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advocate

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Celebrating our Successes and Building for the Future

On March 21, I had the pleasure of attending and speaking at the Greater KW Chamber 2024 Business Excellence Awards Gala.

The event was a great success and celebrated many of the great businesses and organizations that are based here in our region. This year's event featured a new format, with a live streaming party being held at Waterloo Brewing concurrently with the main gala event at Bingemans. I would like to thank everyone involved in making the night as great as it was, especially all of the Chamber staff who worked so hard both leading up to the event and all day and night on March 21 to make things go off without a hitch. I would also like to thank all of the event sponsors, especially the title sponsor Cowan Insurance, and our hosts Daryl Morris and Angie Hill. PwC was proud to sponsor the Young Professional of the Year Award and Ediz Kemal was a very deserving winner. It was also great to see Conrad Lovell win Volunteer of the Year for everything that he does for the Chamber, and Tony Giovinazzo be awarded the Michael R. Follett Community Leader of the Year for his many years of giving back to our community. Congratulations to all of the nominees and winners and thank you for everything you do to make our region great!

In this issue of the Advocate, a number of organizations have contributed with a view to the future and building our community. These organizations will be key in achieving what our region needs as part of Vision One Million. As we've looked back and celebrated our successes in 2023-2024 at the BEA Gala, we can be thankful we have such a great community to build on to set us up for further successes in the future.

Maximize This Summer's Events to G.R.O.W. Your Business: Insights from Christine Neill and Kristen Gillett

As the Waterloo Region strides towards 'Vision One Million,' embracing community events is key to elevating your organization's profile and strengthening community bonds. This strategy boosts business growth, enhances economic resilience, and promotes cohesion, revealing new opportunities. Experts Christine Neill and Kristen Gillett, show how the G.R.O.W. strategy can help you seize these exceptional opportunities.

G – Gear Up for Event Participation:

"Plan for these big events; they're on the calendar," advises Dr. Christine Neill, Chair of the Department of Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University. Start by researching EXPLORE Waterloo Region (www.explorewaterloo.ca) to identify events that align with your business values and goals. She adds, "Preparation sets the foundation for success. Effective planning positions you not just to participate, but to stand out. Consider extending your hours and ensuring you have sufficient staff to handle the increased demand. Adapting your offerings to cater to event attendees not only distinguishes your business but creates memorable connections."

R – Rally Your Team for Hospitable Hosting:

Kristen Gillett, Event Producer/Owner, Birtch-Gillett Inc. based in Kitchener-Waterloo, emphasizes the importance of a hosting mindset: "You're hosting. It's about integrating the event into your organization's daily life." Infusing your operations with event-related motifs – from decorations to special offers or featuring local talent – turns your business into an active participant in the celebration, deepening your connection with the community.

O – Open Doors to New Opportunities:

"Events offer a prime venue for connecting with new and current customers," Christine Neill suggests. "Use events as a 'platform for showcasing what makes your business or organization unique." Featuring related products or services can amplify your connection with both the event and its attendees, enriching your community ties and customer base.

W – Widen Your Circle by Looking Locally First:

"Expanding our connections enriches us all. Look local first. We have so much talent here, so many interesting event vendors and suppliers that are willing to build those relationships for longevity," reflects Kristen Gillett. The Chamber's Member Directory is a gateway to a vibrant network ready to support one another.

Takeaway:

As we navigate towards "Vision One Million," each act of engagement brings us closer to a future marked by prosperity and harmony. This summer let's not just participate in our diverse community events – let's redefine our role within them, turning every opportunity into a foundational block towards a more connected and thriving Waterloo Region.



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Scott Gilfillan is a chartered professional accountant and a partner with PwC in assurance, as well as their Waterloo Market Leader. Scott focuses on providing clients with audit and accounting advice while acting as a trusted business advisor.



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Gina, Founder and Principal of CanCannot Consulting Inc., is Vice Chair of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Chair of the Governance Committee. In these roles, she is dedicated to delivering value to a diverse membership, fostering inclusivity, and driving prosperity.

Building a Collaborative and Prosperous Waterloo Region

Our Region's population over the next 20 years will grow to over 1M and this demands significant investments into our community infrastructure. Planning and implementation must commence immediately to meet both the current and future requirements of all residents and employers.

We require a community where business collaborates with all levels of government, and residents are part of the decision-making for major projects. Waterloo Region has built a global reputation for collaboration that must continue so we can build a community that is worth living in.

Eric Avner, CEO of the Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF), is a strong voice and advocate for managing social change. He has noted that physical infrastructure is the visible systems of housing, parks, roads, public transit and recreation centres along with the less visible networks of power grids and sewers/watermains. Social infrastructure is the accompanying system of organizations, spaces and experiences that enable people to connect. They are the bridges to build trust and civic participation that ultimately guide community development.

In April of 2023, Ontario's Big City Mayors conducted their Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference in Kitchener. A panel discussion focused on how local community leaders transformed Kitchener's city core from an outdated downtown to a vibrant centre supporting the tech industry, new residential projects and cultural attractions.

Kevin Crowley of Communitech wrote that mayors and other attendees at this meeting were told the story of how the main ingredient in Waterloo Region's secret sauce is fundamentally collaboration. Kitchener Mayor Berry Urbanovic noted that his city has taken a holistic approach to city-building where the public, private and not-for-profit sectors all work collaboratively towards the same goals.

Chris Albinson of Communitech also emphasized to the mayors that collaboration and a strong sense of community drive the local tech sector. The Communitech Hub in downtown Kitchener is, very intentionally, a community space. His organization was started by founders for founders and one of their passions is supporting community efforts.

A prominent example is the role played by tech and business leaders during the initial stages of the pandemic, where access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was in short supply. Individuals and organizations mobilized colleagues across the community with a donation drive to provide excess supplies of face masks and other essential equipment to front-line workers.

An online marketplace was also established where Canadian vendors could sell domestically manufactured products.

Communitech has also led projects to connect leaders in specific sectors such as business, municipal, health care and post-secondary education to identify urgent challenges and propose innovative Canadian-made solutions. During the height of the pandemic, Communitech executives met weekly with local hospitals and the president of the University of Waterloo where service providers were expediently connected to clients seeking assistance.

The new strategic plan of the Waterloo Region Community Foundation challenges us to explore and invest in a system of social infrastructure. Interactions and connections between communities, neighbourhoods, groups and generations are critical for our future success. Fundamental concerns include the participation of all residents, most notably those interests that have been sitting on the sidelines and not fully engaged in civic life. The WRCF will support local efforts for integration, active engagement, and innovation.

If Waterloo Region can build the social infrastructure we need as a community of 1M, we can increase our understanding of the needs within our community and the communities around us. We can increase trust and deepen our sense of belonging. The success of our community and future generations demands that we achieve these goals together.

Let's get to work!



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Business Building a Better Future for All Canadians

The logo of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce prominently denotes “business building community” as an articulation of our organizational priorities and responsibilities across the Region of Waterloo.

The statement represents our collective belief that local business activities support community services that are required for economic stability and sustained growth. A similar public policy approach prevails across Ontario and Canada.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) has indicated that thriving businesses, a strong economy and better life for all Canadians motivates the organization to serve the membership and drive positive change for families and communities. Their mission is to advance change, partner broadly and serve as the undisputed champion and catalyst for sustained economic and corporate success.

Communities are built through residents and businesses providing tax revenues to support essential public services such as healthcare, education and infrastructure. Growth is not provided through escalating activity across the public sector.

A December 2022 media release from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) noted that government does not create economic expansion but rather the public sector provides the right conditions to support competitiveness and growth. The CCC also indicated in a recent pre-budget submission that governments stepping aside to allow the private sector to lead economic growth, instead of spending more money to create new programs, is particularly critical during an era of high housing costs and moderate inflation.

Budgetary measure supported by the CCC have historically included regulatory reform and dismantling internal trade barriers which will cost the federal government little or nothing but potentially generate future prosperity and ease any financial burdens on both business and government.

A recent article in The Hill Times (November 21, 2023) from the Fraser Institute noted that since an onset of the pandemic, the rate of net job growth in the public sector has exceeded the private sector in all ten provinces. Their analysis concludes that adequate job creation across Canada originates from growing governments rather than a thriving private sector. Also, the rate of job growth appears even weaker as Canada’s working age population increases.

The Fraser Institute concludes the private-public growth divide is raising important questions around business stability, the effect of a growing payroll on government finances, and the burden on business and residential taxpayers.

Jason Clemens of the Fraser Institute further wrote in The Hill Times on August 1, 2023 that the current Canadian government sector is thriving while the private sector, which provides the resources for government, is struggling and grossly underperforming relative to their collective potential. To increase the living standards of Canadians, as envisioned by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, governments across the nation must change course immediately and focus on economic policies that will increase growth in per-person GDP.

A May 12, 2023 article in the Financial Post by Jack Mintz asserted that all Canadian governments need to focus more on encouraging private sector employment and less on protecting their own workers. Businesses generally have less ability to raise consumer prices for recovering higher negotiated wage costs, which lead to competitors assuming market share.

The Conference Board of Canada (October 2023) noted that while increasing employment may appear to show a strong labour market, results should be interpreted with caution given the wider context of population growth. The absence of private sector employment gains is a sign of underlying weakness, accompanied by increasing part time employment and a rise in self-employment.

According to all indicators including economic growth, business investment, entrepreneurship and employment rates, Canada’s private sector is struggling. These trends will have to be reversed for building the economy, community and sustainable public services that residents and businesses require.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Art Sinclair

Art is Vice President Policy and Advocacy for the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT

CURRENT STATE OF PRIMARY CARE IN ONTARIO

The Ontario Medical Association estimates that 2.2 million Ontario residents do not have access to a family doctor. That is the equivalent combined populations of London, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Kingston that lack comprehensive patient care.

The number of Ontarians without a family doctor is growing steadily and the situation has long surpassed crisis levels. Though, the current shortage of physicians is a national issue, we are facing the impacts of this crisis locally. It is expected that 1 in 5 residents in our community do not have a primary care provider.

Challenges facing physician recruitment:

- » Family medicine is not as attractive as it used to be. We are seeing fewer medical school graduates choose the specialty of family medicine due to rising expectations placed on family physicians without appropriate resources.
- » 30% of local physicians will be reaching retirement age. This does not account for those who will retire early or relocate.
- » More competition. Communities, provincially and nationally, who haven't had a recruiter or recruitment program are now establishing programs.
- » The life cycle of recruitment is longer due to international trained timeline challenges.
- » Changes in practicing. We are seeing physicians choose long-term locum (contract) opportunities over establishing family practices (first 5 years of practice to permanent)

Facing these challenges:

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. Through this program we will:

- Continue to be a resource to physicians in any stage of their career
- Continue to strengthen our relationship with Ontario residency programs
- Broaden our reach by attending International Recruitment Events in partnership with the Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance



Jenna Petker, Physician Recruitment Lead for the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce



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kwphysicians.ca



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

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2024 MANUFACTURING SUMMIT

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The annual Manufacturing Summit is hosted as a way to bring the manufacturing and supply chain communities together in the Region. We are the heart of Canada's most productive manufacturing cluster. With all the challenges facing the industry, companies need to lean into digitalization to ensure success with their people, products, procedures, and processes. So this year, we'll be focusing on Smart Manufacturing & Industry 4.0 because the future of manufacturing is here.

This event is presented in partnership by
the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of
Commerce & Guelph Chamber of Commerce.



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Admission: \$65 (*includes lunch*)*
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2024 Business Excellence Awards Winners



Employee Engagement Award - Linda Li at Dillon Consulting accepts the award from Dean Bulloch, VP, HR, Corporate Services & Secretary General to the Board of Governors, Conestoga College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning



Volunteer of the Year Award - Conrad Lovell, Investment Advisor at RBC Dominion Securities accepts the award from Michael Comsa, Client Executive of Commercial Sales SW Ontario with Bell Canada.



Environment and Sustainability Award - Irene Divaris Founder of Meal in a Jar accepts the award from Mat Robson, Senior Analyst New Business Projects with Enbridge.



Non-Profit/Charitable Award - Dr. Trevor Charles Founder & Executive Director of LiftOff accepts the award from Ted Rowe, President of MTE Consultants Inc.



Service Excellence in Hospitality & Tourism Award - Joanna Loebach, General Manager at St. Jacobs Market District accepts the award from Garth Cressman, CEO of WalterFedy.



Innovation Award - Dr. Michelle Chretien, Associate VP, Research & Innovation, Conestoga College, accepts the award from Raymond Singh, Uptown Waterloo Branch Manager with Scotiabank.



Health & Wellness in the Workplace Award - Chief of Police, Mark Crowell accepts the award from Sean Sullivan, Waterloo Region Managing Partner with Gowling WLG.



Community Builder of the Year Award - Tim Bezner, President of Westmount Signs & Printing accepts the award from Nick Heffner, Variable Operations Manager with Heffner Lexus & Heffner Toyota.



Business of the Year Award (1-10 Employees) - Lesley Warren, CEO & Creative Director of W Design Co. accepts the award from Sarah Tamm, Partner with MNP LLP.



Business of the Year Award (11-50 Employees) - Rob Matlow, President of REM Web Solutions accepts the award from Matt Innes, Associate with Miller Thomson LLP.



Business of the Year Award (Over 50 Employees) - Ted Rowe, President of MTE Consultants accepts the award from Jeremy Red, Director of Co-operative Education Services with the University of Waterloo.



Michael R. Follett Community Leader of the Year Award - Tony Giovino accepts the award from Marc Avaria, Executive VP, Group Insurance Division with Equitable.



Young Professional of the Year Award - Ediz Kemal, General Manager of The Tone-Gar Group of Companies accepts the award virtually from Scott Gillfillan, Partner with PwC.



New Business of the Year Award (Under 2 Years) - Rick and Sherry Couchman, Co-Owners of The Poop Valet Pet Waste Removal Service accept the award from Suzanne Welch, Partner with MAC LLP.

2024 Business Excellence Awards Gala

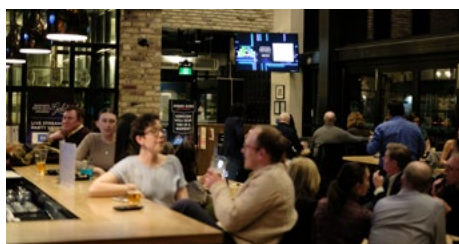
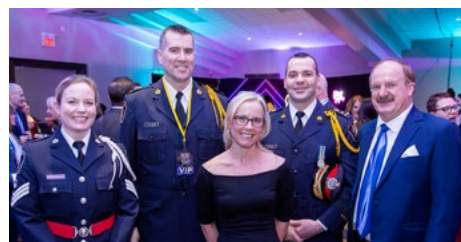


Photo Credits: Tomasz Adamski & Andreas Photography

Mark Your Calendar

Wednesday, May 1st, 2024

Point of View: A Path to Reconciliation with Tabatha Bull

11:00 am – 1:00 pm **Includes a lunch buffet**

Location: Crowne Plaza (105 King Street E, Kitchener, ON)

Member: \$60

Future Member: \$100

Join us for a fireside chat with Tabatha Bull, President & CEO, Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. In this intimate conversation we will get to learn more about her role as CEO with Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, the importance of equal economic opportunity, and the path towards reconciliation. We'll also cover some other specifics such as housing, talent, the energy sector, and forging relationships with Indigenous communities.

Title Sponsor:



Gold Sponsor:



Bronze Sponsors:



Thursday, May 2nd, 2024

MNP Speed Networking

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Location: Crowne Plaza (105 King Street E, Kitchener, ON)

Member: \$40 **Includes a breakfast buffet**

Future Member: \$80

The Speed Networking event is always highly anticipated, and now its in person! Start your day by meeting other business professionals in a quick (yet effective) method of networking.

Title Sponsor:



Supporting Sponsor:



Thursday, May 9th, 2024

2024 Manufacturing Summit

12:00PM-4:00PM

Location: Frank Hasenfratz Centre for Excellence in Manufacturing (700 Woodlawn Rd W, Guelph ON)

Member: \$65 • Future Member: \$120

Exhibitor: \$285 **for Members only**

The annual Manufacturing Summit is hosted to bring the manufacturing and supply chain communities together in the Region. We are the heart of Canada's most productive manufacturing cluster. With all the challenges facing the industry, companies need to lean into digitalization to ensure success with their people, products, procedures, and processes. So, this year, we'll be focusing on Smart Manufacturing & Industry 4.0 because the future of manufacturing is here.

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Thursday, May 16th, 2024

CEO Social

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Location: Virtual Event Hosted on Zoom

Registration is FREE! **pre-registration is encouraged**

Engage in candid conversation with the KW Chamber's President & CEO, Ian McLean, during this (virtual) CEO Social. This open forum gives you the opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns, so your Chamber can continue working for you. Ask about the Chamber and our programs, discuss an issue that your business might be facing, or just pop-in for a quick chat!

Tuesday, May 28th, 2024

Nominee Social

4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Location: Crabby Joe's Kitchener (70 King St E, Kitchener, ON)

INVITE ONLY

A drop-in style networking reception, to celebrate all the accomplishments of the 2024 Business Excellence Awards Gala Nominees.

Thursday, June 6th, 2024

Libro Business After 5: Kickoff to Summer

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: Food Bank of Waterloo Region

Member: complimentary, recommended \$10 donation to our Feature Charity

Future Member: \$40 donated to our Feature Charity

Come and join us at Cowan for fantastic networking opportunities in welcoming environment. Engage with local businesses at their booths, savour refreshments, and make the most of the numerous possibilities at this BA5 event, such as building relationships, generating sales, obtaining referrals, seeking mentorship, receiving advice, and much more!

Title Sponsor:



Gold Sponsor:



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Host Venue & Feature Charity:



Wednesday, June 12th, 2024

Heffner Women's Leadership: Summer Soiree

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Lala Social House (181 King St S, Waterloo)

Members: \$50 +hst • Future Members: \$90 +hst

includes appetizers and your first drink

Join us for the next Women's Leadership event at Lala Social House!

This year's Summer Soiree offers a lively evening with excellent drinks, tasty food, and enjoyable networking. Reconnect with old friends and meet new ones in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Don't miss this chance to celebrate the summer season with great company, and get exclusive access to Lala Social House, a Members-Only gathering place in Uptown Waterloo.

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Thursday, June 27th, 2024

Parking Lot Party (Member Social)

3:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: KW Chamber of Commerce (80 Queen St N, Kitchener, ON)
Save the Date! The KW Chamber of Commerce is hosting a backyard bash complimentary to all members. More details to come.

June 2024

Ginger Goat Chamber of Young Professionals: Hot Seat

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: TBC • Member: TBC • Future Member: TBC

Just like "First We Feast Hot Ones" - Kris Ronan of Ginger Goat sits down with a (local) celebrity to ask hot questions while they eat even hotter wings.

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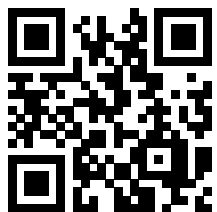
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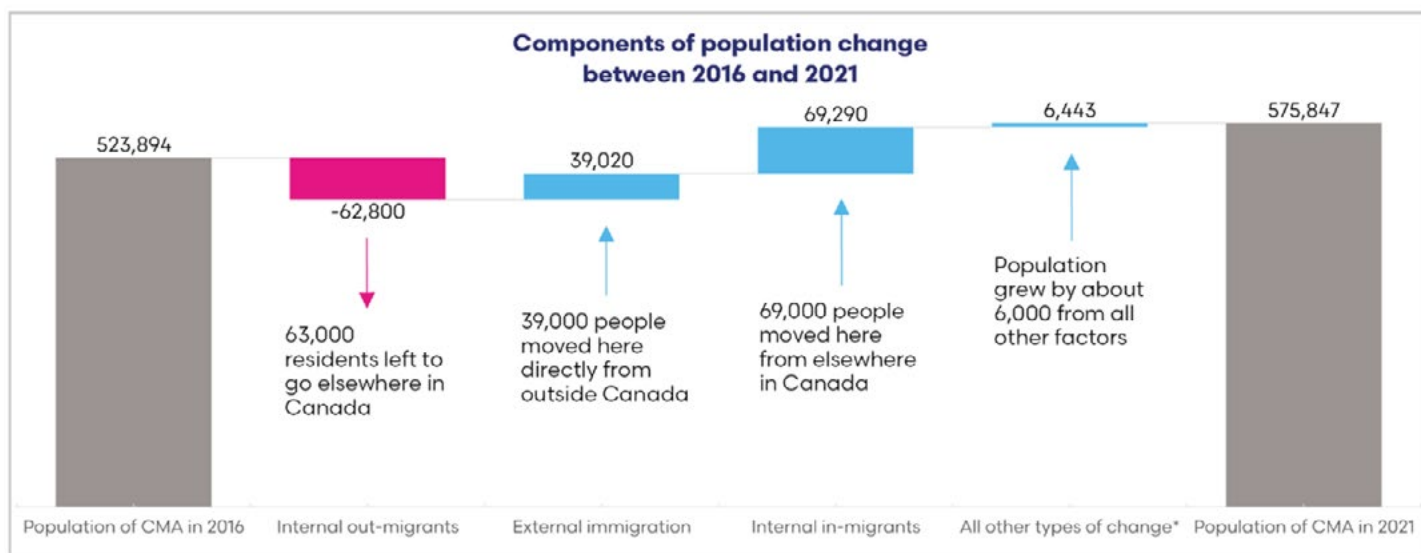
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An Infrastructure to Build Community

Over the second half of 2023, the Board and team of Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF) crafted its first-ever strategic plan. We studied how the world was facing a polycrisis, how philanthropy was transforming, and most importantly, how Waterloo Region was continuing to change before our eyes.

peril. Our growth to one million residents should be a source of unique perspectives, new ideas, and fresh opportunities. It also could cause disruption, confusion, and a loss of shared identity. How do we ensure we don't exclude people, neighbourhoods, or communities from the conversations and opportunities ahead?



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 and 2016. Census of Population. Additional Chart explanation included in the Vital Signs Report.

As we were doing this, we were also releasing the 2023 Waterloo Region Vital Signs report (www.wrcf.ca/vital-signs). Amongst all the data outlining our challenges with affordable housing, a chart on Page 32 stood out.

I knew our region was growing rapidly. I had heard we had Canada's second highest in-migration rate, and in fact, we grew by 10% in five years (2016-2021), which is by 52,000 people. But that's only half of the story. I learned through the report that our region also has Canada's second-highest out-migration rate. We actually welcomed 108,000 new residents to the region during that five-year period... but said goodbye to almost 63,000 people who left town. Admittedly, 40% of that movement can be attributed to students coming and going, but 60% wasn't. They are families and seniors, friends and neighbours, employees, volunteers, patrons, and donors. It's tough to think so many people felt they needed to leave Waterloo Region to have the life they wanted.

It's perplexing to contemplate how to build community when 1/6 of our population is new every five years. I can't imagine maintaining a business when there is that much staff turnover – or customer turnover. Our region's rapid change – both in numbers and in diversity – holds immense potential but also possible

As our larger society faces trends towards more polarization, isolation, and loneliness, we think Waterloo Region can instead realize our collective potential by growing into a place where everyone is valued, feels they belong, and can be part of helping to create something bigger.

How do we do this? By purposely investing in our community's **Social Infrastructure**.

Physical infrastructure is the visible, built environment systems of housing, parks, roads, public transit, recreation centres, and the less visible systems of sewers and power grids. It's the systems on which *economic development* traditionally relies.

Social infrastructure is the system of organizations, spaces and experiences that enable people to connect with each other. They are the bridges necessary to build trust and civic participation, to create a sense of belonging and wellbeing. It's the system that enables sustainable widespread *community development*.

WRCF's new strategic plan challenges us to explore, learn more about, and invest in a system of social infrastructure across our region. Everywhere we look, we see the need to build more trust and more civic participation to create a sense of belonging and wellbeing in all our communities. This is critical from the southern

edge of North Dumfries to the northern tip of Woolwich, and throughout the neighbourhoods spread across all our cities and townships.

It's been gratifying that so many individuals and organizations have reached out to tell us that they too see the importance of creating meaningful interactions between different communities, different neighbourhoods, different groups, and different generations. If we can build enough social bridges, we can be a community capable of coming together to accomplish big things, important things.

We feel there are some common traits that social infrastructure should embrace if we are to experience its full power and impact:

- **Connection** – Build a sense of belonging. Feeling connected to something or someone is fundamental to the human spirit. It allows us to step out of our assumptions and prejudices and feel the joy of open-ended possibility and purpose.
- **Collaboration** – Together, we can do more. Interaction with others – other organizations, other people, other communities – should reinforce our ability to work together to achieve outcomes we couldn't reach alone.
- **Purposeful** – We come together for a reason. Our communities benefit when we act with intention, embracing a clarity of goals aligned with our community's shared values and aspirations.
- **Agency** – We each choose how we participate. Individuals should dictate the role they want to play, or how they interpret a piece of art. Choices create engagement and power.
- **Openness, Safety, and Accessibility** – All are welcomed. People must feel comfortable to openly be themselves and interact. Barriers like buying a ticket, transportation, or a lack of accommodation for people living with disabilities should be removed so communities have a better chance at defining what brings them together and how to support each other.
- **Chance** – Allow for moments of surprise. We often need a jolt of the unexpected to discover new opportunities we didn't know we were looking for. Joy can come from meeting someone new, stumbling upon an unexpected event in the neighborhood, learning a new skill, or just getting a welcome break from the day to day.

There is no shortage of ideas for where to start. Many people and organizations are already building social infrastructure. We look forward to supporting those efforts and trying out new ideas too. We're intrigued by opportunities to build on what has already been done, taking into consideration the state of our region today and its ambitions for tomorrow.

Here's one easy way to get involved: Back in 2019, Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation and Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation led a community initiative called "On the Table" where we encouraged people to get together and discuss what matters to them over some kind of food and drink. People got together at their homes, businesses, and organizations, and we then created a report back to community that was used to take action on what mattered most to members of our community. Over the weekend of June 7-9, **On the Table** is coming back. This time we are going to ask hosts to consider linking their discussions to some prompts about social infrastructure. It will help us share the concept of social infrastructure with people across the community, and also provide us with the chance to incorporate community voices as we evolve the work we do. Let us know if you'd consider hosting a conversation (or two) in your company, organization, or circle of friends over that weekend. Visit wrcf.ca/onthetable to learn more and sign up to host a conversation.

We need to grow more community as our community grows, and we think investing in a system of social infrastructure is the way forward. If you have perspectives, stories, or links to share on ways to build more connections, please send them my way. I'll read them all. My email is eric@wrcf.ca. Our team is learning more every day and welcomes your ideas on what's possible as we build a system of social infrastructure that is right for our region, our residents, and our communities.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Avner

Eric Avner is the President & CEO of Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF), an organization focused on ensuring our communities are equitable, connected, and sustainable; and people are thriving. www.wrcf.ca

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YKF: Canada's Fastest Growing Airport

If you haven't travelled through the Region of Waterloo International Airport (YKF) lately, you are in for a treat. There's been a lot of changes at YKF over the past two years, including our new airport terminal with expanded departures lounge, state-of-the-art baggage system and self-serve kiosks for check-in, just to name a few. YKF is the fastest growing airport in Canada and last year 445,312 passengers travelled through our terminal, a whopping 457% increase since 2019!

Our airport team has been busy putting the finishing touches on the \$37.6M airport expansion project which enables YKF to welcome up to one million passengers per year.

We're also thrilled to be partnering with Stockyards Brewing who will bring local flavour and personal service into our departures lounge with their newest location Stockyards @ YKF. Stockyards leverages their combined experience and taps into the region's farm-to-table supply chain to create affordable, healthy options for travellers, including those with specific dietary needs. We also can't wait to have travellers try their new YKF lager "Jetstream" and custom coffee brew!

From the parking lot to the boarding gate, each touch point of the passenger experience has been enhanced and simplified. We want you to choose YKF.

Flair Airlines, Sunwing and WestJet provide regular, scheduled air service to Calgary, Cancun, Fort Lauderdale, Las Vegas, Orlando Sanford, Puerto Vallarta, Punta Cana, Vancouver and Varadero. And, this summer's schedule also includes the return of routes to Abbotsford, Charlottetown, Deer Lake, Halifax, Edmonton, St. John's and Winnipeg.

In addition to our on-site airline partners, we have recently launched a unique service with Air Canada and Landline. This new land-to-air service lets travellers purchase a single itinerary combining luxury motorcoach service with Air Canada flights for a seamless, convenient and more sustainable journey. Just check-in at YKF 20 minutes before your coach departs and be connected to over 140 destinations worldwide.

As we do in Waterloo Region, we've already got our sights set on our next milestones, innovations and improvements to support the community as it grows. YKF's future is guided by our 20-year Airport Master Plan, which was approved by Regional Council in 2017 and is now in the process of being refreshed. The Master Plan takes into consideration the newest trends in aviation, local opportunities and global context, guiding future growth and strategic direction. At The Region of Waterloo International Airport, our Master Plan takes a "just-in-time" approach, where a pre-set passenger volume is required to trigger each of the five development stages, making the most of existing infrastructure while managing financial risk, allowing YKF to respond to industry changes without compromising customer service.

We invite you to follow along with the Airport Master Plan Refresh project at Engage WR.

Earlier phases of consultation with the community overwhelmed us with stories of how the airport has evolved to be an important gateway to connecting with the experiences and people they love. We heard how YKF is easy to navigate, provides personalized service that you can't find in other places and how it's nice to be a short drive to get home to your own bed at the end of a trip.

These are the stories that help shape what we need our regional airport to become, and we hope that you'll weigh in with your perspective on what YKF means for the community, to you and to your business now and in the future.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colleen James

Colleen James is a Regional Councillor, representing City of Kitchener residents and the Chair of the Planning and Works Committee. Colleen's professional career includes more than 15 years of experience in municipal government at both the city and regional levels.



EXCITING TRAVEL DESTINATIONS!

A scenic view of a tropical beach in Thailand. In the foreground, a traditional wooden longtail boat with a blue canopy is beached on a sandy shore. The water is a vibrant turquoise color. In the background, there are large, steep limestone cliffs rising from the sea under a clear blue sky.

THAILAND

A large, historic stone castle with multiple towers and battlements, surrounded by lush green trees and a well-manicured lawn.

IRELAND

A section of the Great Wall of China, showing the stone wall and watchtowers winding along a ridge covered in green vegetation.

CHINA

A view of the Prague skyline, featuring a dense cluster of red-roofed buildings and a bridge over a river in the foreground.

PRAGUE

A busy street scene in Vienna, showing historic European architecture, people walking, and a horse-drawn carriage.

VIENNA

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Laurier's Facilities Support a Thriving Community

The Waterloo Region is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada and over the next three decades, the population will reach almost one million people.

The postsecondary sector, and Wilfrid Laurier University specifically, has a critical role to play in supporting our community's growth. Educating the next generation so that we have local talent in key industries such as tech, health care, social and educational services, and business is an obvious role that Laurier will play to prepare the region for this significant population growth.

Less obvious, however, is the role Laurier's infrastructure and facilities will play in supporting the many needs of our growing community. Postsecondary campuses are critical anchors in communities and our role in this area will only continue to grow as our population does.

Residences provide affordable housing for students, easing pressure on the local housing market; our athletics and recreation facilities host recreational programs for citizens of all ages; and our buildings provide space for important community events.

In May, for instance, we will welcome Mayor Dorothy McCabe as she hosts hundreds of community members at the annual State of the City breakfast in the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics Atrium. Laurier will also host the provincial Special Olympics this spring, and in summer hundreds of youth come to our campus to attend camps with varying themes, from arts and culture, to athletics, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The next few decades are an exciting time for the region and Laurier has a bold vision to support our community in this growth. One such long-term plan is the re-development of the stadium on Seagram Drive. The Seagram Drive Athletics and Recreation multi-phase redevelopment project includes the addition of a winter-use dome, which will immediately add almost 80,000 square feet of recreation space to the community and over 1,500 hours of field time.

Laurier's campus master plan envisions a greener campus. The Laurier Energy Efficiency Project (LEEP) is a comprehensive, multi-phase initiative to increase the energy efficiency of our buildings. This \$48 million investment in rooftop solar panels, battery storage and a fully functioning micro-grid ensures we are doing our part to move towards a net-zero community.

Other plans include connecting the urban forest tree canopy and supporting community food gardens. We also continue to make improvements on walkways, entranceways and green space so that our campuses and locations are pedestrian friendly, safe, accessible and inviting for all in our community.

Finally, in response to the local housing crunch, Laurier is in the process of creating a renewed strategy to bring new residences to its campuses over the next five years, to increase the availability of student housing in Waterloo.

We sit on the Town and Gown Student Housing Taskforce, gathering data on the housing needs of students, so we can continue to find solutions and meet housing needs as our population grows.

The facilities needs of our campus and community will continue to grow in the coming decades and become more complex. We look forward to continuing to work with all levels of government, local businesses, and donors, so that we can invest in the infrastructure we need for a thriving community.

An investment in the infrastructure at Laurier is an investment in our community – one that will ensure the health and wellbeing of future generations in the Waterloo Region.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lloyd Noronha

Lloyd Noronha is the Vice-President: Finance and Administration at Wilfrid Laurier University.

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Building our Community of the Future through Immigration

Just as the pandemic was taking hold and before Waterloo Region's path to 1 million people became a big and constant focus, organizations across sectors worked together to develop a then new five-year regional strategy for Building Community Through Immigration.

Through the Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, that strategy is the culmination of more than 15 years of working across business, community service, municipal, post secondary, ethno cultural and other organizations to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and contribute to a thriving, prosperous community for all.

Waterloo Region has been a community of immigration since the first settlers arrived in the early 1800s. We will continue to be a community of immigration into the future. We are one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. As of the last census, immigration has become the major driver of Regional population growth. We are in a time when the policies and rules around immigration are changing at a dizzying pace, where immigration has ballooned quickly nationally and locally, and when at a national level we are just starting to think about immigration from a longer-term and intersectional policy lens.

There are many unknowns but one thing is sure: as Waterloo Region grows to 1 million people and beyond, most population and labour force growth will be through immigration. Immigrants will enrich our regional communities and workplaces with a wide range of skills, experiences, connections, language capacities and other talents. Many will be highly educated and of working age, provide labour local businesses need to thrive and support many local businesses. Some will start their own businesses, employ others, volunteer, donate to charity, contribute to arts and culture, and participate in community in many ways. Others will arrive with complex health and other needs that make their settlement journey difficult and lengthy. They will move here from all over the world and continuously change our ethnic, cultural, religious and other forms of regional diversity. Many will come from highly urbanized or densely populated regions. They will come for work, for education, to escape war and conflict, to reunite with family, escape the impact of climate change and more. Ultimately, to build a better life for themselves, their families and the community around them.

In Canada, immigration is nation building, it is community building and it strongly affects our economy. As we work to build our community for the future, we must think about who our community will be and the kind of community they will need and want. What skills will the population have, what work will they do, what businesses will they operate, what learning will they pursue,

and what languages will they speak, what global connections will they have? What housing, health care, transportation, and other physical infrastructure will they want or need, what kind of lifestyle will they be accustomed to, and what social infrastructure will feed their souls and make this a community where everyone belongs and experiences success and joy.

The people who live, work, learn and play in this region will be different in the future from who we are today. We must try to anticipate the changes coming and respond proactively. Since 2009, the Immigration Partnership has brought together partners across sectors to identify the changes we need to make as a regional community, to address short-term challenges and set the stage for long-term success by growing collective community capacity for change.

Three strategic pillars of focus underpin that collective work: Settle, Work and Belong. These pillars matter now and will matter when 1 million people call Waterloo Region home, no matter where they came from. Positive community changes are happening because of organizations across the region coming together to build community for all through immigration. More diverse people are involved in community development and leadership. Workplaces are evolving hiring and retention practices. New business are starting. More diverse housing options are being developed. Programs and services are better suited to a culturally and linguistically diverse community. Equity, diversity and inclusion work is taking root across the community. More residents are welcoming newcomers and others and helping them to settle and belong. New partnerships are developing, and more.

The Immigration Partnership will continue to be a catalyst for change and partner to organizations across sectors as Waterloo Region grows. Everyone must change and grow together, and we are here to help. What will you do?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tara Bedard

Tara Bedard is Executive Director of the Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership.

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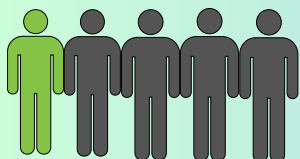


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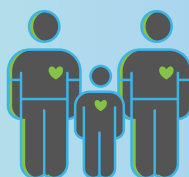
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LERNERS

WORKING FOR WORKERS FOUR ACT: A WIN-WIN FOR COMPANIES AND EMPLOYEES?

On November 14, 2023, Ontario introduced the Working for Workers Four Act, 2023, ("Bill 149"), which proposes providing expanded employee protections.

Are there any positives in the Bill that will benefit job seekers and those already employed?

One such proposed change is for companies to be more open and transparent in using artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool in their hiring process. This ubiquitous technology has escalated in the last couple of years and is now used more heavily when selecting candidates to move forward in the hiring process.

Every employer who posts a publicly advertised job opening and uses AI to screen, assess or select applicants for the position will have to include a statement disclosing the use of AI in the posting.

This means that hopeful job seekers – who have put time and effort into crafting a comprehensive resume and/or cover letter and submitted a solid online application – may be disqualified by an algorithm. It's only right they should know that.

Another potential change will benefit new immigrants to Canada, especially those who have gained many hard-earned skills from back home but end up driving a taxi or doing food deliveries.

The Bill states that no employer who posts a publicly advertised job posting shall include in the posting, or any associated application form, any requirements related to Canadian experience.

Hopefully, this will mean that more Canadian companies will give highly skilled immigrants a realistic chance to gain full employment with them based on their past work experience and not whether they have previously worked in Canada.

Pay transparency will also take centre stage. Every employer who creates a publicly advertised job posting shall include information about the expected compensation for the position or the range of expected compensation for the position.

This is long overdue and will stop job seekers from wasting their time applying for jobs where the salary is way under what they are looking for. Employers should also see a benefit by receiving applications from people more suited to their desired level.

But are these proposals a win-win for all concerned?

"It's a start, and obviously, the gender pay gap has been a huge issue in the past," says Josh Lerner, Associate, Dispute Resolution and Advocacy, Lerner's LLP. "It's really come to light in the last couple of years, and hopefully, this is a step toward addressing that as well. It lets all prospective employees know that they are looking [for jobs] within that range."

But what if you're working for a company looking for another team member in your same position, and you see that role advertised for \$20,000 higher? You'll say, "I need to talk to my manager!"

"I think it could create havoc for some employers, especially if there's already a lot of discrepancies, between how they're compensating their employees," says George Hamzo, Partner, Business Law, Lerner's LLP.

"There could be human rights complaints out of this because some people who belong to equity-seeking groups will say, 'Why am I getting paid less than the advertised job posting that's now required to be within the certain range?'" suggests Hamzo.

"I find myself expressing a more cautious or skeptical perspective at the moment," he continues. "Some employers will be able to get around this Bill – people who secure job opportunities through personal connections might find it

challenging to navigate the new requirements, potentially adding an extra layer of difficulty to the hiring process.

"And through your social networking? What if it doesn't make its way into a job posting? That sort of transparency is not necessarily required there," adds Hamzo.

"The other big thing that we haven't really touched upon is this consideration of NDAs, settlements concerning workplace harassment," explains Hamzo. "I don't know that they've landed anywhere specifically yet on what they want to do about it, but it's on their radar, and I'll be interested to see how that goes."

Canadian experience. The bane of many job seekers leaving their home countries for a new life in Canada, and ideally, a new job too. How will this play out?

"Who's to say that the actual impact of it – of an employee's work experience – is going to be addressed by this bill?" asks Lerner. "That is something you are never going to be able to truly legislate."

Hamzo adds to that view: "It's nice to have a rule that 'we can't do this,' but if there's going to be a whole lot of exemptions here, then that may rob the provision of any teeth. I'm sort of hopeful as to where this will go ... but at a 'wait-and-see approach' at this point."

Most job seekers who apply online understand that their cover letter and/or resume will be subjected to some kind of applicant tracking system (ATS). This is a type of resume-scanning software commonly used by recruiters and employers to collect, sort, scan, and rank the job applications they receive, based on keywords and other algorithms. If you can get through that process, you may have the chance to get in front of an actual human being for the interview stage.

A proposed change in Bill 149 is for hiring companies to take that a step further from ATS and openly disclose that AI has also been used in the selection process.

"Personally, in terms of how they want to use it, I see the value in it," explains Lerner. "I don't know if the hiring manager is actually looking for a 'dynamic self-starter,' but maybe AI is doing that by just filtering out those keywords."

"If I were to list my top three employee protections that come out of this bill, I really don't see AI being on that list because I don't think it changes a ton. And the reality is AI is here to stay and it's going to become increasingly prevalent," he adds.

"This is a wide-ranging anxiety that is touched upon, quite frankly, perhaps more serious: you're going to have people's likeness and voices now being manipulated and used in other areas," says Hamzo. "So I think there's this push now for transparency. If you are using AI, you're just upfront about it."

Final question: Is Ontario lagging behind other provinces or ahead of the curve with Bill 149?

"In terms of nationwide, it's Ontario, certainly, at the forefront," answers Lerner. "I think some other provinces have adopted or discussed similar legislation, but I don't think it's as far along as Ontario."

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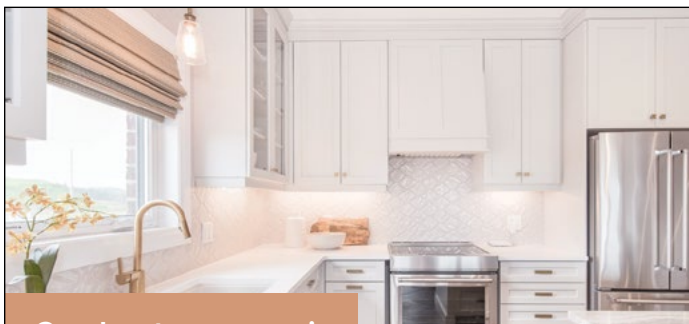
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Chamber Members Achieving Success



Perrin Beatty Announces Departure from Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Perrin Beatty will leave the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) on August 31, 2024. He served as President and CEO for seventeen years.

Canadace Laing, Chair of the CCC Board of Directors, indicated the Board is grateful for Mr. Beatty's extraordinary record of service to both the Chamber and the country. She noted in a March 7 news release that he is a relentless believer in the Canadian Chamber Network's power to act as a united voice to support success for every size and sector of business. He has also been remarkable in his work with a huge range of stakeholders and built partnerships for significant benefits.

A Special Committee of the Board will conduct the search for the next President and CEO with the assistance of a recruitment firm. The Board's goal is a smooth transition for making the Chamber even more relevant to the next generation of business leaders.

University of Waterloo Appoints Vice-President, University Relations

Eleanor McMahon, former Ontario MPP (Burlington) and Cabinet Minister, was recently appointed as Vice-President, University Relations, at the University of Waterloo.

McMahon joins Waterloo from Trans Canada Trail, the national not-for-profit that manages Canada's national trail. As CEO since 2019, Eleanor led the development of a new long-term vision for the organization, secured \$55 million in federal funding, revitalized the trail's brand and digital strategy, and developed Canada's first national Trails Tourism strategy.

She was elected the MPP for Burlington from 2014 to 2018 and served in Cabinet as Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sports, as well a President of the Treasury Board and Minister Responsible for Digital Government.

Her term at the University of Waterloo commenced on March 4, 2024, and she succeeds Sanada Banks who departed in July 2023.



Conestoga Named Canada's Best Trade School

Conestoga has been named Canada's Best Trade School by CourseCompare, a marketplace that helps prepare people for the future of work by connecting them to top-rated courses and training programs across the country. Their rankings are based on several factors including job placement rates, faculty ratings by students, graduate salaries, graduation rates and other measurements.

Conestoga President John Tibbits noted in a February 12, 2024, news release that "we are honoured to be recognized as Canada's Best Trade School for 2024. Ontario is facing a labour shortage in the skilled trades, underscoring the need for training and education in these critical fields."

In addition to providing high-quality programming and education, Conestoga has made major investments in training facilities across the communities they serve. The institution recently invested \$150 million in the first phase of the Skilled Trades Campus in Cambridge with another \$200 million allocated for the second phase.



Centre in the Square Announces New Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Centre in the Square (CITS inc.) recently announced the appointment of Eric Lariviere as Executive Director effective April 15, 2024.

Eric was previously General Manager of Flato Markham Theatre and Executive Director of Destination Markham Corporation in Markham, Ontario. He also served as President and CEO of Daytona Beach International Festival in Daytona Beach, Florida and has been a Professor at Seneca College since 2013.

Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic noted in a CITS release on February 28, 2024, that Eric has a diverse background in theatre development and is a municipal professional who will bring new life and experiences into the institution while working collaboratively with the city and their partners.

The Centre in The Square is a not-for-profit corporation and registered charity established in 1981 to operate and manage the 2,000-seat performing arts theatre in Kitchener. The building, owned by the City of Kitchener, is home to the CITS and the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.



Food Bank of Waterloo Region Appoints New CEO

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region Board of Directors recently announced that Kim Wilhelm will be stepping into the role of Chief Executive Officer replacing Wendi Campbell.

Kim was appointed interim CEO in June of 2022, assuming responsibility for all operational matters. She was previously Vice President of Philanthropy and Partnerships with The Food Bank.

The Board of Directors noted in a December 21, 2023, release they are happy to welcome Kim to the role of CEO on a permanent basis. She brings years of experience in strategic leadership and community engagement, and they look forward to her leadership and direction as the organization embarks on a new chapter.



Kitchener Public Library (KPL) Appoints New CEO

The Kitchener Public Library Board recently announced the appointment of Darren Solomon to the position of Chief Executive Officer effective April 15, 2024.

Solomon most recently served as CEO for Richmond Hill Public Library and started his career as a journalist working at the CBC and CTV. His appointment follows the retirement of Mary Chevreau in February of 2024 after her approximately nine years of service. Under Chevreau's leadership programs and services were expanded, a state-of-the-art recording studio was created and fines were removed.

As CEO, Solomon will work closely with the Board and partners to ensure Kitchener Public Library remains a bold, dynamic and forward-thinking community leader. He noted in an April 10, 2024, release that KPL has great reputation as a progressive organization that is focused on bettering the community every day.



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