



GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS BUILDING COMMUNITY



2023-24

ANNUAL REPORT

GreaterKWChamber.com



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Messages from our President & Board Chair	2-3
About the Chamber	4-5
Board of Directors & Volunteers	6-9
Volunteers	7-9
Chamber Membership	10-11
Networking & Events	12-13
Publications, Media, and Programs	14-15
Advocacy, Healthcare, and Physician Recruitment	16-19
Community Impact & Inclusivity	20
Our Partners	21-23



A message from our
PRESIDENT & CEO



Forecasts estimate our population will reach one million residents by 2050.

The current economy is presenting unprecedented opportunities and challenges for the local business sector.

CEO's Comments

Population growth must be supported by sustained economic growth and enhanced social services. Employers need transportation infrastructure, including a new Highway 7 and expanded GO Train passenger service into the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), to ensure the efficient movement of products and people for a globally competitive economy.

Public services such as primary healthcare are also required for an expanding population base and local employers. Our Chamber is escalating family doctor recruitment activities to ensure the local system is capable of addressing the needs of all residents. The recent decision regarding the siting of a new hospital facility indicates we are actively addressing future challenges.

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

Ian McLean

President & CEO

Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

A message from our
BOARD CHAIR



It has been an extraordinary year at the Chamber!

We've seen some great successes in events, networking, advocacy and member engagement that we plan to build on in the coming year.

Chair's Comments

Having completed my second year as Chair of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, I'm proud to say we are well positioned to continue to grow and provide more value for our members in the future. The 2023-2024 fiscal saw growth in our membership, which in turn led to growth in revenue – this allows us to provide more programming and benefits to our members to ensure they're getting the most value possible from their membership. Advocacy continues to be a strong focus with many ongoing initiatives relating to transit, healthcare, housing, talent and education.

I want to thank my fellow board directors for all of their hard work in supporting Chamber staff in delivering for our members. I would also like to again thank Ian and his team, all of our volunteers and sponsors, and all of our members for helping to make our Chamber and our community great. I can't wait to see what we achieve in the upcoming fiscal.

Scott Gilfillan

Partner, PwC

And 2023-24 Chair of the Board of Directors for the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

About THE CHAMBER



About the Chamber

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

This past year, we started executing on Year 1 of a 3-Year Strategic Plan, with the support from our Board of Directors. With the hefty goals of growing for impact, maximizing profile & influence, and being diverse & inclusive in our work, we're proud to have made significant progress to support our Members.

We also received re-accreditation through the Chamber of Commerce Executives of Canada (CCEC) - acknowledging that we have passed an evaluation against a rigorous set of national standards, and that our Chamber has demonstrated excellence across its leadership, governance and operations. Out of more than 400 Chambers across Canada, we are one of only 78 who are accredited.

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

2023-24 Highlights



44%
member engagement



87%
event satisfaction



275
new members



18+
sectors



1,844+
net increase in
followers
across 5
social media
platforms

About **THE TEAM**



Leadership

Ian McLean**
President & CEO

Lester Holley**
Chief Operating Officer

Heather Hutchings***
Director, Partnerships & Publications

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

Carolyn Marsh*
Director, Community Engagement & Strategic Programs

Jenna Petker**
Director, Healthcare & Physician Recruitment

Staff

Andi Lakatos
Events Manager

Rio McManus
Events Coordinator

Sukhjit Lall
Marketing Coordinator

Bhavya Sood
Marketing Coordinator

Bonnie Frank*
Member Success Manager

Lisa McDonald
Member Success Manager

Darlene Jones**
Membership Services Lead

Sandra Raposo*
Accounting & Office Assistant

Racheal Mulenga
Project Coordinator

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

*5 Years of Service

**10 Years of Service

***15 Years of Service



2023-24

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Executive

Scott Gilfillan (*Chair*)
PwC

Ron Gagnon (*Vice Chair*)
Grand River Hospital

Mohsan Abdullah (*Secretary*)
Token Creative Services)

Gina Hudel (*Vice Chair*)
CanCannot Inc.

Brad Dunbar (*Treasurer*)
Dunbar & Associates Professional Corp.

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

Committee

Chris Andree
Gowling WLG

Shelley Forwell
WalterFedy

Nick Heffner
Heffner Lexus & Heffner Toyota

Mariam Rasool
Stelco

Everton Wilmot
Wilmot Technologies Inc.

Carleen Carroll
Wilfrid Laurier University

Chloe Hamilton
Warm Embrace Elder Care

Ajoa Mintah
Four All Ice Cream

Geraldine Stafford
Waterloo Region Police Services

Roberto Villamar
Coheco S.A.

2023-24

VOLUNTEERS



Ambassador Committee

Don Critelli

Ruben Domingos

Bob Fostor

Darcy Krahn

Shannon Shaw

Sandra Stone

Roberto Villamar

Business After 5 Committee

Conrad Lovell (*Chair*)

Tom Reilly (*Vice Chair*)

Neet Aggarwal

Becca Faber

Kevin Fancy

AJ Feltis

Natalie Hemmerich

Leigh-Anne Quinn

Karen Schlupp

Business Excellence Awards Committee

Laura Hewitson (*Chair*)

Monica Caudle

Jeff Collins

Ruben Domingos

Michael Hewitson

Nahla Kor

Mary Cathryn Lorentz

Curtis Montgomery

Nicole Marinelli

Jessica Spataro

Michelle Tupman

Roberto Villamar



2023-24

VOLUNTEERS



Chamber Young Professionals Committee

Maddie Campbell (<i>Chair</i>)	Dani Bazely (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Mackenzie Ainly
Charly Bax	Ruben Domingos	Alisa Grange
Michelle McDonald	Christopher Sanson	Fahmi Turk

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

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

Healthcare & Physician Recruitment Committee

Laura Hewitson	Mike Hewitson	Jeff MacIntyre
----------------	---------------	----------------

Women's Leadership Committee

Allison Bourke (<i>Chair</i>)	Rachel Sommers (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	
Reem Elkady	Rebecca Hempey	Janice McVey
Karla Moore	Shannon Shaw	Sandra Stone
Lesley Warren	Kim Wilhelm	



2023-24

VOLUNTEERS



Regional Municipal Affairs Committee

Brian Bennett

Andrew Bingeman

Cory Bluhm

Emir Ceric

Kevin Dias

Ian Macdonald

Justin McFadden

Eric Saulesja

David Sunday

Hamza Toofani

Shannon Weber

Provincial Federal Affairs Committee

John Cruickshank

Jessica Dupuis

Ed Lemont

Josefa Michaelson

Tim Strome

Sean Sullivan

Hamza Toofani

Volunteer Appreciation

Sponsored By: Cowan Insurance Group

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

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

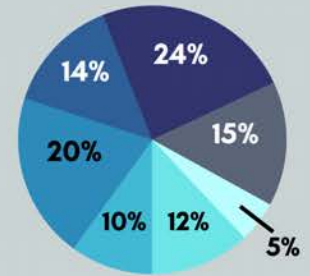
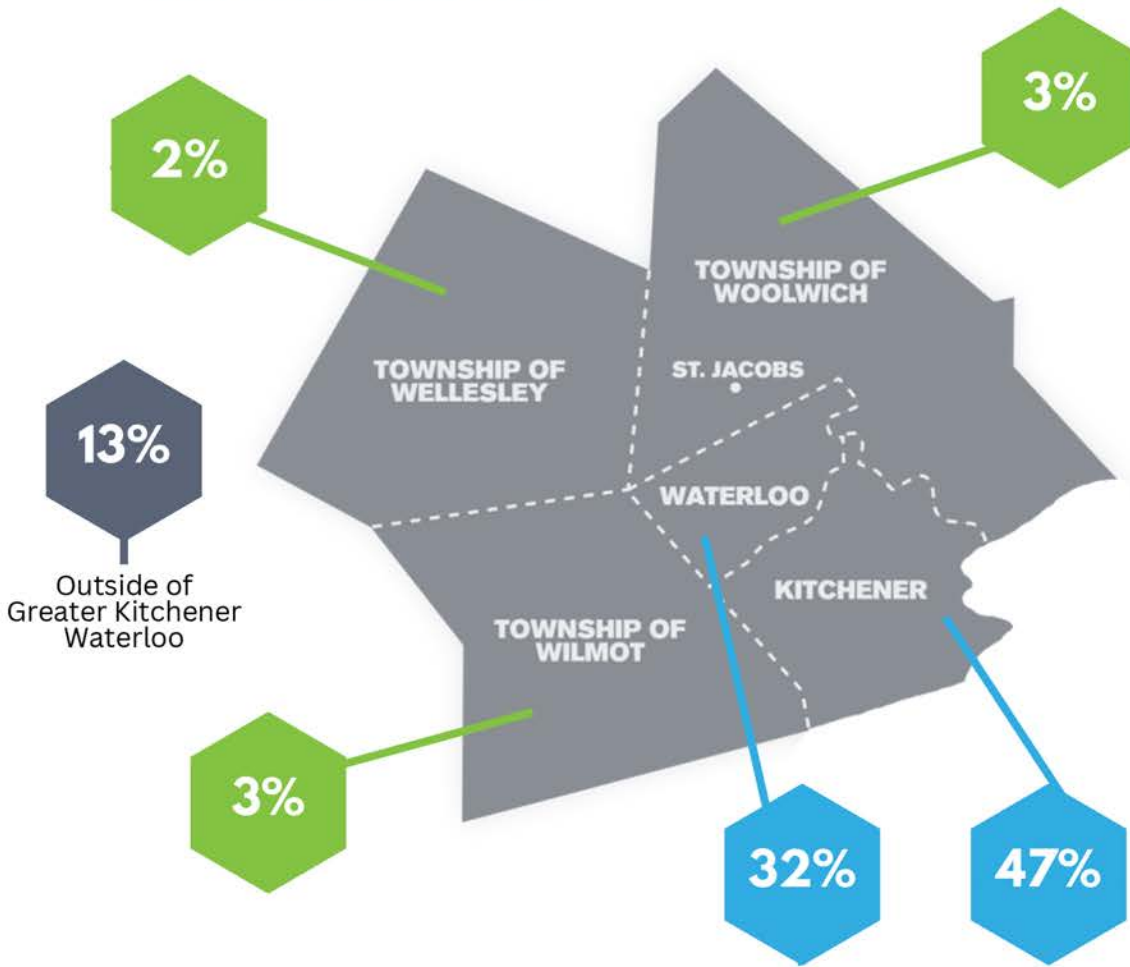


Want to Volunteer with the Chamber?

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



Chamber MEMBERSHIP



Industries Represented through Chamber Membership

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

<p>1,450+</p> <p>Total Membership</p> <p>The total number of businesses enrolled as Chamber Members this year</p>	<p>85K+</p> <p>Workforce Representation</p> <p>The total number of Full Time Employees that worked for our Members this year</p>	<p>84%</p> <p>Member Retention</p> <p>The percentage of Members who renewed this year</p>	<p>275</p> <p>New Members</p> <p>The total number of New Members that signed up this year</p>
---	--	---	---

New Member Events

We implemented monthly **New Member Welcome** events, to engage New Members and introduce them to others during a more intimate networking event, hosted at local Member restaurants.



Business Size

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

Chamber MEMBERSHIP



”

The KW Chamber helped me grow my business!

I love to be at Chamber events, it's my happy place. I am one of the most involved in the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce because they really do help your business grow.

Stephanie Soulis, Little Mushroom Catering

Chamber Community

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

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

The Member Value

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

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

We are here to help *you* succeed.



1,270+
members that participated in peer & mentor meetings



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



530+
businesses featured through programs & advertising



6,800+
professionals reached weekly with e-blasts

Networking & EVENTS



We bring Members together

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

This year, we continued to produce high quality events and experiences for our Members. In-person attendance was encouraged and incentivized by using unique venues, behind the scenes tours, elevated on-site production, increased networking opportunities, diverse speakers, and more.

Although event expenses have increased substantially since the pandemic, Members were kept top of mind. Tiered pricing options and alternate experiences were introduced for select events. This included a new Live Streaming Party, hosted off-site, during the Business Excellence Awards Gala. For a more casual experience and affordable ticket price, guests were able to attend this event while still having access to a secondary stage to accept their award(s). Live cut-ins were also done from the party back to the main Gala Stage, to make everyone feel included in the celebrations.

This year saw many new faces, and familiar ones too, regularly participating in networking events and eagerly supporting Signature Chamber Events.



90+
events, programs,
and round tables



4,447+
total attendees



1 in 3
guests attended 3 or
more events in the year



\$13,948
raised through events
for local charities &
healthcare initiatives



80+
experts shared their
insights as speakers,
panelists, and mentors



20,000+
additional views of
event video recordings



Networking & **EVENTS**

Events in High Demand

The following events were completely sold-out prior to the event date, some of which in record timing:

- Golf Scramble (August)
- Annual General Meeting (Sept)
- Chamberfest (Oct)
- Women's Leadership: 60 in 60 (Jan)
- International Women's Day (Mar)
- Business Excellence Awards Gala (Mar)
- Business Expo - Exhibitor Booths (Apr)
- Manufacturing Summit (May)
- Young Professionals: Hot Seat (June)
- Energy & Environment Forum (June)



Events for Everyone

We offer a variety of events and networking opportunities to meet the needs of our members.



Time Commitment

Events are hosted midweek in the mornings, mid-days, and evenings, accommodating your busy schedule.



Budget

Registration prices vary, with a selection of both paid and free events.



Demographic

Select events are geared towards specific audiences, including: Women in Leadership, Young Professionals, Entrepreneurs, etc.



Industries & Interests

Some programming is done for specific industries and interests, including: Tech, Professional Development, Manufacturing, and more.

PUBLICATIONS & MEDIA



The Advocate

In 2023-24, the **Chamber's Advocate publication** released a series of articles from local sources and authors with national profile. They addressed major issues around growth, population management, infrastructure planning, community building, and more.

Approximately 2,500 copies per issue are distributed to Chamber members and other leaders throughout Waterloo Region, plus an additional 1,800+ interactions online.

[Read Here >>>](#)



The Membership Directory

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

It includes articles from local dignitaries and organizations, and is used as an essential tool for Members to be able to source out new suppliers and partners. This past year, the online version of the directory had 18,000+ interactions.

[Read Here >>>](#)



Media

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

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

[Listen Here >>>](#)

Sponsored By:



Chamber PROGRAMS

Sponsored By:



Peer2Peer Groups (P2P)

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

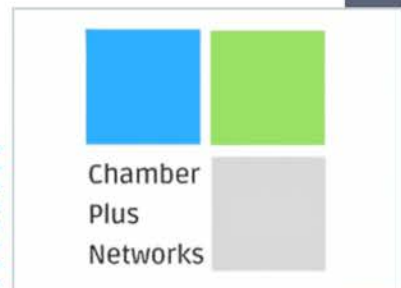
[Join Here](#) >>>



Chamber Plus Networks (CPN)

Chamber Plus Networks continue to be in high demand, providing members the opportunity to support each other with increased sales, networking skills, and business referrals. An additional group was added this year, with 68 total members participating in CPN's.

[Join Here](#) >>>



Sponsored By:



Behind the Business Podcast

The Chamber's **Behind the Business Podcast** hosted by GKWCC President & CEO Ian McLean, released 34 episodes this past year to help viewers learn from prominent business leaders (Owners, CEOs) within the Region. The podcast had 1,200+ downloads in its first year.

[Listen Here](#) >>>



Sponsored By:



Female Founders

The Chamber proudly continued its **Female Founders** program, a monthly women-led initiative in-partnership with Scotiabank. One Female Founder is featured each month, sharing their own career journey in a video interview, to empower others. The stories of 12 Founders were shared, and watched by over 5,000 people.

[Watch Here](#) >>>



Advocacy IN ACTION



Growing for Impact

The Chamber continues to advance the interests of local employers as Waterloo Region experiences unprecedented population and economic growth.

Our organization has worked with community partners across the public and private sectors to ensure we generate employment opportunities accompanying population growth.

Advocacy Wins

Resolutions. Our Chamber put forward a total of 4 resolutions between the the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC). All resolutions were strongly supported and passed.

1. **Building Ontario Fund**
2. **A New Deal for Ontario Municipalities**
3. **A Review of the Canadian Tax System**
4. **Closing the National Digital Divide**

Land Assembly. We support Region of Waterloo Council's efforts to assemble large parcels of employment lands to attract national and global businesses that will elevate our levels of productivity and innovation.

Transportation. We have been a long-standing advocate for the construction of a new Highway 7 between Waterloo Region and Guelph/Wellington County.

Expanded GO Train passenger service from Union Station will assist local employers in meeting their escalating workforce requirements.

Priority Areas

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

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

Advocacy IN ACTION

Community Leadership

Our Chamber leads innovative and effective efforts with local governments and community organizations on programs for a growing and inclusive regional economy.

We are composed of many employers across the private, public and non-profit sectors and create opportunities for business expansion, employment and training.



01. Immigration Partnership

Our Chamber has focused on immigrant settlement and is a long-standing stakeholder in the local Immigration Partnership. Collectively we have built a community that welcomes and supports newcomers arriving from around the world.

02. BESTWR

The Business Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) was established during the pandemic, but still continues to do important work. Ian McLean chairs the weekly meeting with our partners: Communitech, Explore Waterloo Region, Waterloo EDC, and Cambridge Chamber of Commerce.

03. Media

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



50+

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

25+

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

Notable Guests:

- Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, *Minister of Energy & Natural Resources (Canada)*
- Phil Verster, *Metrolinx*
- Tabatha Bull, *Canadian Council for Indigenous Business*
- Jean-François Perrault, *Scotiabank*
- And many more

Physician Recruitment & **HEALTHCARE**



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.

A Focus on Recruitment

On November 3-5th, 2023 we hosted our 25th Annual Family/Emergency Medicine Resident Weekend. This past year we hosted 31 family medicine residents, 5 emergency medicine residents, 2 specialists and their partners. Throughout the weekend long event, our guests toured medical facilities, learned about different practice opportunities, met and networked with community leaders and physicians and explored spousal employment opportunities. This was our largest event to date.

The Chamber also presented at the KW4 Ontario Health Team Clinician Summit to discuss the work we are doing in recruitment and highlight the challenges we are currently facing.

In the past year we were also able to establish a new digital presence through Instagram & LinkedIn, to better engage with the physician community.

1 in 5 

Waterloo Region residents without a Family Doctor

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

300+
Family Physicians recruited through this program

Since 1998, more than 300 physicians have been recruited to the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo area.

Physician Recruitment & **HEALTHCARE**

Power of Collaboration

This 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

This year we 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.

Where We've Been

- McMaster Resident Fair, engaging with 40 residents
- Canadian Society of Physician Recruitment (CaSPR) conference in St. John's NFLD to network, connect and learn best practices with recruiters across Canada
- SOPRA recruitment fair in Birmingham, UK
- FMF in Kansas City, engaging with Canadians currently training in the US

The future of Healthcare in Waterloo Region

Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital announced the location for the new hospital this past June. The Chamber celebrates this important step and the impact it will have on healthcare delivery and recruitment efforts.

A new hospital is critical to the needs of our community and essential for the growth that we are anticipating. Waterloo Region is home to a health innovation ecosystem – driving change in research, development and delivery of health care, this advancement is progressing the economic health of our community and beyond.

IMPACT & INCLUSIVITY



Diverse & Inclusive in Our Work

We continue to strive to be a Chamber that represents the diverse community that we live and work in.

Fostering a culture of inclusivity helps drive our success and innovation every year.

Local Support

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

-  Anishnabeg Outreach
-  Caribbean Canadian Association (CCAWR)
-  Community Support Connections
-  The Food Bank of Waterloo Region
-  The Healing of the Seven Generations
-  KW Multicultural Festival
-  KW Oktoberfest
-  LiftOff Black Innovation Hub
-  Mamas for Mamas KW
-  Special Olympics Ontario
-  SPECTRUM Rainbow Community Space
-  Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region
-  And many more!

50-30 CHALLENGE

Commitment to Organizational Leadership Equity

We are registered and working towards gender parity (50%) and representation (30%) with both Staff & Board of Directors

\$28,950

Donations contributed back to the community

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

Education & Allyship

We continue to prioritize the need for continued education and training for our Staff and Volunteers, specifically as it relates to Allyship and Inclusivity.

Some of what we participated in this year:

- “Working Towards Reconciliation Together” Allyship Session at Crow Shield Lodge
- “IDEA Fundamentals” Diversity Training with CCDI Consulting
- “Commitment to Accessibility” presentation with CNIB Foundation

Healthcare & Physician Recruitment PARTNERS

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

Platinum



Gold



Silver



Bronze



Community



Our PARTNERS

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

Chamber Chair's Circle



Chamber Patrons



Chamber Trustees



Our PARTNERS



Title Sponsors

Manulife



Media Partners



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





GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS BUILDING COMMUNITY



CONNECT WITH US

 GreaterKWChamber.com

 (519) 576-5000

 admin@greaterkwchamber.com

