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To: The House of Commons Standing Committee

From: Karen Behune Plunkett CEO WEtech Alliance (Softech Alliance Network)

Concept Paper for FEDDEV Project: Investing In Regional Diversification and the IMPORTANCE

Duration of Project: 5 years

Project: I.Q. (Innovation Quarters)

Lead Organization: WEtech Alliance (Regional Innovation Centre Ontario- RIC- ONE Network)

Concept: A hub of innovation, technology, and creativity

WEtech Alliance promotes the technology and innovation sector in part by facilitating Research & Development partnerships between industry and academia as well as fostering the launch of lean startups and efficiencies in SME's.

Ongoing growth and diversification are critical to maintaining a healthy economy. By offering strategic support for entrepreneurs and innovation and tech companies, the Innovation Quarters will create long-term economic impact in Windsor-Essex Chatham-Kent.

The overarching intent with this multi faceted project is to support local industry, SME'S and start-ups in the diversification and stabilization for global competitive growth which will significantly strengthen our local economy.

WE would create an environment that would accommodate both our intent and culture through the development of Innovation Quarters (I.Q.) This initiative would host the WEtech offices, Maker space which would comprise of 3Dprinting, R & D projects, Commercialization of HackWE Apps, DeskUP for Lean start-ups, an Investment desk, as well as SSMartLab connecting industry with technology, social science and the arts for enterprise solutions. The intent is to aid SMEs in prototype development, built out in collaboration with academia. An additional focus would be on Border ICT Initiatives that are identified in the IBLs which was recently funded by FEDDEV. As well as recognizing that the Border ICT would assist, identify and implement enhanced mobility through M2M workshops and training modules.

Through our Robotics Program, I.Q. will address the youth unemployment & retention of the chronic skilled worker shortage in Windsor-Essex Chatham-Kent regions by directing young people into STEM fields. We look to expand our successful partnership with FIRST Robotics which launched an Annual FIRST Great Lakes Tournament in Windsor April 4, 2014 to a huge success. 40 teams from North

American with 1500 students participating. This resulted in both the University of Windsor and St. Clair College offering \$1000.00 bursaries for students enrolling into STEM faculties beginning September 2014. The overarching goal is to train and retrain talent and encourage entrepreneurial efforts in these advanced technology sectors. Sources indicate the skills gap in the Machining, Tool, Mold and Die (MTM) sector alone is costing our region \$43 million a year, thereby impacting our region's ability to compete in a knowledge based economy. The second goal of these programs is economic diversification in Windsor- Essex Chatham-Kent which has seen the manufacturing sector decline by almost 20 percent in the last five years, by building up an emerging entrepreneurial tech sector.

I.Q. (WEtech Alliance) will deliver the commercialization and sustainability component for the University of Windsor EPICentre's youth entrepreneurs. The WEtech team will contribute to their initiatives at the newly CLA (OCE) funded Entrepreneurial Program & Innovation Centre (EPICentre) while they are students with a permanent desk on site, but more importantly by our programs, services and networks that will be delivered to them following graduation. We are currently developing a more modest version with St.Clair College by aiding them with the creating of an Entrepreneurial program newly funded by OCEA (OCE).

By diversifying the economy to enhance ICT, Robotics,M2M Mobility sectors through the I.Q., will allow us to address the competitive challenge of regional skills, youth retention and industry attraction . This will be an investment which will lead to significant NEW investment and expansion and jobs or this region. WE may not continue to be reliant on historical behavior. Our competition is not London down the 401- we must hone our skills and expand our regional behavior to compete globally.

The proposed FEDDEV contribution will support the I.Q.to be the catalyst for economic revitalization in the Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent region by developing expansion in these sectors while retaining young talent and a skilled workforce. FEDDEV will support the expansion of our regional manufacturing industry by helping SME manufacturers perform product development and tech adoption, and working with partners target new markets. Windsor's location in the Michigan- Southern Ontario tech corridor will play a key role in technology development, innovation adoption, and export launch pad. The timing of this proposed FEDDEV contribution aligns with the major shift in Southern Ontario from traditional manufacturing to more innovative high tech industries with existing and newly developed skills set.

Key partners:

- Board of Directors – from Senior levels in Industry and Academia
- University of Windsor
- St. Clair College
- Windsor Economic Development Corporation
- Small Business Centre Enterprise (SBEC)
- Business Advisory Services (BAS)
- IRAP
- Ontario Network Of Excellence (ONE)
- Business Advisory Services (BAP)

- Canadian Digital Media Network (- National & Global) CDMN) WEtech is a Hub member (CER)
- Wavefront -Canada's CER for Wireless & Research to accelerate the growth & success of wireless companies
- HackWE N f P will locate in I.Q.

WEtech Alliance, the Regional Innovation Centre for Windsor-Essex Chatham-Kent was established 3 years ago and is led by a seasoned executive entrepreneur and has as Board of Directors and strong team in place to govern and execute the mandates of the RIC's, to accelerate innovation and technology in start-ups, SME's and Youth.

By providing a vibrant and supportive environment for everything from small startups to large, cutting-edge innovation and tech firms, the Innovation Quarters will help promote, nurture, and support this region as the most innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial technology and innovation cross-border community in Canada.

Sample Proposed Budget:

Capitol Costs

Build out/furnishing		\$485,000.
Equipment & Maker Space		\$349,000.
	Sub-total	\$834,000.00
Non-capital Costs		
Wages		\$925,000.
I.Q. Programs		\$290,000.
Operations (Shared w ONE budget)		\$273,000.
Travel		\$50,000.
Marketing		\$249,000.
	Sub-total	\$1787,000.
Total:		\$2,621,000.

“Experience has proven that a technology hub works very differently than traditional office space and the Innovation Quarter will be is designed to facilitate the growth of research, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurial eco-system by providing a purpose-built enclave with the varied functions, collaboration opportunities, and vibrant working environment that the tech and innovation sector thrive upon”