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advocate

November | December 2024

Innovative Growth - Waterloo Region Readies for 1 Million





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Preparing Our Community for the Future

As I reflect back on the past two years that I have had the privilege of chairing the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Board, I'm proud of what our staff, Board, volunteers and members have accomplished. We have been able to build on the support we were able to give our members during the pandemic to look for ways to continue to add value to them and our community. As part of this, we developed a new three-year strategic plan focused on creating value for our members through growth, profile, advocacy and diversity and inclusion. With our strategic direction, Ian and his team at the Chamber have done a great job in focusing on key advocacy initiatives, creating new member touchpoints, events and products, and looking for ways to increase the value our members get from being a part of the Chamber community.

In our Region, many of our members made it through the pandemic and have been focused on building and growing their businesses. I hope that the Chamber has provided support to those businesses that has helped in their own journeys and contributed to the growth of our community. This edition of the Advocate again focuses on how our Region, government and businesses are growing and preparing for a population base of over 1 Million people.

As I move into the Past Chair role for one more year on the board, I'd like to introduce our new Board Chair, Brad Dunbar. Brad has been a key member of the board since 2019, acting as part of the finance committee since that time and taking on the Treasurer role as part of the executive committee since 2022. Brad is a chartered professional accountant with many years of experience working with private companies in the Waterloo Region. His business, accounting and financial expertise, along with his years of volunteering with the Chamber, make him an excellent candidate for the role. I know that I feel comfortable that by passing the reins to Brad, our Board will have strong leadership and direction.



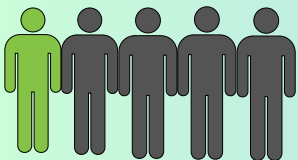
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Gilfillan

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.



HEALTHCARE & PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT PROGRAM



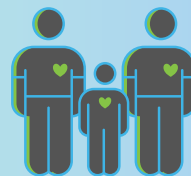
1:5 in our community do not have a family physician



OF LOCAL PHYSICIANS ARE AT RETIREMENT AGE

Currently 70,000 + residents in our community do not have a family physician with risk of 50,000+ additional residents if recruitment efforts aren't taken to replace the retiring physicians.

"This community initiative relies on the support of the local business community to ensure we can meet the needs of our growing community"



Canada is expected to welcome 460,000 newcomers every year. Having access to adequate healthcare is critical to the success of newcomers integrating into our community.



Access to healthcare is one of the top factors considered when relocating to a new community. Are you committed to ensuring your workforce has access to primary care in order to recruit and retain the best and brightest talent?

"a growing community with growing needs"

contact Jenna Petker to support this community initiative:
jpetker@greaterkwchamber.com

Building Waterloo Region for the Future Economy

Provincial policy dating back to 2006 envisions the population of Waterloo Region to reach one million residents by 2050. The question that needs to be asked and answered is, are we ready? The reality is that critical and informed decisions are required now and for many years into the future around community planning and the delivery of public services.

In her annual State of the Region address on May 28, 2024, Chair Karen Redman focused on the theme of 1 Million Ready, a new term around the emerging requirements and pressures of a growing local population. She noted that we carry both the opportunities and responsibilities to shape the change that lies ahead.

Jeff Neven, CEO of Indwell, Darshpreet Singh Bhatti, CEO of Green Line LRT in Calgary, and Leia Minaker, director of the Future Cities Institute at the University of Waterloo, participated in a panel discussion with Chair Redman. They discussed what is needed to make a community a place where people want to live and work and what's needed to ensure there's room for everyone. Choices and decisions ahead will be challenging and local officials are committed to finding solutions with universal benefit.

The discussion noted the conditions for economic growth and further opportunities for all residents need to be created and sustained. Investments are required in reliable services that voters can depend upon for meeting and exceeding local objectives, including a new hospital, transit infrastructures and addressing the housing shortage.

Population increases are initiating new approaches to governing. The Waterloo Region Community Foundation is transitioning their primary strategic focus from affordable housing to social infrastructure. They have asserted that as the demand for additional housing accompanies population growth, innovative and effective social infrastructure is also an imperative.

Our Chamber supports our municipal partners who realize that additional financial assistance is required from the federal and provincial governments to meet increasing local social responsibilities, particularly across a growing community such as Waterloo Region. At the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting last April, the GKWCC tabled and passed a policy resolution that supported the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) request for a major review of current provincial-municipal financial arrangements to adequately meet increasing demands and pressures.

Property taxpayers, most notably small businesses, cannot afford to continually pay for provincial costs covering health and social services that municipalities are increasingly responsible for administering. Property taxes were never designed to pay for and support health and social services.

The Region of Waterloo and Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership recently released the 2024 Immigration Profile, which is a planning tool to support organizations with appropriate investment decision-making and service planning. The report noted that recent immigrants face higher unemployment rates and lower median employment incomes compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born individuals. Additionally, seventeen percent of recent immigrants live below the Market Basket Measure (poverty measure) compared to six per cent for the remainder of the community.

Local employers and our Chamber will continue working with partners across the community on closing these gaps for equitable growth and the full participation of all residents in our future economic prosperity. Our workforce of the future and economic growth and prosperity depend on this being addressed.

The Waterloo Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has noted that to continue attracting talent and employment, local organizations and businesses will need to collaborate closely to create a balanced approach that supports economic growth while preserving the unique characteristics that make our community so attractive to investors from across the globe.

Investing in housing, public transportation, public services, and healthcare needs will be key to keeping pace with the growing population while maintaining our relatively high quality of life.

It is important for the business community and Chamber members to collaborate with not for profit and service providers to ensure that the question of are we ready is answered. There are many initiatives that need to be decided on and completed. Time is wasting, so let's get started.

The Chamber's clarion call to the community is a statement and a question.

Vision One Million- Are we Ready?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian McLean

Ian is President and CEO of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.



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Business Growth Supporting Canadian Social Services

In their 2024 pre-budget submission to the federal government, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) noted that collectively we must pursue a strategy of economic growth to maintain our standard of living and provide the services that Canadians require.

In a March 2021 response to the federal budget, President and CEO Perrin Beatty indicated that for all the subsidy and stimulus spending Canada has seen and will continue to see, the only path to real and sustainable growth is job creation and business investment. Chamber members wanted one item from the budget – a clear path to help them lead Canada’s economic recovery through the creation of an effective business environment.

In advance of the 2021 federal election, the CCC further noted that Canada cannot borrow our way to prosperity, nor should we confuse government spending with actual economic growth. To succeed against intense international competition, Canada must generate sustained business investment, jobs and growth for the short and long-terms. All other societal priorities including environmental protection, improving childcare and achieving reconciliation depend on our ability to maintain a growing economy.

Historically, Canadian business organizations have focused on economic growth generated by the private sector as the foundation for sustainable and stable development. Businesses must be generating revenues and employing people which will translate into escalating taxation levels to support social services and other critical programs required by our population.

A March 27, 2024, Bloomberg article noted that Canada has long prided itself on domestic social programs to reduce poverty and equalize access to core values such as health care, education, food and shelter. The Business Council of Canada, in a September 5, 2024, report, noted that Canadians will not be able to sustain their living standards – including the benefits of social programs – if the country does not change their economic course.

Generally, analysts have concluded that stagnant productivity is the priority issue that must be resolved. Canada requires a more technology-driven economy which emphasizes the role of innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological change as the primary drivers of economic growth.

According to the Business Council of Canada, the Canadian standard of living is dependent upon the ability of domestic businesses to competitively sell goods and services to the rest of the world while paying higher wages to employees who subsequently contribute significant revenues to government. If Canada does not produce products for international markets, it will be more challenging to maintain our current network of supports and compete in a global economy.

Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem, in remarks to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce on June 24, 2024, noted that tackling Canada’s productivity weakness is challenging but vital to our economy. Productivity growth ensures businesses are competitive across international markets, pays for higher wages and supports rising living standards. As the Canadian population ages, improving our productivity growth will become more important.

Macklem added that Canadian businesses invest much less per worker than the United States. With less investment in machinery and equipment, specifically information and communication technology, Canadian employees have older machinery for utilization. Weaker investments across intellectual property translate to fewer innovations for more efficient work.

The deeper question is why Canada has less investment than the United States or, from a more optimistic perspective, how can the Canadian economy transition to a more “investable” environment. Securing answers to these highly relevant questions is critical if we want to elevate the Canadian standard of living.

Bank of Canada Senior Deputy Governor Carolyn Rogers noted in a March 20, 2024, speech in Halifax that improving productivity needs to be a priority for everyone and our standard of living is determined by economy-wide activity. Levels must increase across the board but particularly the high value portfolios.

The challenge has been cited by the analysts and it is the responsibility of all governments to support business in protecting our social and economic fabric. Higher productivity is a priority issue for future economic policy to maintain the programs that Canadians expect.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Art Sinclair

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



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



Critical Need for Our Community

Family physician recruitment is critical to meeting the primary health care needs of our rapidly growing population, for the well being of our residents and an economic development imperative for our businesses to ensure that they can attract the best and the brightest talent.

We know that access to healthcare is one of the top deciding factors considered when relocating to a new community. As we are pressured with talent concerns, ensuring our workforces have access to primary care is essential to recruit and retain talent.

Power of Collaboration

This past year, 16 recruiters across Southern Ontario collaborated to form the Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance (SOPRA) to reach residents outside of Ontario. Many of the residents training abroad are Canadian and it is a critical initiative to engage with them and encourage them to return home.

Recruitment Gone Global

We have expanded our efforts globally. By partnering with SOPRA, Waterloo Region has been represented at 20+ international recruitment fairs. In June, SOPRA hosted its first event in Birmingham, UK which was aimed at physicians interested in relocating to Ontario. We were thrilled to welcome 50+ GPs who are currently taking steps to relocate to Ontario.



Jenna Petker

*Director, Healthcare & Physician
Recruitment*
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kwphysicians.com

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)



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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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Beyond Cans and Boxes: How The Food Bank of Waterloo Region Ensures Fresh, Healthy Food for Those in Need

When many people think about food banks, they picture cans and boxes. However, at The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, we provide more than non-perishable food. Of the over 8.9 million pounds we distribute to the 54 organizations in the Community Food Assistance Network, 59 per cent is fresh or frozen! Here's how we ensure that fresh, healthy food is available for the more than 73,000 people accessing food assistance through our Network.

Every week, dozens of volunteers pack fresh, nutritious hampers for our partners that run food programs. Working on an assembly line, they add seasonal fruits and vegetables until each hamper is filled. Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, our dedicated volunteers packed over 76,000 hampers, ensuring individuals and families receive the nutrition they need.

Our award-winning Fresh Approaches Food Centre allows us to safely repack and freeze large donations of fresh food from various sources, including farmers, restaurants, and retailers. This helps us maximize produce use, keeping it fresh longer and allowing us to provide more healthy food to our partners. Since 2018, volunteers and community groups have processed over 551,000 pounds of food in this space.

Much of the food processed in our Fresh Approaches Food Centre comes from our Food Recovery program. Launched in 2019, this initiative works with various food industry partners to accept edible food that can no longer be sold and would otherwise go to waste. This food helps feed the 1 in 8 households in Waterloo region struggling to afford meals. Our Food Recovery program not only addresses food waste but also ensures surplus food reaches those who need it most. Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, we prevented over 2.6 million pounds of food from being wasted, significantly helping those relying on food assistance.

Another way we provide fresh, healthy food is through our Mobile Pantry. Launched in 2021, this service travels to neighbourhoods across Waterloo region, making it easier for individuals and families to access essential food support from our Network partners. During each visit, our Mobile Pantry can provide fresh, frozen, and non-perishable food for up to 160 households.

Throughout the growing season, we welcome donations of perishable produce from personal gardens. In the fall, we host a Harvest Food Drive at all Sobeys and Zehrs locations in Kitchener-Waterloo. This one-day event invites community members to buy and donate fresh produce to The Food Bank. Be sure to follow us on social media to stay updated on the date of our next Harvest Food Drive!

These initiatives rely heavily on community support. The generosity of our donors and the dedication of our volunteers are what make it possible for us to provide fresh, healthy food to those in need. If you're a food producer or distributor interested in donating edible food to our Food Recovery program, visit thefoodbank.ca/foodrecovery to learn more about our criteria. To volunteer in our distribution centre, visit thefoodbank.ca/volunteer for more information. Or if you'd like to make a financial contribution, visit thefoodbank.ca/holidaygiving.

As we look to the future, The Food Bank is committed to supporting our community through innovative solutions that ensure access to fresh, healthy food. By implementing programs like our perishable hamper line, Fresh Approaches Food Centre, and Mobile Pantry, we're addressing immediate food needs while preparing for the anticipated growth in demand for food assistance. Our Food Recovery program exemplifies our dedication to reducing waste and ensuring surplus food reaches families struggling to make ends meet. With continued support from our generous donors and dedicated volunteers, we're well-equipped to support our community—creating a stronger, healthier, and hunger-free Waterloo region.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kim Wilhelm

Kim Wilhelm is the CEO at The Food Bank of Waterloo Region.

Event Highlights



Sara Clarke, Scott Macleod, Carlton Benjamin, and Women's Leadership Committee Member Allison Bourke, enjoying the nice weather on the green.



Women's Leadership Committee member Carla Harris networking with guests at Den 1880 during the first event of our Heffner Women's Leadership Series; Sip & Social.



Karen Redman, Sandy Shantz, and guest speaker, Stephanie Pearsall sharing a laugh while enjoying breakfast during the Vision 1 Million; Future of Healthcare event.



Moderator Ian McLean speaking with our healthcare panel; Mark Fam, President & CEO of St. Mary's General Hospital, Ron Gagnon, President & CEO of Grand River Hospital, and Stephanie Pearsall, VP Clinical Programs & Chief Nursing Executive of Cambridge Memorial Hospital.



Rebecca Schoenhardt saying a few words on behalf of the title sponsor, Canadian Western Bank for the Business After 5 Series Season Kick off!



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Event Highlights



Guest Speaker Andy Nasr, Chief Investment Officer of Scotia Wealth Management speaking at our 2024 Annual General Meeting.



Grazing Table for all of our guests to enjoy at the Heffner Women's Leadership; Sip & Social provided by Bella Vista Catering & Events.



Speaker Ron Gagnon, President & CEO of Grand River Hospital speaking with attendees after his panel discussion.



Willy Heffner, John Heffner, Steve Heffner along with fellow golfer putting on the green during the 32nd Annual Golf Scramble, aiming for precision and a perfect finish.



Guests networking and enjoying the quiet upscale podcast studio at Den1880 at our Heffner Women's Leadership; Sip & Social Event.



FACS Foundation making sure all guests can enjoy some lemonade while learning about Activa's LemonAid program at the Canadian Western Bank Business After 5 Season Kick Off



Steve Caron of Newman Human Resources Consulting networking and making a new connection with Oliva Coke at the Canadian Western Bank Business After 5 Season Kick Off hosted at FACS Foundation.



Former Chair Scott Gilfillan, Partner at PwC sharing the annual report for the 2024 Annual General Meeting.

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Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

Immigration Partnership's Networking Breakfast Series: 3-Minute Networker

8:00 am – 10:00 am

Location: Hampton Inn Waterloo St. Jacobs

Member: \$45 • Future Member: \$90

Season Pass: \$135.00 • Small Business Sponsor: \$350

Join us for an exciting event where you'll hear from 15 dynamic business professionals in just 45 minutes! Learn about local businesses and innovations through various styles of pitches and presentations. At the end of the event, you'll leave with fresh ideas, valuable connections, and inspiration. If you're a presenter, it's a unique opportunity to showcase your story and demonstrate how your business can make a difference in our community. With only 3 minutes to captivate your audience, it's a perfect platform to unleash your creativity and make a lasting impression.

Title Sponsor:



Wednesday, November 13, 2024

Expert Exchange - Sales & Marketing

4:00 PM-6:00 PM

Location: Workhaus

Members: Free (Small Businesses) and \$30 for other Members

Future Members: \$60

Event Details: Connect with industry experts and mentors in intimate and collaborative round table discussions. You'll participate in "speed rounds" with experts in specialized areas before you rotate to the next table topic. We'll cover everything from Digital Marketing, social media, Branding, Growing your Network, Generating Leads, Video & Storytelling, Analytics & KPI's, and Website Development and Optimization. This is a great opportunity for small businesses to grow and develop their skills for future success

Platinum Sponsor:



Thursday, November 7, 2024

Charcoal Group Chamber Young Professionals: Holiday Social

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: WildCraft Lounge

Member: \$35 • Future Member: \$70

Small Business Sponsor: \$350

Dress in your best holiday attire for a night unlike any other, at Wildcraft Lounge. Our hosts are opening up the doors to all our young (and young at heart) professionals. Along with indulgent food and drink, and an inspiring atmosphere sure to encourage new connections, be ready for a few other surprises and holiday festivities!

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Thursday, November 14th, 2024

Vision 1 Million, Are We Ready?

Time: 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Location: Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum

Member: \$45 • Future Member: \$90

As the Region of Waterloo is projected to reach 1 million residents by 2050, we must plan for the future. The Vision 1 Million- Are we Ready? series will cover Housing, Healthcare, Talent, and Infrastructure. Join us for an insightful discussion centered on Housing in Waterloo Region. We're excited to welcome Minister Bethlenfalvy, as our guest speaker.

Title Sponsor:



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Tuesday, November 26, 2024

Canadian Western Bank Business After 5: Holiday Edition

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: Kids Ability Foundation

Member: complimentary

(but recommended \$10 donation to the Feature Charity)

Future Member: \$40 minimum donation to the Feature Charity

Small Business Sponsor: \$450.00

Close out your year with some great networking opportunities in a festive atmosphere. Connect with local businesses at their booths, enjoy drinks and treats, and celebrate the start of the holiday season with other professionals! Additionally, we'll be hosting a toy drive to support KidsAbility, and spread the holiday cheer.

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Gold Sponsor:



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Host Venue and Feature Charity:



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the rapid population growth has significantly outpaced housing development

However, there's a pressing issue: the rapid population growth has significantly outpaced housing development, creating a substantial housing shortage. According to Stats Canada, Ontario's average household size is 2.6 people, meaning we need one home for every 2.6 residents. When we compare the region's population growth to housing starts, the numbers reveal a troubling gap.

The Waterloo Region Community Foundation's Vital Signs Report presents sobering data. Over the past two years, we've fallen short by 14,692 homes, based on the 2.6 people-per-home metric. And while we made up some ground in 2021, this recovery followed five years of falling behind. In fact, we've lost ground in seven of the last eight years.

Since 2016, when the region's population growth began to surge, the total shortfall has grown to 16,523 homes. This gap highlights a critical need for more housing to support our rapidly growing community.

How does this apply to us – to the community? What does this housing shortage look like?

A family of four earning \$85,000 per year and paying \$2,200 a month for a two-bedroom apartment is trapped between a rock and a hard place. They don't have enough space, and their rent is unaffordable. For housing to be considered affordable, rent should be no more than 30 percent of income, or \$2,125 a month. So, what are their options? They can continue paying high rent, hoping prices drop – though that seems unreasonably optimistic. They might try to buy a home but are unlikely to qualify for a mortgage. Even if they do, the monthly payments, combined with other living expenses, would be out of reach.

According to the Cornerstone Association of REALTORS® (formerly the Waterloo Region Association of REALTORS®), the average price for a townhouse in June 2024 was \$611,164. Purchasing would require a down payment of over \$36,000, with monthly mortgage payments around \$3,292, or 46 percent of their income for a three-year fixed-rate mortgage. Variable rates are even higher. A condo is somewhat more affordable. At an average price of \$470,163 in June, the monthly mortgage payments would be about \$2,486 after a \$22,800 down payment, consuming 35 percent of their income. But this doesn't include condo fees, insurance, utilities or the fact that three- and four-bedroom condos are virtually nonexistent in Waterloo, leaving the family underhoused. Saving for a down payment while already struggling with rent and living expenses becomes nearly impossible.

This situation represents a systemic failure, driven by a lack of affordable housing options. With too few homes available at accessible price points, the market forces continue to push prices higher.

The notion of affordable homeownership has become almost unimaginable, but it's crucial and we believe it's possible again.

As the Region of Waterloo grows toward a population of one million, housing affordability will be one of the most urgent issues we must solve to thrive as a community. We need housing for everyone—families, working professionals, seniors, and others who cannot currently afford it. This lack of housing is what's known as the “missing middle,” and addressing it with attainable housing options is desperately needed.

The key to affordability lies in engineering the lowest sale prices.

That's where BUILD NOW: Waterloo Region comes in. We've brought together the private, public, and non-profit sectors to create affordable housing solutions that work for people. BUILD NOW is an ambitious initiative to develop 10,000 new homes across the region – 7,000 affordable ownership units and 3,000 rentals. Through strategic partnerships and community collaboration, BUILD NOW focuses on providing “missing middle” homes at prices people can afford.

The key to affordability lies in engineering the lowest sale prices. We've done this by eliminating development charges, developer profits, and land costs. This reduction in pricing is realistic and

achievable if we adopt forward-thinking policies that prioritize long-term sustainable growth over short-term self-interest. Builders have the skills, land is available, and local non-profits are experienced in providing affordable rentals. By working together, we can make affordable housing a reality.

Homes under the BUILD NOW program will be sold to eligible buyers, ensuring they can achieve the stability and equity that come with homeownership. These homes come with covenants that prevent flipping or speculative investment, keeping them affordable for future generations. Home resale values will be tied to market changes, allowing owners to benefit from market appreciation while ensuring future affordability. Local realtors will screen potential buyers to ensure they meet the necessary qualifications.

By working together, we can make affordable housing a reality.

But homeownership isn't for everyone, which is why BUILD NOW is also committed to affordable rentals. Far too many people in our community are spending an unsustainable portion of their income on rent. We want to change that, allowing people to enjoy local amenities without being burdened by housing costs.

To make these rental homes accessible, BUILD NOW is partnering with affordable rental housing providers. Their expertise in managing affordable properties will ensure that these units remain affordable for the long term. By placing these homes in the hands of organizations committed to serving the community, we can ensure they will be available for generations to come.

The economic ripple effects of affordable housing will be enormous. Businesses will thrive as they attract top talent, knowing there are affordable places for people to live. When people aren't spending 40 to 60 percent of their income on

housing, they can support local businesses—going to shows, dining out, and shopping at local stores. Affordable housing unlocks economic growth for the entire community.

Housing is about much more than a roof over your head.

Neighborhoods will flourish, too. Young families, recent graduates, and seniors will all have a safe, decent and affordable place to call home. They will no longer worry about being priced out of their communities, away from friends, family and jobs. They will be able to plant roots and connect with neighbors, knowing they have a secure place to live.

Housing is about much more than a roof over your head. It impacts nearly every aspect of life. That's why we as a community must come together to solve this problem and BUILD NOW is the solution that can make it happen.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip Mills

Phil is the CEO of Habitat for Humanity Waterloo Region. Phil is a skilled leader with executive leadership experience across diverse fields including community development, health care, and housing. Described by those who know him as a “non-status quo guy,” Phil is caring, ambitious, visionary, and thrives on disruption and change. He offers a broad range of perspectives, having served on local and national boards where he has provided strategic guidance on governance, corporate culture, and fiscal responsibility.

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From Generosity to Greatness: Building a Healthcare Legacy Right Here

With a population approaching 1 million, Waterloo Region stands on the brink of significant growth, presenting opportunities and challenges for our healthcare system. Our community is more than ready to meet these challenges head-on. Grand River Hospital Foundation continues to work with partners at St. Mary's General Hospital Foundation and both St. Mary's and Grand River Hospitals to rally support and align efforts to prepare for what lies ahead.

I have deep roots here. I grew up in this region, returned for university, and came back again in 2019, this time with my wife and five daughters. The energy and passion of our community drew me back, and it's that same spirit that drives me in this role. Our can-do attitude and our willingness to push beyond the status quo will carry us forward to build a healthcare system that meets the needs of our growing region for generations to come.

The path ahead is challenging, but with community support, I'm confident in our shared ability to create something extraordinary. We have the ingredients to make Waterloo Region a model for innovative, world-class care, setting a new standard for healthcare in Canada.

We know new hospital infrastructure is needed. Our region has grown rapidly, and so have the demands on our healthcare system. But this isn't just about building more infrastructure; it's about re-imagining how we deliver care. The COVID-19 pandemic showed us the power of community support, with hospital philanthropy surging in response to the crisis.

We cannot stop harnessing this momentum, because the need for local funding is greater than ever for us to do more. As Anthony Dale, CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, has said: "Ontario spends the least per capita on hospitals but produces some of the best results in quality and access."

Beyond provincial funding, our community is responsible for 100% of hospital equipment and furnishings, as well as a significant portion of new construction costs. It's a tall order, but we're rising to meet it.

Before returning to Ontario, I had the privilege of helping build a world-class library in Calgary. The opportunity before us here feels similar but magnified tenfold. By coming together as partners and champions of our healthcare system, we can create something

even more powerful. By leveraging the expertise of local businesses and institutions, we can break barriers and provide care in ways none of us could accomplish alone.

We've already seen incredible local support for healthcare, from public schools to post-secondary institutions and businesses alike, including the Chamber. The Foundation created new giving programs, like Careships, which function like scholarships supporting a patient's care journey. Local businesses like MappedIn, Steed & Evans, and Equitable Life have stepped up with innovative solutions and significant investments. Strong partnerships build a healthcare system our community deserves.

At the heart of this effort is *Building the Future of Care Together*, a transformative partnership between Grand River Hospital, St. Mary's General Hospital, and their Foundations. Together, we're:

- planning a new, state-of-the-art hospital near the University of Waterloo.
- renewing and re-purposing the existing Grand River Hospital building as an ambulatory and urgent care centre; and
- modernizing and expanding rehabilitation capacity at the Freeport campus.

As we stand on the cusp of this exciting new chapter, I'm filled with optimism. We have the opportunity to set a new standard for healthcare excellence. Together, we can build a healthcare system that will serve our families, friends, and neighbours—now and for generations to come. I invite you to join us in this shared mission. The future of care in Waterloo Region starts with us.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul McIntyre Royston

Paul McIntyre Royston (PMR), CEO of Grand River Hospital Foundation, has led the Foundation to more than \$100M in investment since 2019. With 20 years in fundraising across various sectors, including roles at Canadian Olympic Foundation and Calgary Public Library Foundation, PMR grew up in KW and is delighted to have come back home with his spouse and 5 daughters.

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Innovating for Growth: A Small Business Perspective in Waterloo Region

As Waterloo Region prepares for the milestone of 1 million residents, innovation needs to be at the heart of this growth. As a small business owner and a woman of colour, I have a unique perspective on how innovation can be inclusive and transformative for everyone in the community.

Growth in the Region: An Opportunity Four All

Waterloo Region is known for its booming tech sector, but its innovative spirit goes beyond that. As the founder of Four All Ice Cream, a food based small business, I see growth as more than just numbers—it's about creating opportunities for businesses like mine and supporting the local community.

Four All Ice Cream, started with the goal of bringing fun, unique and accessible ice cream to the region. But more than that, we wanted to reflect the diversity and the needs of our community in our products. Growth in the region means an influx of new ideas, cultures, and talents, which fuels even more creativity for small businesses.

Supporting Black Entrepreneurs: The Power of Innovation

As a Venture Coach with LiftOff Innovation Hub, I'm passionate about supporting Black entrepreneurs in Waterloo Region. LiftOff is an organization that helps Black-owned businesses get off the ground through mentorship, coaching, resources, and networking. It's an initiative, which in less than 3 years, has supported over 100 new entrepreneurs grow their businesses. Not only has it made a tangible impact to this community it reflects how innovation should be inclusive.

Innovation isn't just about new technology or cutting-edge products; it's also about breaking down barriers and creating space for underrepresented communities to thrive. In a region that's becoming more diverse, it's essential that innovation includes everyone. LiftOff is proof that when we invest in marginalized entrepreneurs, we create a stronger, more vibrant economy.

Navigating Challenges as a Small Business Owner

Growing a small business in a rapidly expanding region comes with its challenges. For businesses like mine, scaling up requires creativity and flexibility. As the region grows, the cost of doing business rises too—rents increase, competition grows, and talent becomes harder to find.

But these challenges also create opportunities for innovation. We've had to rethink how we operate, focusing on sustainable growth, community partnerships, and expanding our product lines to meet the demands of a growing population.

And as a person of colour, I'm aware that some challenges are unique to my lived experience. Representation matters, and seeing more Black-owned businesses succeed in Waterloo Region is crucial. It sends a message that entrepreneurship is for everyone, and that our region is a place where people from all backgrounds can thrive.

Building an Inclusive Future

Looking ahead to a population of 1 million, growth in Waterloo Region will need to be inclusive. Small businesses, especially those owned by women & people of colour, have a vital role to play in shaping the future of the region.

We need to create ecosystems where all businesses can flourish, where diversity isn't just welcomed but celebrated. Programs like LiftOff are a great example of how we can nurture the next generation of entrepreneurs and ensure that innovation reaches every corner of our community.

Conclusion: Thriving Together

As Waterloo Region grows, it's crucial that we innovate in ways that allow small businesses and diverse communities to thrive. Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, and with the right support, they can lead the charge in shaping an inclusive and prosperous future.

By supporting entrepreneurs of all backgrounds, we're not just preparing for 1 million—we're building a region where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ajoa Mintah, P.Eng.

Ajoa Mintah received her Chemical Engineering degree from the University of Waterloo in 2001 and subsequently worked in the automotive industry and finance sector. As the founder of Four All Ice Cream in Kitchener she has blended her education, experience and creativity to offer frozen delights that defy dietary limitations.



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Community Corner



Local dignitaries were a few of the first to see the new seats installed at Centre in the Square, creating a more comfortable and accessible experience for guests.



Shannon Hall of St. Jacobs Farmers' Market organized their annual Harvest Hoedown event on September 20, which included live music, line dancing, alpaca and goat selfies, and more!



On September 19 the March of 1,000 Umbrellas took place, as part of the 2024 United Way Campaign Launch. Waterloo Regional Police Service was one of many groups who supported the cause and walked down King Street.



Bonnie Frank (GKWCC), Bardish Chagger, and Sara Fife at the KW Oktoberfest Keg Tapping at City Hall in Kitchener.

Want to be featured in an upcoming edition of the "Community Corner"?
Send us your photos to cmarsh@greaterkwchamber.com or tag @GKWCC on Instagram



Kris Ronan of Ginger Goat Hot Sauce (right) hosted the 2nd annual Goat Fest on September 28 at Concordia Club.

Community Corner



Greater KW Chamber staff were thrilled to support KW Oktoberfest at the Loft Haus event, alongside the Canadian Western Bank team.



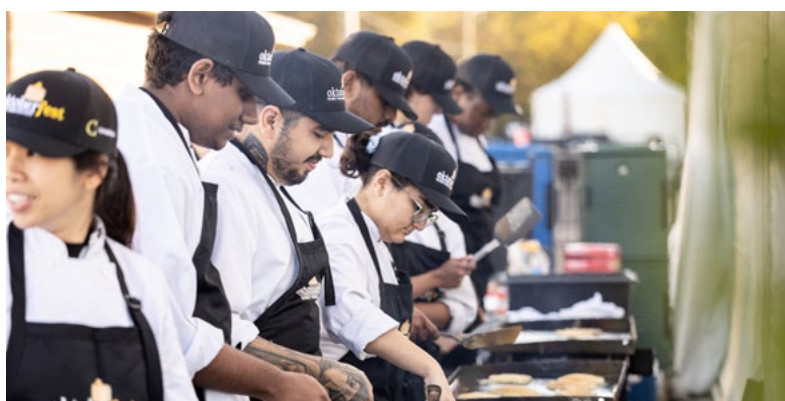
Claire and Andy of Only1AndyWright Photography welcomed the community into their studio space for Doors Open WR on September 21.



Chef D and City of Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbancovic judge the "Best Caesar in Town" Finale during KW Oktoberfest at Willkommen Platz, hosted by Will Aiello of CTV News Kitchener



Grand Valley Construction Association is celebrating 50 years and hosted a private concert to celebrate with their members, while raising funds for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and Nutrition for Learning. Jeff MacIntyre and Mandy Bujold of GVCA welcomed Dwayne Gretzky to the stage for a fun night at Maxwell's Concerts & Events.



Grand River Hospital Foundation hosted the annual Oktoberfest Family Breakfast, raising over \$14,000 and serving more than 4,000 people!

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“Building” Community

One of the biggest concerns among members of the Grand Valley Construction Association (GVCA) is the ongoing challenge of finding skilled talent. The questions are pressing: "When I need them, where will I find them? Where did they go?" and "What is being done to attract talent to our community?"

In October 2023, GVCA took a significant step towards addressing this issue by applying for an Ontario Skills Development Fund Grant, now known as the *GVCA Path to Employment Program*. Our initial hypothesis, shaped by several factors—including the shortage of affordable housing—was that many individuals already living in the Waterloo Region might be interested in construction careers but lack access to these opportunities. These individuals don't need to relocate or find housing; they're already here. At the same time, our members often post job openings and receive hundreds of resumes with no relevant experience. We wanted to explore if this gap could be bridged.

To test our theory, GVCA reached out to members and partners. We confirmed that employers often sift through resumes unrelated to construction, with many applications simply discarded. Meanwhile, we engaged with the Region of Waterloo's Community Services to verify that numerous residents had applied for construction roles but never received acknowledgment or feedback.

Based on these insights, we developed a program to address both sides of the issue—helping candidates become more attractive to employers and reducing uncertainties for hiring managers.

The *GVCA Path to Employment Program* aims to train 100 local individuals by providing them with:

- Certifications required for job site work within the first three weeks,
- Complete personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary for construction,
- A set of essential tools for general laborer roles,
- Two weeks of hands-on tool training to gain practical experience.

In addition, the program offers a paid placement where GVCA subsidizes 50% of the wage for one month, based on the Waterloo Region Living Wage. This placement is designed to help

participants gain further experience, with the goal of matching their interests to employers' needs. Our partners at the Region of Waterloo leaned on Ontario Works caseworkers and Employment Ontario providers to connect us with underrepresented groups in construction—women, youth, new Canadians, justice-involved individuals, and others from marginalized populations.

Our first cohort of 20 participants saw 18 individuals successfully complete the required training and secure placements with local contractors, subcontractors, specialty contractors, suppliers, and professional service providers. Of these 18, 15 were offered full-time employment by their placement companies. In a significant success, two individuals were able to move out of shelters and into permanent housing because of the program. *Path to Employment* is clearly making an impact.

We are currently training our third cohort while the second cohort completes their placements, and we expect continued success as the program progresses.

The *Path to Employment Program* is having a positive ripple effect on our community. By providing training and placements, we are bridging the gap between potential employees and employers. We are showing that construction and skilled trades offer attractive career paths where everyone is welcome. The program also reduces the strain on social services and is training the next generation of skilled workers needed to build our community and province. Initiatives like this are crucial to addressing the looming talent shortage that will affect our industry's ability to build the future.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff MacIntyre

Jeff is the President of The Grand Valley Construction Association. Jeff is a community builder and connector who has experience with organizations and businesses that focus on continued growth through collaboration and innovation. He has held numerous leadership and Director roles in both the public and private sectors.

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Chamber Members Achieving Success

Four New Board Members at Communitech

On September 23, 2024, Communitech formally announced the appointment of four new members to their Board of Directors. Bringing years of experience from leading technology employers, the new board members are prepared to support the organization as it continues to deliver on its mission of helping founders start, grow and succeed.



The new board members appointed for the 2024-2025 term include Adam Belsher of Magnet Forensics, Ruth Casselman of the Accelerator Centre, Hongwei Liu of Mappedin, and Iain Stewart, former President of the National Research Council of Canada.

As noted in an organizational media release from September 23, the Communitech Board of Directors is a dynamic mix of entrepreneurs and senior business leaders who are committed to championing Canada's innovation economy and supporting world-class tech organizations. Catherine Graham of commonsku will continue as Chair of the Board while Michael Doughty of Manulife Canada (retired) will remain as Vice Chair.

John Tibbits Extended as Conestoga College President

The Conestoga College Board of Governors recently extended Dr. John Tibbits contract as President of the institution to August 31, 2025. A news release from the College noted the extension is a reflection of the Board's confidence in Dr. Tibbits' ability to advance the college's vision to be a recognized leader in applied learning and research that enables student success in meeting workforce demands.



After nearly 40 years of service to the college and community, Dr. Tibbits carries the institutional knowledge and experience to guide Conestoga over their next phase of their growth. The institution is proceeding through a transformative expansion that will solidify their reputation as the premier centre for education and training across industry-relevant careers.

The Conestoga Board of Governors believes that continuity in leadership is key to ensuring successful implementation not only for the college but local and provincial economies. Dr. Tibbits' extended tenure will provide the stability and strategic direction required to sustain momentum and further enhance local economic growth and community development.

Region of Waterloo Appoints Commissioner of Corporate Services and CFO

The Region of Waterloo recently announced the appointment of Wayne Steffler as Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer (CFO). His responsibilities will include financial planning, budgeting, and capital and operational planning.



Mr. Steffler's experience includes senior financial and administrative positions at Sheridan College, Wilfrid Laurier University and KidsAbility. He replaces Chief Financial Officer Craig Dyer who retired earlier this year.

The Chamber extends our congratulations to Mr. Steffler on his appointment and our best wishes to Mr. Dyer on his retirement after many years of service to the local business community.

University of Waterloo Appoints New Dean of Arts

The University of Waterloo appointed Dr. Alexie Tcheuyap as Dean of Arts effective on July 1, 2024. He joins Waterloo from the University of Toronto where he was most recently the Associate Vice-President and Vice-Provost of International Student Experience.

He completed his PhD at Queen's University and later held faculty positions at the University of Calgary and University of Toronto. Among his many grants, awards and honours, Tcheuyap was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (FRSC) in 2021.

In a recent University of Waterloo release (September 6, 2024), he noted that past leadership roles have provided the chance to interact with all players in the academic setting. He views himself as a facilitator whose primary role is to support students, staff and faculty to reach their full potential. Dr. Tcheuyap is ready to share his background with the Waterloo community.



Canadian Western Bank Opens New Office in Kitchener

Canadian Western Bank (CWB) opened their fourth Ontario banking centre at 50 Sportsworld Crossing in Kitchener on September 19, 2024.

Rebecca Schoenhardt, Assistant Vice President and Market Lead for Kitchener, noted that Waterloo Region is known for its dynamic business community and CWB will be offering partnership-focused financial services to local entrepreneurs. With robust digital and mobile banking tools and a specialized offering to agriculture businesses, the new office positions them to assist general commercial businesses to thrive.

Steve Guthrie, Executive Vice President of Banking at CWB, noted in a September 18 news release that they have been introducing a unique banking experience to Ontario business owners that stands out from competitors. Their clients consistently highlight the combined value of specialized expertise with premium service. Business owners are seeking more from their banking partner, and CWB is providing that alternative.



Local School Boards Starting Construction for Enrolment Increases

The Waterloo Region and Waterloo Catholic District School Boards recently announced the commencement of construction on two new buildings.

On September 5, 2024, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) conducted a groundbreaking ceremony for a property on Thomas Slee Drive in Kitchener's Doon South area. A new elementary school for 591 students is expected to open in September of 2025.

On September 11, 2024, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) formally announced the start of construction on a new elementary school in the Rosenberg neighbourhood of Kitchener. In addition to serving as a learning hub, the building will house a Community Centre in collaboration with the City of Kitchener to offer programs and resources for local residents. The school is also opening for new students in September of 2025.



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