/publications/employerone)) indicate that the main recruitment methods of participating local employers were #1. personal contacts/word of mouth/referrals/informal networks and #2. online job boards.

Older job seekers are more likely to look at job ads and less likely to use the internet compared to younger job seekers.<sup>16</sup> As such, consider additional ways to reach older workers or job seekers. Suggestions include:<sup>17</sup>

- Place advertisements in local newspapers, trade/industry magazines, and publications that target the 50 year and older population (online and in print), as well as on local radio stations
- Contact local retirement or seniors' organizations
- Develop an employee referral program

A great local resource, **free of charge**, are Employment Ontario (EO) Service Providers. These organizations assist employers with job postings, job development, and access to program specific hiring and retention incentives, training grants and other services.

**“Meet with a counsellor, who can help you attract and recruit the right employees, and find financial incentives to offset on-the-job training costs.”**

**-Employment Ontario**

**<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>**

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<sup>16</sup> Bernard, Andre. (August 2012). “The job search of the older unemployed”. Statistics Canada. Component of Statistics Canada Catalogue 75-0001-X Perspectives on Labour and Income p.3

<sup>17</sup> Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors. (2012). “Age-Friendly Workplaces: Promoting Older Worker Participation”. HRSDC. p4 [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf)

Local Employment Ontario Service Providers (in alphabetical order):

- **Four Winds Community Employment Services:**  
9156 Tecumseh Lane, Kettle & Stony Point phone: 519-786-6780  
<https://kettlepoint.org/four-winds-community-employment-services/>
- **Goodwill Career Centre:**  
1249 London Rd, Sarnia phone: 519-332-4333  
<http://goodwillekl.com/>
- **Lambton College Community Employment Services:**  
4248 Oil Heritage Rd, Petrolia phone: 519-882-4333  
<https://www.lambtoncollege.ca/elc/>
- **The WorkPlace Group:**  
265 Front Street N. Suite 107, Sarnia phone: 519-337-7377  
<http://theworkplacegroup.ca/>

### 3. Work Schedule:

In order to help make work more appealing for older workers, consider offering flexible work arrangements. Remember that younger workers appreciate this option too.

Some flexible work arrangements include:<sup>18</sup>

- Flexible work hours: Start/end times are flexible as long as hours of work are met.
- Compressed workweek: the workweek is reduced into fewer days and employees make up their full weekly hours by working longer days.
- Job sharing: 2 people are employed on a part-time or reduced hour basis to perform a job that 1 person normally does. Compensation is distributed between them.
- Teleworking: working from home and communicating electronically or by phone with the workplace.
- Project-based assignments: the project is clearly defined and completed within a specified timeframe.
- Unpaid short-and long-term leave: an employee is allowed to have extended leave (i.e. 2 months) where no salary is paid but the employee maintains status within the organization.

SLWDB asked local employers what non-monetary benefits they offer that would be valuable for older workers. Of the employers that reported offering non-monetary benefits, almost half stated they provide some type of flexible work arrangements.

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<sup>18</sup> Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors. (2012). "Age-Friendly Workplaces: Promoting Older Worker Participation". p.5 [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf)

SLWDB asked older workers and job seekers what employers could do to make working or returning to work appealing for them. At least 30% of participants indicated flexible work arrangements.

#### **4. Training:**

Training is an important factor in worker retention.<sup>19</sup> Workers establish a sense of value when they see you investing in them. Training also helps employees feel more equipped to do a job and their new skills can equate to increased productivity and quality on the job.

Recall that “difficulty with technology” was identified as both a challenge with employing older workers and a challenge for older workers/job seekers at work. Consider the benefits for workers and for your business from training on computer systems and/or new technology.

#### **5. Health and Benefits:**

Common knowledge tells us that healthy workers are less likely to be absent from work and are more productive on the job.

Recall that “health concerns” were identified as a challenge by both employers and by older workers/job seekers. A number of strategies can be considered to address this concern:

- Implementing a workplace wellness program. This program might include on-site health screening, ergonomic assessments, subsidized gym memberships, on-site fitness activities, access to wellness experts and/or dietitians, etc.<sup>20</sup> From SLWDB’s 2018 EmployerOne Survey, 41% of participating employers stated they had a workplace wellness program.

More about implementing workplace wellness programs can be found online; some resources include:

Healthy Work-Life Balance: A Guide for Employers: <http://www.slwdb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/HealthyWorkLifeGuide.pdf>

Lambton Public Health: <https://lambtonhealth.on.ca/health-information/workplace-wellness>

- Adapting physical environments to be less physically demanding and more accessible for all workers (e.g., introduce equipment for transporting and lifting, sit-stand work stations, large print materials, etc.).<sup>21</sup>
- Offering comprehensive benefit packages (for example: health care, Registered Retirement Saving Plans, family supports, wellness programs, investment and personal counseling, etc.) may provide a holistic view of employee health.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors. (2012). “Age-Friendly Workplaces: Promoting Older Worker Participation”. p.6 [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/rhdcc-hrsdc/HS4-114-2012-eng.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.8

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.8

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.8

## 6. **Generational Differences:**

In Sarnia Lambton, workplaces can have five different generations working together. Each generation may have motivations and attitudes that differ from other generations.<sup>23</sup> In order to work effectively in a multi-generational workplace, it is important to understand the different work styles of different generations. Employers can benefit from learning about the effective use of different management styles and techniques for different age cohorts.

Recall that multi-generational dynamics were identified as both a challenge with employing older workers and a challenge for older workers and job seekers.

Formal training or information sessions (i.e., lunch and learn, staff meetings, workplace newsletters, and posters) about generational differences in the workplace can help workers understand generational dynamics and learn strategies for working together effectively. To get started, check out SLWDB's infographics on working in and managing a multi-generational workforce (see slwdb.org website under the resources tab).

## 7. **Age-Friendly Practices:**

An age-friendly workplace creates a healthy work environment by "...cultivating a workplace culture that embraces and values workers of all ages and abilities, and that includes older workers."<sup>24</sup>

You can evaluate your workplace for age-friendly qualities by taking an assessment: "Age-Friendly Workplaces: A Self-Assessment Tool for Employers"<sup>25</sup> at:

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/corporate/seniors/forum/tool.pdf>

Also, visit <https://www.agefriendlyarnia.com/> to learn about Age-Friendly Sarnia, an initiative launched in 2015.<sup>26</sup> The initiative promotes active aging in the City of Sarnia.

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<sup>23</sup> Saleh, Krista L. (2011) "Managing to Manage Across Generations at Work". The Psychology Foundation of Canada. Desjardins Financial Security.

<sup>24</sup> Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors. (2012). "Age-Friendly Workplaces: A Self-Assessment Tool for Employers". HRSDC. p.3 <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/corporate/seniors/forum/tool.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Age-Friendly Sarnia. Community Action Plan. (2016). City of Sarnia. p.37

## **Concluding Remarks:**

A growing number of older workers are remaining in or re-entering the workforce in Sarnia Lambton.

Given the benefits that older workers can bring to a workplace, it makes good business sense to ensure your workforce planning practices include a plan for attracting and retaining older workers.

Although challenges may exist when engaging older workers, it is possible to mitigate some of these by considering opportunities for change in your workplace (e.g. flexible work schedules, training programs, understanding multi-generational dynamics, etc.).

Make age-friendly practices a priority in your workplace. Remember that many older workers are staying in the workforce longer. Now is your opportunity to embrace and benefit from all that older workers have to offer.