Ending the Local Employment Planning Council Pilot (LEPCs)

Questions and Answers
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1. What was the Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) pilot?
Since the 1990s, Ontario has invested in local workforce planning bodies, known as Local Boards, across the province to identify local labour market needs and undertake activities to support workforce development.

In 2015, Ontario launched a pilot selecting eight Local Boards, through a Call for Proposal process, to become Local Employment Planning Councils (LEPCs). The pilot was to test whether additional resources and enhanced capacity within a set of defined pillars and activities could better support local workforce planning.

2. Why is the ministry ending the pilot?
LEPCs were established as a pilot with an anticipated end. Since the 2015 pilot launch, government priorities have shifted, and the ministry has begun transforming the way employment services are delivered. The ministry intends to look at workforce planning entities within the current and future ecosystem and consider, for instance, whether and how to better align supports and system features to support local and provincial workforce planning and economic development initiatives.

3. What is the future of local workforce planning now that the LEPC pilot is ending?
While the LEPC pilot is coming to an end, the ministry will, for the immediate future, maintain its network of 26 local planning bodies across Ontario and continue supporting local efforts in workforce planning.

4. How will the ministry use the findings from the pilot?
The ministry is using the findings to better align its training system, employment services, and workforce development supports with the needs of employers and communities across the province. Additionally, learnings from the pilot will help support
the ministry in its commitments to continuously improve to ensure it keeps on pace with changes in the labour market and economy.

5. What are the government’s strategic directions related to local planning? Will the ministry be making program design changes to the Local Board model?

On March 9, 2020, the government announced its commitment to a Workforce Development and Training Review. As part of the Review, the ministry intends to look at workforce planning entities within the current and future ecosystem and consider how to better align Ontario’s framework to support local and provincial workforce planning and economic development initiatives.

We hope to partner with the Local Boards to better understand how best to support local workforce planning and inform a new, modernized approach to workforce development.

6. What role will new System Service Managers play in workforce planning within the three prototype areas?

Returning LEPCs to Local Boards will create more of a level playing field within prototypes areas as well as across and across the province. Currently, LEPCs exist in certain communities and not in others.

Service System Managers are expected to work with local entities, including local boards, in order to best serve their local communities and to reach outcomes for jobseekers and employers.

The prototype period is an opportunity to learn from the new model. In addition, as part of the Workforce Development and Training Review, the ministry intends to look at workforce planning entities within the current and future ecosystem and consider how to better align Ontario’s framework to support local and provincial workforce planning and economic development initiatives.
7. What labour market information activities does the ministry expect Local Boards to undertake during the next fiscal year?

Existing Local Boards have already submitted their business plans and will work with the ministry to negotiate transfer payment agreements for the 2020-21 fiscal year. Agreements will contain the approved deliverables that the ministry expects the Local Boards to undertake in 2020-21.

LEPCs that choose to transition to Local Boards will be given a conditional transfer payment agreement effective April 1, 2020. This conditional agreement will require the submission of a Local Board business plan for ministry review and approval, from which an amended agreement with deliverables will be negotiated and finalized.

Over the longer term, the ministry will be looking at current labour market needs and how best to align workforce development in a transformed employment services system.

8. What supports will the ministry provide to assist LEPCs to transition to Local Boards?

LEPCs will be offered funding to support their transition to Local Boards. This funding will be reflected in the conditional agreement and will be comprised of three months maximum of funding at the current LEPC level.

As of July 1, 2020, funding will revert to Local Board funding levels; this will be reflected in the amended agreements.

The LEPC-level funding will allow the LEPCs an appropriate amount of time to complete their Local Board business plans and determine deliverables; and to provide sufficient flexibility for potential lease changes and termination of agreements with vendors. Severance costs will not be eligible as per transfer payment agreements terms.
9. What if LEPCs do not wish to submit new business plans to transition to Local Boards for 2020-21?

If LEPCs do not wish to transition to a Local Board, they will exit the ministry's local planning system March 31, 2020. The ministry is aware that a decision by the LEPC to not transition to a Local Board will cause a local planning gap in communities. The ministry will work to address this risk, if required.

10. Why is the government winding-down the LEPC pilot at a time when the COVID-19 impacts are generating layoffs and uncertainty in the labour market?

LEPCs were established as a pilot with an anticipated end. Since the 2015 pilot launch, government priorities have shifted, and the ministry has begun transforming the way employment services are delivered. The ministry intends to look at workforce planning entities within the current and future ecosystem and consider, for instance, whether and how to better align supports and system features to support local and provincial workforce planning and economic development initiatives and to be responsive to COVID-19 impacts.