

Staffing among local business concerns, according to Dufferin Board of Trade survey

By **JAMES MATTHEWS**

It's been said that it's best to keep looking up in difficult times.

And, according to the results of a Dufferin Board of Trade (DBOT) survey, that's how local business operators weather the obstacles of inflation and the rising cost of overhead in power rates, shipping costs, and others.

This year's edition of the board's annual business survey was conducted in February. As many as 125 local businesses from various sectors in each Dufferin County municipality and some surrounding areas participated.

This year's top priorities for local businesses focus on marketing and forging connections in the local business community.

Their biggest concerns are attracting employees, navigating government red tape, and competition.

This year's data was compared to previous local surveys and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2023 Business Confidence Survey.

According to the local board, respondents were generally optimistic about their business performance in 2023. They scored an average of seven on a sliding scale of one to 10, indicating they expect to perform better this year than last.

The Ontario chamber's survey showed 53 per cent of businesses across the province are optimistic about their organizations' outlook and prospects.

The majority of Dufferin businesses feel that creating an environment in which more people both live and work in the community is the top factor driving Dufferin County's economic growth and prosperity.

On average, employment levels remained the same with businesses in 2022, but 41 per cent of businesses had challenges filling all their available positions with candidates that met their needs and requirements.

The survey shows that networking and professional development opportunities are vital to local businesses. To help meet the networking need, DBOT will offer regular free networking DBOT Connects events at various businesses throughout the community.

DBOT will offer regular learning sessions to support professional development needs, covering topics such as creating LGBTQ+ Safe Spaces, becoming environmentally and socially responsible businesses, and others.