



GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS BUILDING COMMUNITY



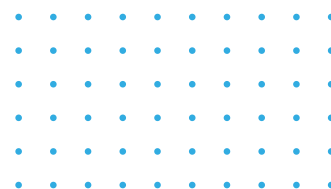
2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT

GreaterKWChamber.com



A message from our **PRESIDENT & CEO**



The Chamber will continue to be a strong voice for business, advocating for the policies and investments that enable businesses to grow and succeed.



Navigating Change and Building Opportunity

Waterloo Region is a community with much to be proud of and even more to look forward to.

Over the past year, the Chamber has continued to bring business leaders together with municipal, provincial and national leaders to advance important conversations around infrastructure, housing, talent, transportation and the services needed to support a growing community. These priorities will remain central to our work in the year ahead.

Our business community is navigating a rapidly changing environment, but businesses continue to demonstrate resilience, adaptability and determination. Waterloo Region has strong foundations: innovative businesses, talented people, world-class post-secondary institutions and a community that embraces opportunity. Together, we can navigate growth and change while creating new opportunities.

The Chamber will continue to be a strong voice for business, advocating for the policies and investments that enable businesses to grow and succeed. We will create opportunities for members to connect, collaborate and learn, while bringing people together to address the issues that matter most.

Our future is full of opportunity. By working together and investing in our community, we can ensure Waterloo Region remains one of the best places in the world to live, work, invest and do business.

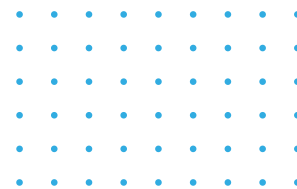
On behalf of our staff and Board of Directors, thank you for your continued support and leadership. We look forward to building a stronger Waterloo Region together.

Ian McLean

President & CEO

Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

A message from our **BOARD CHAIR**



We continue to focus on creating meaningful opportunities for our members to connect, learn and do business together, while ensuring they see real value in their Chamber membership.

Chair's Comments

Wow, two years have flown by! As I complete my second, and last, year as Chair of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, I am able to look back with pride for all that we have accomplished. Much of that work has been behind the scenes, ensuring this Chamber remains well governed, compliant, and strong.

Some of the more visible highlights include increased advocacy through our Vision-1-Million series, the launch of our podcast studio and Behind the Business series, our work supporting physician recruitment and the new hospital, a record number of new members, and the celebration of the Chamber's 140th anniversary.

It has not, however, been without challenges. Like many businesses and organizations in our region, we have felt the impact of economic uncertainty, rising interest costs and ongoing tariff wars. While we have welcomed record new members, we have also experienced record cancellations. Ian and his team are working hard to address this, but they cannot do it alone. We need your help, not only to bring in new members, but to get them involved and connected so they can truly see the value of Chamber membership.

Finally, thank you to my fellow board directors, Ian and his team, our volunteers, sponsors and, most importantly, our members. Together, you make this Chamber and our community stronger.

Here's to a prosperous, and hopefully less volatile 2026-2027.

Brad Dunbar

*President, Dunbar & Associates, Professional Corp.
And 2025-26 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 140 years, of *Business Building Community*... and yet, we're just getting started.

This year, we celebrated **140 years** of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. This is a remarkable milestone and a testament to the strength and resilience of our business community. To mark the occasion, we launched **\$140K for 140 Years**, a campaign to raise \$140,000 in support of physician recruitment in Waterloo Region. It's more than a fundraising campaign. It's **investing in a legacy of care** and a reflection of our belief that a strong business community depends on a strong and healthy community.

With the support of our Board of Directors, we also developed a new three-year strategic plan to guide our work and build on the momentum we've created together. We're excited to enter the next three years with a clear focus on growing our impact and continuing to serve our local business community.

We remain committed to providing the events, education, member benefits and advocacy our Members have come to expect from us, while continuing to evolve to meet the changing needs of our community. **140 years in, we're proud of our legacy – and even more excited about what comes next!**

2025-26 Highlights



65%
member engagement



87%
event satisfaction



293
new members

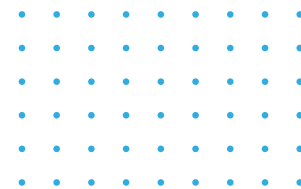


19
sectors



12%
increase in reach
across our
marketing channels

About **THE TEAM**



Leadership

Ian McLean***
President & CEO

Lester Holley**
Chief Operating Officer

Heather Hutchings***
Director, Partnerships & Publications

Jenna Petker**
Director, Healthcare & Physician Recruitment

Carolyn Marsh*
Director, Community Engagement & Strategic Programs

Staff

Nicole Chaisson
Events Lead

Lisa Giehler
Marketing Manager

Esther Timm
Events Lead

Bhavya Sood
Marketing Coordinator

Bonnie Frank*
Member Success Manager

Lisa McDonald*
Member Success Manager

Sofia Zanabria Guzman
Insights & Analytics Lead

Carol-Ann Lorentz
Member Services & Operations Coordinator

Sandra Raposo*
Accounting & Office Lead

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



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Executive

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

Stephanie Soulis (*Secretary*)
Little Mushroom Catering

Gina Hudel (*Vice Chair*)
CanConnot Inc

Mariam Rasool (*Treasurer*)
Lumine Group

Mohsan Abdullah (*Vice Chair*)
Token Creative Services)

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

Committee

Kyle Brohman
Conestogo Electric Inc

Ruben Domingos
Zehr Group

Shelley Forwell
WalterFedy

Faune Lang
Food4Kids Waterloo Region

Nick Heffner
Heffner Lexus & Heffner Toyota

Linda Li
Dillon Consulting Limited

Cathy Snyder
Nopak Canada Inc.

Gwenyth Stadig
Gowling WLG

Geraldine Stafford
Waterloo Region Police Services

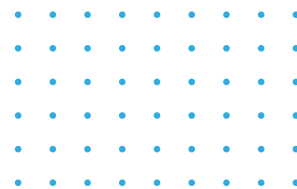
Roberto Villamar
Stradox Consulting

Everton Wilmot
Wilmot Technologies Inc.



2025-26

VOLUNTEERS



Ambassador Committee

Bob Foster
Darcy Krahn
Don Critelli

Roberto Villamar
Ruben Domingos
Sandra Stone

Shannon Shaw

Business After 5 Committee

Tom Reilly (*Chair*)
Andrew Leith
April Lupi
Conrad Lovell

Jason Taylor (*Vice Chair*)
Frances van Dieren
Jon Hureau
Karen Schlupp

Leigh-Anne Quinn
Michael Lyons
Mike Butean
Ryan Marriott

Business Excellence Awards Committee

Laura Hewitson (*Chair*)
Janie O'Brien
Jeff Collins
Jessica Spatoro

Michelle Tupman (*Vice-Chair*)
Michael Hewitson
Monica Caudle
Nahla Kor

Nicole Marinelli
Steve Ashton
Roberto Villamar
Ruben Domingos



2025-26

VOLUNTEERS

Chamber Young Professionals Committee

Emma Marriott (<i>Chair</i>)	Hannah Poole (Vice Chair)	Gabi Underwood
Alisa Grange	Daniel Moholia	Ryan Schinker
Ashley Close	Eniko Cserepka	
Chintan Patel	Fahmi Turk	

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

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

Healthcare & Physician Recruitment Committee

Jeff MacIntyre	Mike Hewitson	Trevor Eaton
Laura Hewitson		

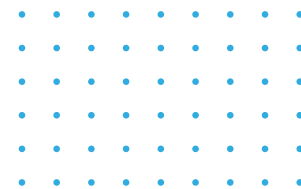
Women's Leadership Committee

Rachel Sommers (<i>Chair</i>)	Andrea De Jager-Jackson (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Sabrina McGregor
Allison Bourke	Janice McVey	Sandra Stone
Christy Bertrand	Kelly Koner	Shannon Shaw
Debbie Mann	Lesley Warren	Suzanne Flinn



2025-26

VOLUNTEERS



Regional Municipal Affairs Committee

Andrew Bingeman
Andrew Sturgess
Brian Rodderick
Cory Bluhm
David Sunday
Emir Cerić

Gina Hudel
Ian Macdonald
Justin McFadden
Justin Watkins
Kevin Dias
Kevin Litwiller

Matthew Klassen
Shannon Weber
Simran Singh
Stéphane Hamade
Tamim Hamidi
Vladimir Blagovanin

Federal & Provincial Affairs Committee

Brian Rodderick
Gina Hudel
Jeff MacIntyre

Matthew Klassen
Sean Sullivan
Simran Singh

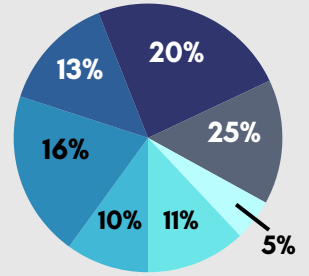
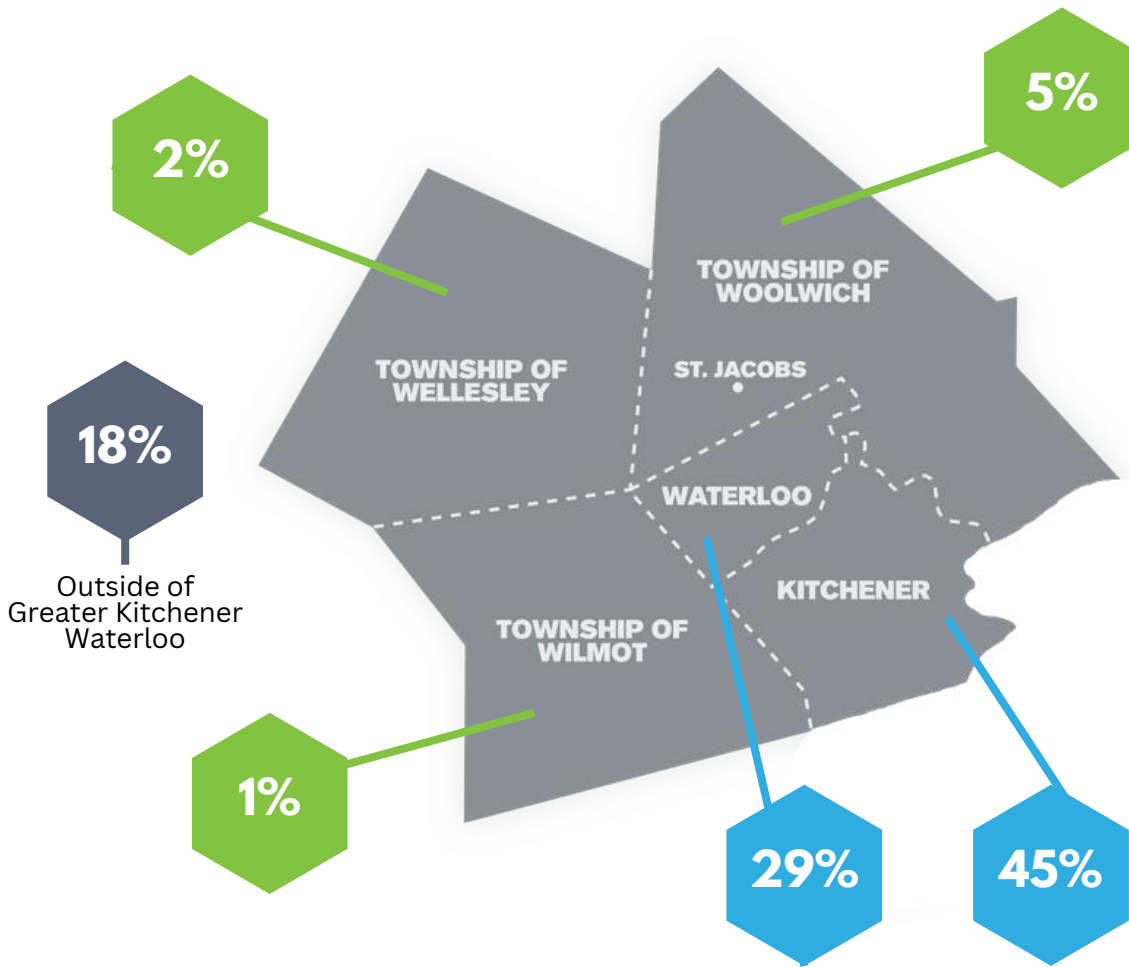
Stéphane Hamade
Tim Strome



Want to Volunteer with the Chamber?

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

Chamber MEMBERSHIP



Industries Represented through Chamber Membership

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

1,470+

Total Membership

The total number of businesses enrolled as Chamber Members this year

85K+

Workforce Representation

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

81%

Member Retention

The percentage of Members who renewed this year

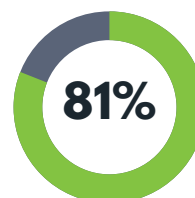
293

New Members

The total number of New Members that signed up this year

Membership Loyalty

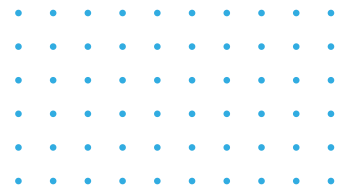
42% of members have been with the KW Chamber for more than 10 years, and **17%** have been with us for over 25 years. Thank you for your continued commitment!



Business Size

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

Chamber MEMBERSHIP



”

Every Chamber event gives me an opportunity to meet someone new, build a relationship and get something valuable out of our membership.

Shawn Kavanaugh, Royal Bank of Canada

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.

More Than A Member

More Than A Member is a year-long initiative introduced in March 2026 by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. Twice a month, a brief video is shared across all Chamber marketing channels that feature authentic testimonials from Chamber members, spotlighting why they remain engaged with the Chamber, and how GKWCC supports their success.

What makes someone More Than A Member?

Being More Than a Member isn't about the size of your business or how long you've been part of the Chamber. It's about the ways you connect, contribute, and grow through our community.



1,360+
members that participated in peer & mentor meetings



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



621+
businesses featured through programs & advertising



9900+
professionals reached weekly with e-blasts

Networking & **EVENTS**



We expand opportunities for Members

Events play a significant role in bringing members together, expanding engagement, and creating meaningful opportunities for connection.

This year, we continued to deliver high-quality events and experiences, bringing our members together in meaningful ways.

Several events sold out and others grew in size. We hosted events at more venues, including new ones, to showcase more of our members. We also utilized LinkedIn Live streams to extend our reach beyond the room and provide different participation options for our members.

We made events more financially accessible for businesses of all sizes by opening new sponsorship levels and offering more flexible registration options at different price points. This allowed us to welcome new sponsors on board and attract new attendees to our events.

We opened more speaking opportunities for diverse voices, utilizing our online member portal to make getting involved easier. We also saw increased volunteer participation this year, and we gathered more feedback from attendees to help shape future events. Lastly, we became more environmentally friendly by utilizing QR codes for event programs instead of printed paper.



137
events, programs,
and round tables



5,731
total attendees



10
sold-out events



\$10,052
raised through events
for local charities &
healthcare initiatives

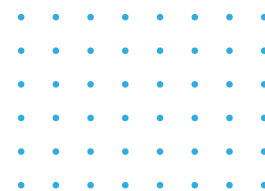


6,000+
additional views of
event video recordings



Networking & EVENTS

We offer a diverse lineup of more than 60 events each year designed to connect, support, and celebrate our local business community. From high-profile gatherings to casual networking, there's something for everyone.



Networking Series

Business After 5 Series **Average attendance*

 **5 events/year**  **130/event**

Chamber Young Professionals Series

 **4 events/year**  **60/event**

Networking Breakfast Series

 **5 events/year**  **70/event**

Vision 1 Million Series

 **4 events/year**  **110/event**

Women's Leadership

 **4 events/year**  **75/event**

Signature Events

Awards (Business Excellence & Small Business)

22 award categories | 700+ guests

Business Expo

200+ exhibitors | 1,500+ guests

Golf Scramble

16 exhibitors | 130+ guests

International Women's Day

330+ guests | 8 Donated Prizes

Manufacturing Summit

20+ exhibitors | 280+ guests

Highlighting Your Business (through Events)

This year, we increased brand awareness for our members in four key ways. We hosted events at a variety of local venues, offered members exhibitor booths to showcase their businesses, invited them to speak at our events, and welcomed sponsorships from many of them, which increased their visibility across our local business community.

23

different venues
hosted our
events

308

businesses
hosted an
exhibitor booth
at our events

109

experts shared
insights as
speakers, panelists,
and mentors

114

businesses
sponsored our
events

PUBLICATIONS & MEDIA



The Advocate

In 2025-26, the **Chamber's Advocate publication** released a series of articles from local sources and authors with national profile. They addressed major issues around growth, international trade wars, population management, infrastructure planning, community building, and more.

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

[Read Here](#) >>>



The Membership Directory

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

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

[Read Here](#) >>>



Business to Business

GKWCC President & CEO, Ian McLean, continued to co-host the **Business to Business** Radio Show, every Sunday on CityNews 570. They host meaningful conversations with business leaders, subject matter experts, elected officials, and policy makers. The show helps explain the issues shaping our economy, highlights the successes of our business community, and demonstrates how, together, we can influence positive change.

[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 15-20 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. There are a total of 4 groups who meet biweekly, with 75 total members participating in CPN's.

[Join Here](#) >>>



Sponsored By:



Behind the Business Podcast

The Chamber's **Behind the Business Podcast** hosted by GKWCC President & CEO Ian McLean, released nearly 45 episodes this year to help viewers learn from prominent business leaders (Owners, CEOs) within the Region & beyond. In it's 3rd year, there were over 3,200 downloads.

[Listen Here](#) >>>



Sponsored By:



Fearless Females

The Chamber proudly continued its **Fearless Females** program, a monthly women-led initiative in-partnership with Scotiabank. One Fearless Female is featured each month, sharing their own career journey in a video interview, to empower others. The stories of 8 Founders were shared, and watched by over 1,300 people.

[Watch Here](#) >>>



Advocacy IN ACTION



Advocacy Wins

Our Chamber successfully passed policy resolutions at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce supporting **Streamlining Administration for Canadian Doctors**, as well as a resolution brought forward by the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce on **Equitable Tax Distribution Policy to Assist Canadian Municipalities**.

Resolutions were also passed at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce:

- Retaining and Attracting more Women in Skilled Trades
- Removing Barriers to Boost Ontario's Labour Pool

Supporting Local Businesses Through Trade Uncertainty

As the trade war continues to impact businesses across our community, we remain committed to advocate and support our members navigating tariffs, shifting trade policies, and changing economic conditions.

In partnership with the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, we re-launched **ChamberCheck.ca** to empower our local community to easily identify and support products made in Canada, while providing timely access to resources and updates on the evolving trade relationship between Canada and the U.S.

Vision 1 Million Community Scorecard

In June 2025, the Business & Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR), in partnership with the University of Waterloo's Future Cities Institute, launched the **Vision 1 Million ScoreCard** to track the region's readiness for a population of one million. Updated every six months, the ScoreCard assesses key areas including housing, transportation, healthcare, employment, and placemaking and livability. It promotes accountability across businesses, organizations, and the municipal government while identifying areas where action is needed to keep the region on pace for growth.



Housing



Transportation



Healthcare



Employment
& Jobs



Placemaking
& Livability

Advocacy IN ACTION

01. Land Assembly

The Chamber advocated for strategic investment-ready sites to support Waterloo Region's anticipated growth, highlighting the need for coordinated planning, economic development, community input and environmental stewardship to attract major investments, create jobs and strengthen the Region's long-term social and economic future.

02. Municipal Reform

The Chamber engaged members and community stakeholders to identify the leadership skills and experience needed for effective regional governance, sharing these recommendations with the Ontario government to inform future appointments.

03. Water Crisis

We are advocating for urgent action, provincial leadership, transparent communication and long-term solutions to Waterloo Region's water crisis, while calling for a clear path forward to lift the development pause and support sustainable growth.

Media

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



55+

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

27+

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

Notable Guests:

- Hon. Mike Harris, Minister of Natural Resources
- Hon. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Darrell Bricker, Global CEO for Ipsos Public Affairs
- Hon. Caroline Mulroney, President of the Treasury Board
- Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation

Physician Recruitment & **HEALTHCARE**



Building a Stronger Physician Pipeline for Waterloo Region

Access to primary care remains one of the most significant healthcare challenges facing Waterloo Region and communities across Ontario. For employers, it also supports the ability to attract and retain talent and contributes to the long-term strength of our community.

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce's Healthcare & Physician Recruitment program continues to work directly with physicians, medical learners and community partners to attract and retain physicians in Waterloo Region.

Making a Measurable Difference

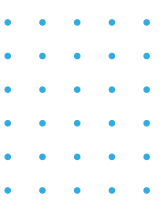
21 physicians joined Primary Enrollment Model (PEM) practices in Waterloo Region. Recruitment efforts also filled eight locum positions and two practices of retiring physicians, helping maintain continuity of care for local patients.

Recruitment is About Finding the Right Fit

A successful recruitment is not simply about matching a physician to a community with need. Physicians are looking for opportunities that align with both their professional and personal goals.

They are considering established patient rosters, collaborative and team-based environments, flexible practice models, mentorship, professional opportunities and work-life balance. They are also considering the broader community, including employment opportunities for spouses and partners, schools, housing, recreation and quality of life.

This makes practice and succession planning an important part of recruitment. Opportunities to take over an established practice can be particularly attractive, providing an existing patient roster, infrastructure and administrative support while ensuring continuity of care for patients.



Physician Recruitment & **HEALTHCARE**

Building Relationships Through Recruitment

Recruitment is about much more than filling a vacancy. Physicians have considerable choice in where and how they practise, making it essential to establish relationships early and demonstrate why Waterloo Region is a great place to build both a career and a life.

Over the past year, the Chamber participated in a broad range of recruitment and relationship-building events across Canada, the United States and internationally:

AAFP FUTURE Conference – Kansas

City: Connected with medical students and family medicine residents across North America, including Canadian physicians training in the U.S., and introduced them to opportunities in Waterloo Region.

McMaster Family Medicine Resident

Fair: Engaged directly with family medicine residents at the McMaster Waterloo Regional Campus, strengthening our relationship with local medical learners and keeping Waterloo Region top of mind for future practice locations.

FMX – Anaheim: Represented Waterloo Region at the American Academy of Family Physicians' Family Medicine Experience, connecting with family physicians and medical professionals from across North America. The event provided an opportunity to engage with Canadian physicians practising in the U.S. and U.S. physicians interested in exploring opportunities in Ontario.

Ottawa Family Medicine Resident Fair:

Connected with family medicine residents, showcasing the professional, practice and lifestyle opportunities available in Waterloo Region.

27th Annual Family Medicine Resident Weekend:

Hosted our annual resident weekend, welcoming residents and their partners from the University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, Western University, McMaster University and Queen's University, as well as participants from the U.S. and U.K. The weekend gives future physicians an opportunity to experience Waterloo Region first-hand and learn about local practice opportunities, healthcare organizations and the community.

Western Family Medicine Resident

Retreat: Engaged with first- and second-year family medicine residents

GP Recruitment Fair – Birmingham, UK:

Through the Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance, connected with more than 90 UK-trained physicians interested in relocating to Ontario. Five physicians are now actively exploring opportunities in Waterloo Region, demonstrating the value of international recruitment and collaboration.

Together, these activities extend our reach well beyond traditional recruitment channels. They allow us to connect with physicians at different stages of their careers and, importantly, begin relationships years before a physician may be ready to establish a practice.

Physician Recruitment & **HEALTHCARE**

Together with our healthcare and business community partners, we are helping build a stronger physician pipeline and a healthier Waterloo Region today and for the future.

Working Together to Reach More Physicians

Collaboration is an increasingly important part of successful physician recruitment.

The Chamber is an active member of the Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance (OPRA), working alongside recruitment professionals across the province to share resources, strengthen outreach and advocate for physician recruitment and retention.

Through OPRA, communities can participate collectively in international recruitment initiatives that would be difficult and costly to undertake individually. This collaborative approach allows Ontario to present a stronger presence internationally while giving physicians the opportunity to explore a range of communities and practice models.

OPRA also plays an important role in physician repatriation, connecting with Canadians who have completed medical education or residency training abroad and are considering a return home. Building these relationships early creates a pipeline of potential physicians for Ontario communities in the years ahead.



Looking Ahead

The physician recruitment landscape continues to evolve, but the need remains clear. An aging physician workforce, fewer medical graduates choosing family medicine and continued population growth will require sustained recruitment and retention efforts.

Looking ahead, the Chamber will continue to expand recruitment across Canada and internationally, build relationships with residents and medical learners, support physician retention and succession planning, strengthen the profile of Waterloo Region as a place to practise and live, and work with local practices to develop opportunities that are attractive to the next generation of physicians.

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



Charcoal Group of Restaurants Presents:



Media Partners



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



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