



GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO  
**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
BUSINESS BUILDING COMMUNITY

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022-2023

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# Chair's Comments

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## SCOTT GILFILLAN

### Chair

In my first year as Chair of the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, I have been very proud of what our staff, volunteers, sponsors and members have been able to achieve. We have seen a greater return to in-person and hybrid events including over 500 attendees at Bingemans for our Business Excellence Awards Gala, and another successful turn at hosting Canada's Innovation Corridor Summit, as well as many other great events and networking opportunities. We have seen some excellent advocacy initiatives around healthcare, housing, talent, education, inflation, and transit. We continue to focus on ways to increase and enhance member engagement and involvement.

Our Board also completed a detailed strategic planning process which will direct the activities of the organization through fiscal 2026. The focus of our strategic plan is to create value for our members, through three strategic pillars, and underpinned by operational excellence. The three pillars are focused on engagement and growing for impact, maximizing our profile and influence, and being diverse and inclusive in our work. These priorities will help direct staff in the areas of focus and key activities for 2023-2026. I look forward to seeing us put the strategy into action starting in 2023-2024 and building on the successes from 2022-2023. As part of the nominations process for identifying new board members for approval at the 2023 AGM, we continued to work to build a Chamber board which is reflective of our community. I would like to thank our outgoing board members who have made valuable contributions to the board throughout their respective tenures.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ian and his team, all of our volunteers and sponsors, and all of our members for being engaged and continuing to support the Chamber and helping it meet its objectives. I look forward to another great year chairing the organization in 2023-2024.

# President's Comments

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## **IAN MCLEAN** **President & CEO**

The emerging priorities for our organization during 2023-2024 and beyond are economic recovery and growth management across Waterloo Region and neighbouring municipalities. Over the past three years we concentrated significant efforts on the distribution of screening kits, regular vaccination of employees, and other initiatives to support local employers through the pandemic. As we emerge from mandated closures and other restrictions, prospects for sustained economic growth are promising.

Our Chamber has built strong relationships with stakeholder organizations, municipal governments, healthcare providers and post-secondary institutions on securing commitments from federal and provincial governments to build the infrastructure for local demands. As our population grows, requirements for healthcare, transportation, and transit will also escalate.

We will enhance our efforts for physician recruitment and the expansion of primary care across the community. Local challenges revolve around an existing gap between practicing physicians and residents seeking their services combined with the pending departure of many practitioners from the profession. A recent media report estimated that one in six family doctors across Canada are 65 or older and nearing retirement, leaving millions of Canadians potentially losing access to this critical component of the system.

Our organization, in collaboration with municipal governments, will continue advocacy efforts around improved GO Transit services. An extensive list of commitments has been promised by the provincial government, and the movement of people between Waterloo Region and the Greater Toronto/Hamilton Area (GTHA) remains a high priority for local employers attempting to access skilled talent across a competitive market.

Local businesses and residents are also seeking progress on the extension of ION services into Cambridge. In 2011, our Chamber requested the release of a detailed plan around the cost and timing for completion of a light rail system to serve all taxpayers in the Region of Waterloo. Over a decade has passed since the historic decision to proceed with regional services and expectations are high that all prior commitments will be fulfilled.

# President's Comments

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*(Continued)* The Canadian and Ontario Chambers of Commerce will continue their strong advocacy efforts around assisting small and large businesses to compete across international markets. Both organizations have recognized the importance of skills shortages and the chronic challenges for employers across all sectors in securing the talent for meeting current and future workforce development requirements. Recent provincial measures to reduce barriers on the recognition of foreign credentials and related restrictions originated from the lobbying efforts of employers.

Other issues for the local business sector include the repayment of Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loans, rising interest rates, and volatile consumer spending. The Chamber and our partners will be working on behalf of local employers to ensure a competitive and sustainable environment.

The Chamber will continue to offer events and related services that assist our membership in meeting the on-going challenges of a post-pandemic recovery. Our dynamic roster of speakers across a wide range of sectors and professions will share their experiences for building a diverse and inclusive local economy. I encourage all community stakeholders to monitor our schedule of upcoming events and ensure their attendance for networking and relevant information.

Our Chamber was built, and has continued for many years, on talented, innovative and committed volunteers working with engaged individuals whose efforts contribute to Waterloo Region and Canadian economic prosperity. The Chamber Board of Directors and I thank you for your on-going support and extend our best wishes for continued business success.

# 2022-2023 Board of Directors

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## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**SCOTT GILFILLAN, CHAIR**

*PwC LLP*

**ADAM SMITH, PAST CHAIR**

*My IT Guy*

**WENDI CAMPBELL, VICE CHAIR**

*The Foodbank of Waterloo Region*

**BRAD DUNBAR, TREASURER**

*Dunbar & Associates, Professional Corporation*

**GINA HUDEL, VICE CHAIR**

*CanCannot*

**IAN MCLEAN, PRESIDENT/ EX OFFICIO**

*Greater Kitchener Waterloo  
Chamber of Commerce*

**SEAN SULLIVAN, SECRETARY**

*Gowling WLG LLP*

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**NICK HEFFNER**

*Heffner Lexus & Heffner Toyota*

**SHELLEY FORWELL**

*WalterFedy*

**CARLEEN CARROLL**

*Wilfrid Laurier University*

**RICHARD JAQUES**

*BMO Bank of Montreal*

**KRIS RONAN**

*Ginger Goat Hot Sauce*

**GLENN THORPE**

*Flightpath*

**RON GAGNON**

*Grand River Hospital*

**JODI ARMIT**

*H2R Business Solutions*

**ROBERTO VILLAMAR**

*COHECO S.A.*

**MARIAM RASOOL**

*STELCO*

**AJOA MINTAH**

*Four All Ice Cream*

# Honorary Members

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Honorary Members are those who have distinguished themselves by exemplary contributions to the Chamber and community. These members are elected by a majority vote by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. We appreciate the work these members have done for our Chamber and community.

Art Bamford\*  
Armand Klinck\*  
Bernie Hermsen  
Bill Gladwish  
Brian Bennett  
Brother Clifford Bringleson\*  
Charles E. Greb\*  
Dennis Myer\*  
Diane Wolfenden  
Eugene Moser  
F. Clay B. Hall\*  
Frank Varga  
Greg Weiler  
Harold Chapman\*  
Howard Jasper\*  
Ian Marr\*  
Jack Duffy  
James Beingessner  
James F. Robertson\*  
Jeff MacIntyre  
Jim Harper  
John Acheson\*  
John B. (Jack) Forbes\*  
John Bowman\*  
John Doherty  
Kathi Smith  
Kelly McManus  
Kenneth I. Tyers

Mark Kreller\*  
Mary D'Alton  
Morgan Fisher\*  
Murray Costello  
Neil Richardson  
Owen Lackenbauer  
Paul Eichinger  
Peter Sims\*  
R. Ross Wells  
Renata Rusiniak  
Rev. Gary Alcock  
Robert G. Heer  
Roger Farwell\*  
Ron Carther  
Rosa Lupo  
Rosemary Smith  
Sabrina Fitzgerald  
Sandra Stone  
Scott Carson  
Sidney S. Bergstein\*  
Terry Flynn  
Tom Burns  
Wally Teichroeb  
William D. McGregor\*  
W. T. Townshend\*

**\*Deceased**

# 2022-23 Volunteer Committees



## **BUSINESS AFTER 5 COMMITTEE**

Allison Bourke  
Jeff Sheppard  
Steven Elliott  
Thomas Reilly  
Conrad Lovell  
Karen Schlupp  
Tom Heiber  
Becca Faber  
Kevin Fancy  
Verese Vessell-Bowen

## **BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS COMMITTEE**

Michael Hewitson  
Laura Hewitson  
Nicole Marinelli  
Jeff Collins  
Mary Cathryn Lorentz  
Michelle Tupman  
Stephen McInnes  
Nahla Kor  
Curtis Montgomery  
Ruben Domingos  
Roberto Villamar

## **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Allison Bourke  
Janice McVey  
Kathy MacDonald  
Kim Wilhelm  
Rachel Sommers  
Rebecca Hempey  
Sandra Stone  
Jessica Bondy  
Kate Bradfield

## **SPEED NETWORKING COMMITTEE**

Michael Hewitson  
Stephen Goodfellow  
Nick Heffner  
Darcy Krahn  
Charlène Le Duc  
Bill Pegg

## **CHAMBER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE**

Adam Smith  
Dani Bazely  
Mackenzie Ainley  
Ruben Domingos  
Jessica van der Heide  
Charly Bax  
Jordan Baker  
Maddie Campbell  
Michelle McDonald  
Kyla Vendrig

## **PHYSICIAN LIASON TASK FORCE**

Laura Hewitson  
Michael Hewitson  
Jeff MacIntyre

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE**

Nora Whittington  
Carl Cadogan  
Mohsan Abdullah  
Dani Bazely  
Yolande Lansing  
Uma Maharaj  
Yasin Dewji

## **FEDERAL & PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

John Cruickshank  
Jessica Dupuis  
Ed Lemont  
Josefa Michaelson  
Tim Strome  
Sean Sullivan  
Hamza Toofani  
Mary Henricksen

## **REGIONAL & MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Brian Bennett  
Andrew Bingeman  
Cory Bluhm  
Emir Ceric  
Ian Macdonald  
Justin McFadden  
Eric Saulesleja  
David Sunday  
Hamza Toofani  
Kevin Dias



## **PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

Healthcare is a significant issue for all of us and having access to professionals is critical to the wellbeing of families in the Region. However, many families, locally and across the province, do not have the benefit of being under the care of a primary care provider. This is why the Chamber's physician recruitment program is an important community initiative.

Since the program was launched in 1998, the Chamber has successfully attracted well over 300 family physicians. The successes we have achieved would not be possible without the support and involvement of our community partners.

## **CHALLENGES WE'RE FACING IN PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT**

Within the next 3-5 years, 25.4% of local physicians will be reaching retirement age. While we take great pleasure in celebrating our progress, we realize that our physician recruitment efforts are far from over. The Region will continue to be challenged with rapid population growth, a growing number of physicians at retirement age, physicians taking on smaller rosters to provide additional care in other areas of need (refugee health, addictions, and student health) and fewer physicians entering family medicine.

The current shortage of physicians is a national issue, and we are facing the impacts of this crisis locally. It is estimated that 1 in 5 residents in our community do not have a primary care provider.

There is a lot of work to do and the GKWCC is committed to ensuring our community has the healthcare professionals it needs and deserves.

## **A YEAR IN REVIEW**

We were successful in attracting 14 family physicians to our community. These professionals have made full time, part time and locum practice commitments in K-W. This would not have been possible without the support of our generous municipal and corporate sponsors. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to eliminating the physician shortage in Kitchener-Waterloo.

# Physician Recruitment Sponsors



GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
**PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT**

Thank you to our dedicated sponsors for helping the Chamber continue its goal of eliminating the doctor shortage in Waterloo Region.

## PLATINUM



## GOLD



## SILVER



## BRONZE



## COMMUNITY



## Individual Contributors

AL HAYES

IAN MCLEAN

# Networking & Events



The Greater KW Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to providing our members with networking and professional development opportunities, in addition to access to experts on topics important to the local business community. Some highlights from the past year:



## BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Our 2023 Business Excellence Awards Gala was the premier networking event of the year. It was a record year for nominations and fourteen winners took home awards. There was also an increased demand for in-person tickets since the pandemic, with nearly 600 guests attending live.



## GOLF SCRAMBLE

Nearly 120 golfers hit the green in August 2022 during the 30th Annual Chamber Golf Scramble. Fundraising efforts during the tournament supported the Chamber's Healthcare & Physician Recruitment initiatives.



## VINE & DINE

We were once again able to 'vine & dine' in-person, as local Chefs prepared a multi-course meal all in the flavours of Bourbon & BBQ. The event highlighted local culinary talent, while also raising funds and awareness for the KW Physician Recruitment Program.



## BUSINESS EXPO

This year also saw the return of the highly anticipated Business Expo, for the first time since October 2019). In partnership with the Cambridge & Guelph Chambers, we had a full expo floor and excellent attendance for exhibitors to engage with.

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



More than **450** women and allies across the Region came together to *#EmbraceEquity*

## PREMIER FORD'S VISIT



In addition to a keynote address at the Manufacturing Summit, Premier Ford participated in a round table discussion with key Chamber partners.

## RETURN TO IN-PERSON



Although virtual attendance was still popular, there was a built-up anticipation to return to in-person events. Many programs reached pre-pandemic attendance levels.

# Networking & Events



In addition to our signature/premier events, we had a number of event networking series throughout the year. These events were primarily committee (volunteer) driven, and could not have been made possible without the support of our many sponsors, including our Title Sponsors of each series.



## **LIBRO BUSINESS AFTER 5**

Title Sponsor: Libro Credit Union | 850+ attendees

We hosted 5 events within the series this year, at a variety of local businesses. In addition to casual networking and exhibitor tables to connect with, the series also implemented a new optional donation upon registration. Each event raised funds for a different local charity, and at the end of the season more than \$4,500 was donated to local charities in the Region.



## **MCAP CHAMBER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS**

Title Sponsor: MCAP | 200+ attendees

We hosted 4 events within the series this year, bringing the young and “young at heart” together at a variety of local businesses. Catering to the diverse needs and aspirations of young professionals in the region, these events included keynote presentations from industry experts and trailblazers, mentorship on professional development and growth, as well as casual networking.



## **HEFFNER WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

Title Sponsor: Heffner Lexus & Heffner Toyota | 200+ attendees

We hosted 2 events within the series this year, with the goal to make a positive impact on the professional development and advancement of women. Our “60 in 60” event fostered confidence, giving attendees the tools, they need to overcome challenges and break through barriers, and our Wine Social gave the opportunity to build connections in a casual setting.



## **MNP SPEED NETWORKING**

Title Sponsor: MNP | 200+ attendees

We hosted 2 events within the series this year, one virtual and one in-person. Providing a wider reach and convenience for participants, as well as valuable face-to-face interaction. This year, we aimed to provide a structured yet dynamic environment for networking for professionals in the region who are looking to expand their networks and exchange insights with a variety of peers.

## **OTHER TITLE SPONSORS**

**TD Bank** - Women Leading Waterloo Region

**HIP Developments** - Chamberfest

**BMO** - International Women's Day Breakfast

**Immigration Partnership** - 2-Part Immigration Event Series

**Waterloo Region Association of Realtors** - 2022 Municipal Candidate Forums



# Programs & Initiatives



In addition to our regular program of events, we also executed a variety of programs throughout the year to highlight our members and provide opportunities for businesses to share their stories.



## SCOTIABANK FEMALE FOUNDERS

A new initiative this year was launching a video interview series, highlighting local Female Founders. Through the series, they shared their career journeys, told their business story, and provided inspiration and advice for other professionals. The series, sponsored by Scotiabank, featured 8 local Female Founders (1 per month) since its launch in December 2022.

Manulife



## MANULIFE BEHIND THE BUSINESS PODCAST

The Behind the Business Podcast, presented by Manulife and sponsored by Immigration Partnership, is a weekly podcast where Ian McLean sits down with local business and community leaders and dives deep into the issues, the interests and the inside perspectives of what matters most on the economic front, to ensure the success of Waterloo Region.



## BUSINESS TO BUSINESS RADIO PROGRAM

Every Sunday, Ian McLean (GKWCC) and Greg Durocher (Cambridge Chamber) co-host the Business to Business Radio Show on CityNews 570, sponsored by Cowan Insurance Group. With influential guests, intriguing topics, and informative subjects, Business to Business focuses on connecting the community through business.



## GORE MADE RIGHT HERE

For generations, manufacturing has been the economic backbone of our area. The emergence of the local tech sector has prompted a switch in what's being produced locally, often in the form of hand-made or tech-integrated goods. In the weekly segment Made Right Here, CTV Kitchener profiles makers from around the region. This segment is proudly sponsored by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and Gore Mutual Insurance Company.



## PEER 2 PEER

Sponsored by Sun Life, the Peer2Peer groups consist of a series of programs aimed to bring together professionals in our community in a powerful new way. Each group brings together 12-15 industry leaders from the community to share, collaborate and collectively grow their businesses. The content for each group is driven solely by the group members, led by one group champion.

# Advocacy & Looking Ahead

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The emergence of the Waterloo Region economy from COVID-19 pandemic restrictions has created a dynamic environment for all local business sectors.

Three elections – federal, provincial and municipal – between September of 2021 and October of 2022 provided a significant forum for the discussion of issues impacting employers and the future direction of government decision-making. At the municipal level, council composition has changed and pending directions from the provincial government have the potential to significantly transform future structures and operations.

Our Chamber and many local stakeholders are anticipating extensive and comprehensive discussions with a provincially appointed facilitator about the future of municipal governance across the Region. Our focus will be the delivery of vital government services on the most efficient and cost-effective basis for businesses and employers. Additional and unnecessary costs cannot be absorbed against worker shortages, inflation and rising interest rates.

Since the start of the pandemic, organizations across Waterloo Region have collaborated to assist employers on managing lockdowns, employee testing, and participation in vaccination programs. The Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) was created in 2020 and continues to sustain all businesses across the community with recommendations and analysis advanced to all levels of government as the current recovery proceeds.

Our organization will continue expanding relationships with the Ontario and Canadian Chambers of Commerce on advocacy initiatives to assist employers on priority provincial and national issues. In June of 2023 we were signatories on Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) correspondence to the federal government related to labour disruptions at ports in British Columbia including Vancouver and Prince Rupert. It was noted that Canadian business is increasingly dependent upon supply chain stability and the efficient flow of products. Exports facing delays in reaching markets hamper the ability to generate revenue and maintain domestic employment. The CCC asked the federal government to work closely with all parties to reach an agreement for avoiding any work stoppages that the domestic economy could not afford.

We also supported the Canadian Chamber in their advocacy efforts around an extension of the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) repayment deadline by two years.

# Advocacy & Looking Ahead

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*(Continued)* Many employers, particularly in the retail and tourism sectors, had no choice apart from taking this assistance due to circumstances beyond their control. Mandatory closures and health restrictions left owners with severe income losses and cash flow issues.

High interest rates, inflation and increased labour costs have prohibited businesses from addressing debt issues. With each passing day, entrepreneurs who collectively maintain a considerable workforce face increasingly severe financial pressure. Extending the repayment timeline will provide employers with the stability required for returning to profitability.

Locally, the planning and construction of new infrastructure to meet current and future demands remains a priority for the business sector across Waterloo Region. Local employers have identified that adequate primary and specialist healthcare services are a critical component in the attraction and retention of jobs, investment and new opportunities.

Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital have commenced a process to build a new joint institution for supporting the public healthcare requirements of our escalating regional population and economy, and the business sector will be active participants in this historic agenda for Waterloo Region.

The expansion of transit and transportation infrastructure is also vital for our growing economy. Local employers have consistently noted that moving people through the Toronto-Waterloo Region corridor is required for employee attraction and retention. We will continue our collaboration with municipal governments and other stakeholders to ensure the provincial government maintains previously announced commitments related to Two-Way, All-Day GO train service and a new Highway 7 between Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington County. The pandemic clearly impacted construction work across Ontario, however we expect major projects will be completed to meet growing community demands.

Our organization initiated strong working relationships with Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and will continue with these partnerships as the recruitment of skilled talent and other related issues remain as a priority for Waterloo Region employers.

# Advocacy & Looking Ahead

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*(Continued)* The 2023-2024 year promises more Chamber activity on behalf of Waterloo Region employers as all levels of government examine their operations and policy priorities. Many of our members in essential services and supply chains have maintained an extraordinary level of production against significant challenges and we anticipate the environment will incrementally improve and elevate our position as one of Canada's premier locations for business.

# Chamber Staff

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**IAN MCLEAN (HE/HIM)**

*President & CEO*

**ART SINCLAIR (HE/HIM)**

*Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy*

**LESTER HOLLEY (HE/HIM)**

*Vice President, Operations & Finance*

**DANA WALTON (SHE/HER)**

*Director of Strategic Initiatives & Business Development*

**HEATHER HUTCHINGS (SHE/HER)**

*Director, Partnerships & Special Projects*

**JENNA PETKER (SHE/HER)**

*Physician Recruitment & HR Lead*

**CAROLYN MARSH (SHE/HER)**

*Events Manager*

**ANDI LAKATOS (SHE/HER)**

*Events Coordinator*

**LISA MCDONALD (SHE/HER)**

*Business Development Representative*

**BONNIE FRANK (SHE/HER)**

*Business Development Representative*

**SUKHJIT LALL (HE/HIM)**

*Marketing Coordinator*

**BHAVYA SOOD (HE/HIM)**

*Marketing Coordinator*

**DARLENE JONES (SHE/HER)**

*Member Services Lead*

**RACHEAL MULENGA (SHE/HER)**

*Project Coordinator*

**SANDRA RAPOSO (SHE/HER)**

*Accounting & Office Assistant*

# Corporate Sponsors



## Helping us make our vision possible

A special Thank You to each of these Chamber Sponsors.

The Chamber realizes its vision through the support of its sponsors. We are the voice of all business in Waterloo Region - no matter the size of the business or the sector represented - and these sponsors make that possible through their donation of time, energy and financial support. On behalf of Chamber staff and members, we would like to thank these organizations:

<b>CHAMBER CHAIR'S CIRCLE</b>					
<b>CHAMBER PATRON</b>					
<b>TITLE SPONSOR</b>					
<b>CHAMBER TRUSTEE</b>					
<b>MEDIA PARTNERS</b>					

If your organization would like to support the Chamber through a partnership program, please contact Heather at [hhutchings@greaterkwchamber.com](mailto:hhutchings@greaterkwchamber.com)