



GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS BUILDING COMMUNITY



2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT

GreaterKWChamber.com



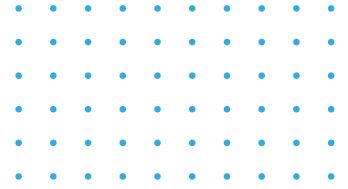
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A message from our
PRESIDENT & CEO



Changes in trade relations with the United States have made operations difficult for local businesses.

Do we possess the infrastructure: roads, rail, public transit, social services and healthcare - to support jobs and economic activities?

CEO's Comments

The Region of Waterloo is experiencing impressive economic and population growth. Recent forecasts indicate that approximately one million people will reside throughout the local community by 2051.

This growth creates immediate challenges and opportunities. Over the past year, our organization has created a series of forums with local, provincial and national leaders around service requirements to meet current and future demands. Businesses will expand and increase revenues if support is consistent with growth. Also, growing businesses pay increasing taxes to all levels of government which subsequently pay for services.

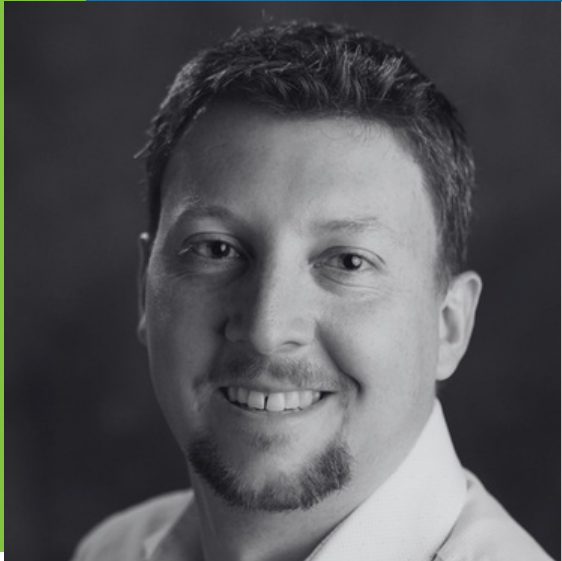
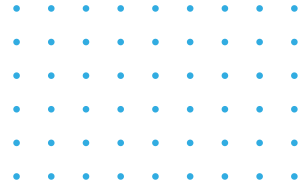
On behalf of Chamber staff and our committed board of directors, I extend best wishes to all our members for continuing success and we greatly appreciate your past support through event attendance, committee service, and ambassadors for community building. Working collaboratively, we will make Waterloo Region an exemplary and productive global location for business.

Ian McLean

President & CEO

Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

A message from our
BOARD CHAIR



We continue to ensure that people are getting the most out of their membership.

We were able to introduce some new networking events in 2024-25 and saw great success at our inaugural Small Business Awards.

Chair's Comments

This has definitely been a challenging year. We have gone through more political turmoil than I think anyone expected, sparked largely by our neighbours down south. This has led to a lot of stress and unpredictability in our economy. The Chamber has also felt this. That being said, 2024-2025 saw us bring in over 270 new members, which is fantastic. It is a testament to the work Ian and his staff put in, and how we are viewed in this community.

We also relaunched the [ChamberCheck.ca](https://www.chambercheck.ca) website and our "Ask the Expert" series to provide our members with valuable and timely information around trade and tariffs.

I want to thank my fellow Board of Directors for all of their hard work this year. I would also like to thank Ian and his team, all of our volunteers and sponsors, and all of our members for helping to make our Chamber and our community great.

Here's to a prosperous 2025-2026.

Brad Dunbar

*President, Dunbar & Associates, Professional Corp.
And 2024-25 Chair of the Board of Directors for the
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce*



About THE CHAMBER



About the Chamber

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce has a rich history, spanning nearly 140 years, of *Business Building Community...* and yet, we're just getting started.

This past year, we continued executing on Year 2 of a 3-Year Strategic Plan, with the support from our Board of Directors. With the hefty goals of growing for impact, maximizing profile & influence, and being diverse & inclusive in our work, we're proud to have made significant progress to support our Members.

Several new events were also added this year, including the Links & Leads Golf Tournament, Small Business Awards, and the Expert Exchange series. These events are all focused on supporting small businesses, who make up more than 60% of our membership. We continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our local business community.

We have an unwavering dedication to excellence, so we can provide the events, education, member benefits, and advocacy that our vibrant business community has learned to expect from us... and we have big plans to build on this success next year!

2024-25 Highlights



53%
member engagement



87%
event satisfaction



271
new members

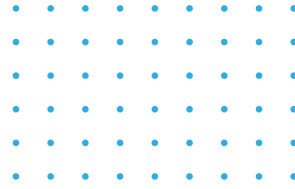


18+
sectors



2,107+
net increase in
followers
across 5
social media
platforms

About **THE TEAM**



Leadership

Ian McLean***
President & CEO

Lester Holley**
Chief Operating Officer

Heather Hutchings***
Director, Partnerships & Publications

Art Sinclair***
Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy

Carolyn Marsh*
Director, Community Engagement & Strategic Programs

Jenna Petker**
Director, Healthcare & Physician Recruitment

Staff

Sherwet Mohamed
Events Lead

Rio McManus
Events Coordinator

Sukhjit Lall
Marketing Coordinator

Bhavya Sood
Marketing Coordinator

Bonnie Frank*
Member Success Manager

Lisa McDonald*
Member Success Manager

Darlene Jones***
Membership Services Lead

Sandra Raposo*
Accounting & Office Assistant

Sofia Zanabria Guzman
Project Coordinator

Career Milestones, as recognized by the Chamber of Commerce Executives of Canada (CCEC):

*5+ Years of Service

**10+ Years of Service

***15+ Years of Service



2024-25

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Executive

Brad Dunbar (*Chair*)
Dunbar & Associates, Professional Corp.

Gina Hudel (*Vice Chair*)
CanConnot Inc

Mohsan Abdullah (*Secretary*)
Token Creative Services)

Ian McLean (President / Ex Officio)
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

Scott Gilfillan (*Past Chair*)
PwC LLP

Carleen Carroll (*Vice Chair*)
Wilfrid Laurier University

Mariam Rasool (*Treasurer*)
Lumine Group

Committee

Chris Andree
Gowling WLG

Shelley Forwell
WalterFedy

Nick Heffner
Heffner Lexus & Heffner Toyota

Cathy Snyder
Nopak Canada Inc.

Geraldine Stafford
Waterloo Region Police Services

Everton Wilmot
Wilmot Technologies Inc.

Ruben Domingos
TD Commercial Banking

Chloe Hamilton
Warm Embrace Elder Care

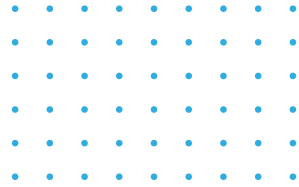
Ajoa Mintah
Four All Ice Cream

Stephanie Soulis
Little Mushroom Catering

Roberto Villamar
Coheco S.A.

2024-25

VOLUNTEERS



Ambassador Committee

Don Critelli
Darcy Krahn
Sandra Stone

Ruben Domingos
Stephan Logan
Roberto Villamar

Bob Fostor
Shannon Shaw

Business After 5 Committee

Tom Reilly (*Chair*)
Kevin Fancy
Michael Lyons
Leigh-Anne Quinn

AJ Feltis (*Vice Chair*)
Conrad Lovell
Ryan Marriott
Karen Schlupp

Becca Faber
Natalie Hemmerich
Jessica Poworzynk
Jason Taylor

Business Excellence Awards Committee

Laura Hewitson (*Chair*)
Jeff Collins
Nahla Kor
Jessica Spatoro

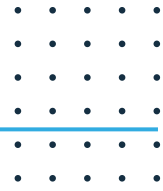
Mohsan Abdullah
Ruben Domingos
Nicole Marinelli
Michelle Tupman

Monica Caudle
Michael Hewitson
Janie O'Brien
Roberto Villamar



2024-25

VOLUNTEERS



Chamber Young Professionals Committee

Maddie Campbell (<i>Chair</i>)	Dani Bazely (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Ashley Close
Eniko Cserepka	Alisa Grange	Emma Marriott
Chintan Patel	Hannah Poole	Christopher Sanson
Geraldine Stafford	Fahmi Turk	

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Carl Cadogan (<i>Chair</i>)	Mohsan Abdullah (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Dani Bazely
Yolande Lansing	Uma Maharaj	Destiny Moser
Mariam Rasool	Geraldine Stafford	Nora Whittington

Healthcare & Physician Recruitment Committee

Laura Hewitson	Mike Hewitson	Jeff MacIntyre
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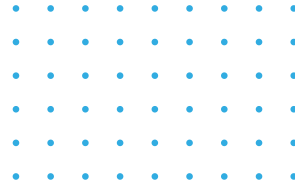
Women’s Leadership Committee

Rachel Sommers (<i>Chair</i>)	Reem Elkady (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Amanda Atkins
Carla Harris	Rebecca Hempey	Nahla Kor
Janice McVey	Ajoa Mintah	Shannon Shaw
Sandra Stone	Kim Wilhelm	



2024-25

VOLUNTEERS



Regional Municipal Affairs Committee

Brian Bennett

Andrew Bingeman

Cory Bluhm

Emir Ceric

Kevin Dias

Ian Macdonald

Justin McFadden

Eric Saulesleja

David Sunday

Hamza Toofani

Shannon Weber

Provincial Federal Affairs Committee

John Cruickshank

Jessica Dupuis

Tim Strome

Sean Sullivan

Hamza Toofani

Volunteer Appreciation

Sponsored By: Cowan Insurance Group

Several times throughout the year, we are able to recognize and show our appreciation for our many volunteers, through Volunteer Socials, personalized thank you cards, complimentary tickets to events, and private receptions before/after select events - among many other initiatives.

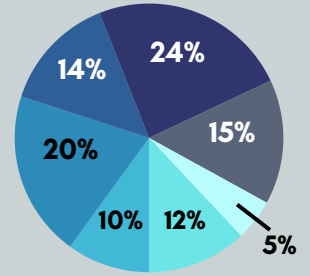
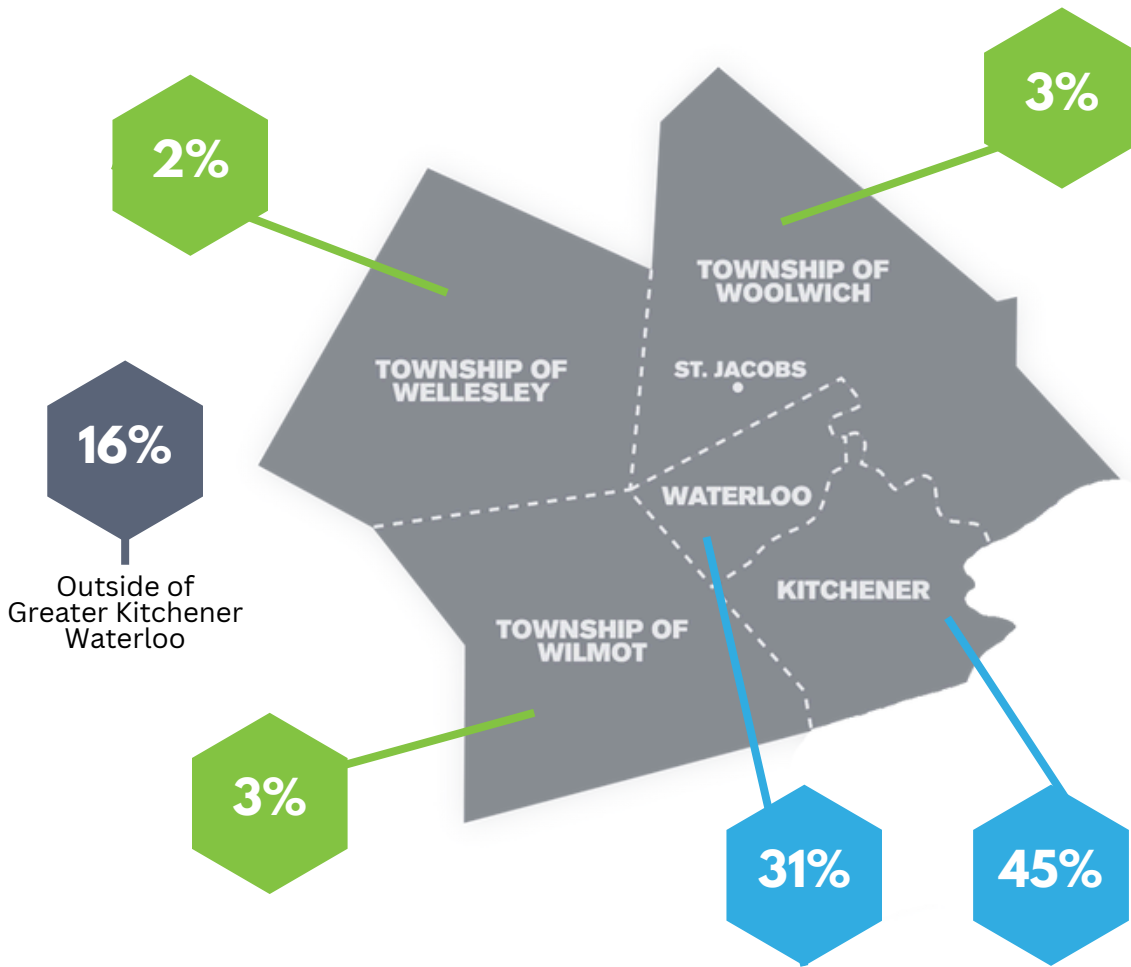


This is all made possible due to the generosity of our Volunteer Appreciation Sponsor.

Want to Volunteer with the Chamber?

Volunteers are vital to the work that we do. We offer a wide range of opportunities with varying time commitments to accommodate the needs of our membership and their busy schedules. [Visit our website to apply.](#)

Chamber MEMBERSHIP



Industries Represented through Chamber Membership

- Business Services, Products, and Wholesalers
- Financial, Investments, and Insurance
- Retail/Hospitality
- Charitable/Government
- Construction, Trades, and Manufacturing
- IT Hardware/Software and Services
- Other

1,460+

Total Membership

The total number of businesses enrolled as Chamber Members this year

85K+

Workforce Representation

The total number of Full Time Employees that worked for our Members this year

82%

Member Retention

The percentage of Members who renewed this year

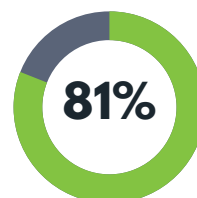
271

New Members

The total number of New Members that signed up this year

Membership Loyalty

43% of members have been with the KW Chamber for more than 10 years, and 17% have been with us for over 25 years. Thank you for your continued commitment!



Business Size

Members who represent as a Small Business (20 or fewer employees).

Chamber MEMBERSHIP



The KW Chamber has been fantastic to us!

“We've had the opportunity to collaborate with many fellow chamber members, leading to meaningful business connections and community growth.”

Faizal Jamal, Welcome Home Construction

Chamber Community

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce brings together a membership of like-minded, community-focused businesses that are eager to see each other succeed through a “Member-to-Member” approach.

They also prioritize their teams, and wish to extend a multitude of benefits to their employees, through Member Advantages, Member Rewards, Cowan Insurance Group One Source Advantage, and so much more.

Membership Values

You, as a Member, can access Resources & Education, Member Rewards & Discounts, as well as Networking Opportunities to help grow your business.

We also advocate for you and your business in the areas that are fundamental to your future success and growth. This includes Talent, Healthcare, Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, Economic Stability, and more, as it relates to businesses - both big and small.

We are here to help *you* succeed.



1,280+
members that participated in peer & mentor meetings



Nearly \$1M
savings available that can be accessed by members



530+
businesses featured through programs & advertising



6,960+
professionals reached weekly with e-blasts

Networking & EVENTS



We bring Members together

Networking plays a significant role in keeping your company visible in a relationship-based business climate.

This year, we continued to produce high-quality events and experiences, bringing our members together in unique and valuable ways.

By adding new events, we were able to provide more opportunities, specifically to small businesses, to make valuable connections (Links & Leads Golf Tournament), access resources to encourage business growth (Expert Exchange Series), and to recognize the dedication and success of our local business community (Small Business Awards).

Even with increased costs of event expenses, we were able to find ways to offer ticket options at various price-points, making them more accessible for all. We also extended the impact of events, after guests leave the venue, by incorporating LinkedIn (to facilitate easier connections), and providing more take-aways, and “next steps” for success.

This year we also saw a significant increase in Members on-stage as Speakers/Experts, gaining visibility, building credibility, and sharing their knowledge to collaborate with and inspire others.



115
events, programs,
and round tables



5,625
total attendees



16
sold-out events



\$10,995
raised through events
for local charities &
healthcare initiatives



100+
experts shared their
insights as speakers,
panelists, and mentors



5,000+
additional views of
event video recordings



Networking & **EVENTS**

We're constantly working to create fresh, valuable experiences for our members. This year, we were excited to launch several new events and series to help you build your network, grow your business, and get inspired.

New Events This Year

Links and Leads Golf Tournament: This isn't your average golf tournament. We've replaced traditional team formats with a unique networking approach. You register individually and are strategically paired with fellow professionals for a round of golf, making it easy to build new connections in a relaxed, social setting.



One-on-One Speed Networking: A new addition to our popular Networking Breakfast Series, this format provides an opportunity for focused, one-on-one conversations with other attendees, helping you make meaningful connections in a short amount of time. Plus, due to increased demand, we were able to add more of this programming during the summer months to continue year-round connections.



Vision One Million Series: This event series brought together leaders and experts to discuss key pillars of our community's future: Jobs & Economy, Transportation, Housing, and Healthcare. It allowed our local business community to be apart of crucial conversations that directly affect their Region's future.



Expert Exchange Roundtable: Get direct, practical advice for your business. This roundtable series connects you with industry experts for small-group discussions on specific topics, such as finance or marketing. The fast-paced format allows you to rotate between tables to address your most pressing questions.



Small Business Awards: An evening dedicated to celebrating the hard work, innovation, and contributions of our dynamic small business community in Waterloo Region. A total of 7 awards were handed out during the inaugural event.



PUBLICATIONS & MEDIA

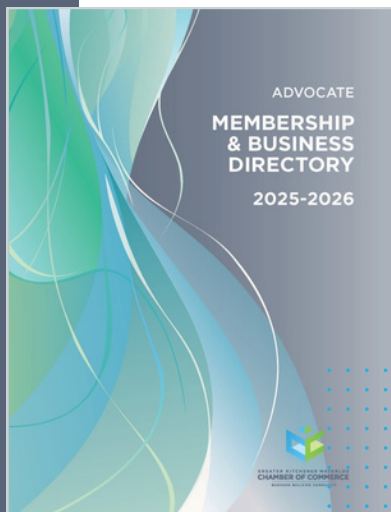


The Advocate

In 2024-25, the **Chamber's Advocate** publication released a series of articles from local sources and authors with national profile. They addressed major issues around growth, international trade wars, population management, infrastructure planning, community building, and more.

Approximately 2,500 copies per issue are distributed to Chamber members and other leaders throughout Waterloo Region, plus an additional 2,000+ interactions online.

[Read Here >>>](#)

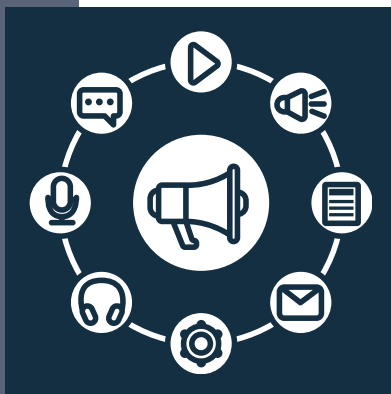


The Membership Directory

The Chamber **Membership & Business Directory** is published annually with 8,000 copies being distributed to local businesses, industry organizations, and tourism operators.

It includes articles from local dignitaries and organizations, and is used as an essential tool for Members to be able to source out new suppliers and partners. This past year, the online version of the directory had 26,000+ interactions.

[Read Here >>>](#)



Media

The Chamber once again was proud to present the weekly **Made Right Here** segment on CTV News Kitchener, profiling makers from around the Region.

In addition, GKWCC President & CEO, Ian McLean, continued to co-host the **Business to Business** Radio Show, every Sunday on CityNews 570.

[Listen Here >>>](#)

Sponsored By:



Chamber PROGRAMS

Sponsored By:



Peer2Peer Groups (P2P)

The Chamber's **Peer2Peer groups** were successful again this past year, with 8 groups, each consisting of 12-15 industry leaders. Participants collaborated with their colleagues to share best practices and resources, resulting in business growth and success.

[Join Here](#) >>>



Chamber Plus Networks (CPN)

Chamber Plus Networks continue to be in high demand, providing members the opportunity to support each other with increased sales, networking skills, and business referrals. An additional group was added this year, with 75 total members participating in CPN's.

[Join Here](#) >>>



Sponsored By:



Behind the Business Podcast

The Chamber's **Behind the Business Podcast** hosted by GKWCC President & CEO Ian McLean, released nearly 50 episodes this year to help viewers learn from prominent business leaders (Owners, CEOs) within the Region & beyond. In it's 2nd year, there were nearly 1,500 downloads.

[Listen Here](#) >>>



Sponsored By:



Female Founders

The Chamber proudly continued its **Female Founders** program, a monthly women-led initiative in-partnership with Scotiabank. One Female Founder is featured each month, sharing their own career journey in a video interview, to empower others. The stories of 11 Founders were shared, and watched by over 7,500 people.

[Watch Here](#) >>>



Advocacy IN ACTION



Protecting Local Businesses Amid Trade War

Over the past year, the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce has collaborated with the Ontario and Canadian Chambers of Commerce to aggressively support local employers through on-going American and global trade disputes. Our efforts will continue into 2025 and beyond as political decisions are significantly impacting local businesses and global markets.







Advocacy Wins

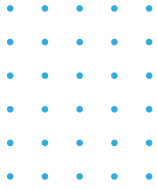
Resolutions. Our Chamber successfully passed policy resolutions at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce which supported a **federal manufacturing tax credit and national trade infrastructure plan.**

Resolutions were also passed at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for **cutting physician red tape/administration and ensuring provincial financial support on municipal land assembly related to economic development.**

Priority Areas

With the direction from our Members, our Chamber continues to focus on the issues that matter most to our local businesses. We've heard from our Members in Round Table Discussions, focus groups and surveys, Council Meetings, and through real-time feedback. As a result, we continue to advocate for businesses in the following priority areas:

-  Transportation
-  Infrastructure
-  Talent
-  Governance
-  Healthcare
-  Economy
-  Housing



Advocacy

IN ACTION

Real Community Discussion

This past year, we hosted 6 Provincial Leaders to discuss priority issues for Waterloo Region businesses. This included conversations with 3 Party Leaders during the election campaign.

We also organized a series of Vision One Million panel discussions which focused on healthcare and primary care delivery, housing and infrastructure, supporting local public services, and meeting employer skills demands.



01. ChamberCheck

In-partnership with the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, ChamberCheck.ca was relaunched to empower our local community to easily identify and support products made in Canada, and to access resources and updates on the constant changes to trade & tariffs between Canada and the U.S.

02. Vision 1 Million Scorecard

The Business Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) continues to do important work. In 2025, the Vision 1-Million Scorecard was created as a transparent tool to monitor our region's progress as we ready for 300,000+ new residents by 2050.

03. Media

Chamber programs and/or staff interviews also appeared in local media, including:



50+

Business leaders that met regularly to help guide & form our advocacy agenda

25+

Thought leadership pieces written to raise awareness of issues important to the business community

Notable Guests:

- Bonnie Crombie, Liberal Party (Ontario)
- Mike Schreiner, Green Party (Ontario)
- Marit Stiles, NDP Party (Ontario)
- Hon. Stephen Lecce, *Minister of Energy & Mines (Ontario)*
- Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, *Minister of Finance (Ontario)*
- Flavio Volpe, *Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association*
- Dan Tisch, *Ontario Chamber of Commerce*

Physician Recruitment & HEALTHCARE



A Critical Need for Our Community

Healthcare and physician recruitment continues to be one of the most pressing issues facing our community and communities across Ontario. Ensuring that residents have access primary care remains at the heart of our efforts, and our program.

Despite our efforts, several challenges persist, including declining Interest in Family Medicine, increased competition across Ontario, limited capacity in Family Health Organizations (FHOs), and complex international pathways (immigration and credentialing delays).

Progress & Impact

This past year, 12 family physicians have been successfully recruited to our community. These physicians have taken over for a retiring physician, starting their own practice, or locuming (contract). Beyond these successes, our recruitment pipeline remains active, with several additional candidates at various stages of consideration, ranging from short-term locum placements to physicians exploring permanent opportunities.

We proudly hosted our 25th Annual Family/Emergency Medicine Resident Weekend: Hosted the largest group to date, welcoming residents and their partners from the University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, Western University, McMaster University, and Queen's University, as well as participants from the U.S. and U.K. The weekend provided future physicians with a first-hand look at both professional opportunities and lifestyle in our community.

1 in 5 

Waterloo Region residents without a Family Doctor

Although the current shortage of physicians is a national issue, we are facing the impacts of this crisis locally.

312 Family Physicians recruited through this program

Since 1998, 312 physicians have been recruited to the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo area.

Physician Recruitment & HEALTHCARE

Collaboration is Our Strength

Through the Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance (SOPRA), we share resources and amplify our outreach efforts internationally. Since 2024, participation in SOPRA allows us to work alongside recruiter colleagues to raise awareness, coordinate strategies, and connect directly with physicians training in Canada and abroad.

Opportunities Ahead

While challenges remain, there are promising opportunities to strengthen our recruitment and retention efforts.

- **Locum-to-Permanent Pathways:** Short-term placements offer a valuable pipeline to permanent recruitment
- **Leveraging New Licensing Pathways:** Ontario's updated licensing rules for UK, U.S., and Australian-trained physicians position our community to attract candidates from abroad.

Where We've Been

- AAFP Future Conference in Kansas City to connect with Canadians training in the US
- FMX (Family Medicine Experience) Phoenix, largest annual conference to meet with both Canadians/U.S physicians
- GP Recruitment Fair in Birmingham, UK to connect with over 90 UK-trained physicians seeking relocation to Ontario

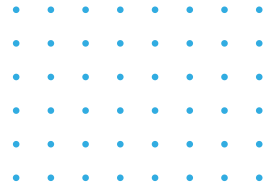


Looking Forward

Physician recruitment remains vital to the health and well-being of our community.

While the landscape is increasingly competitive, our focused outreach, strong local partnerships, and collaborative approach with provincial and regional alliances are ensuring progress. By continuing to adapt to evolving challenges and seize new opportunities, we remain committed to securing the physicians our community needs today and into the future.

IMPACT & INCLUSIVITY
















Representing Our Community

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are woven into every aspect of how we operate. We remain committed to reflecting the diverse community we live and work in, and we know that embedding inclusivity into our culture is what fuels our success and drives innovation year after year.

Local Support

We were proud to support a variety of local organizations this year through both financial and in-kind contributions. Some of those included:

-  Anishnabeg Outreach
-  Caribbean Canadian Association (CCAWR)
-  Coalition of Muslim Women of KW
-  The Compass Refugee Centre
-  The Healing of the Seven Generations
-  KW Multicultural Festival
-  KW Oktoberfest
-  The Multicultural Theatre (MT) Space
-  tri-Pride
-  Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC)
-  SPECTRUM Rainbow Community Space
-  White Owl Native Ancestry Association (WONAA)
-  And many more!

50-30
COMMITMENT

Sustaining Equity

We continue to advance gender parity and diverse representation across staff and Board leadership, ensuring equity is embedded in our operations.

\$28,950

Donations contributed back to the community

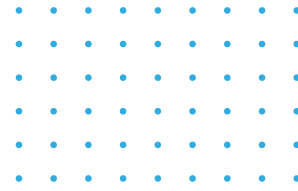
In support of local organizations. Made through both financial and in-kind, including WRCF community grants.

Amplifying Diverse Voices

Across all our events, programs, publications, and staffing (volunteers and full-time), we are committed to achieving a minimum of 40% diverse representation. Ensuring diversity in our main stage speakers, podcast guests, guest authors, Board of Directors, and more not only reflects the community we serve, but it drives richer dialogue, sparks greater innovation, and fosters stronger collaboration. This commitment strengthens our Chamber and enhances the way we support our Members.

Healthcare & Physician Recruitment

PARTNERS



These community partners are crucial in helping us reach our goal of eliminating the doctor shortage in Waterloo Region. The work is far from done, but we've been able to amplify our efforts, thanks to the support and dedication from the following sponsors.

Platinum



Gold



Silver



Bronze



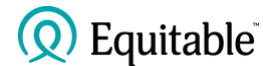
Community



Our PARTNERS

We could not deliver the programming, events, advocacy efforts, or resources that we do each year without the generous contributions of our corporate and community partners. These leaders are strong supporters of the Chamber and the work we do to support our local businesses.

Chamber Chair's Circle



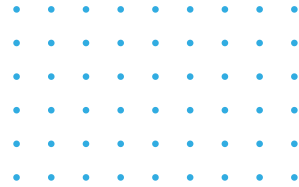
Chamber Patrons



Chamber Trustees



Our PARTNERS



Title Sponsors



Media Partners



Want to join them, while raising awareness for your business?
[Contact us today](#) for custom partnership opportunities that fit your goals and budget.



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