



GERRY REMERS
STEPS DOWN

SUPER HEROES OF THE
BUILDING TRADES



TIM JACKSON TO HEAD
SHAD

EXCHANGE

MAGAZINE FOR ENGAGEMENT / ENTREPRENEURS / EARLY STAGE ENTERPRISES / ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS / EDUCATORS

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SMASHING STEREOTYPES

**Little time for nostalgia:
after a century of success,
Cober is focused
on the future**

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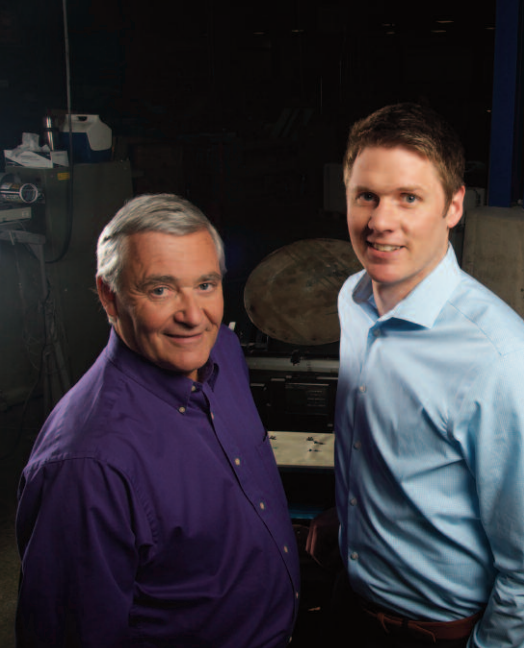
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On the cover: Smashing stereotypes at Cober

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BUILT ON INNOVATION

In praise of corporate creative class

by PAUL KNOWLES



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"Innovation." It's a word we hear so often, it can become almost commonplace. You barely notice it. "Innovation... yawn."

That reaction is a mistake. Because our unique, local capacity to innovate, to create, to embrace change, is

why each of us has the privilege of living in a prosperous, dynamic community.

Our economic success is built on innovation. If our corporate creative class had not continually innovated, we would be stuck in a dying economy. Instead, the future is bright with promise.

In this issue, we feature a number of our local innovators, including the award-winning builders featured in our special section.

I was intrigued to be guided around the facilities at Cober – once, "Cober Printing" – by Peter Cober. As a guy who has been around printing for a very long time, I was fascinated by the innovation happening in every aspect of the field. This is print-plus, powered by creativity and enabled by start of the art technology.

We also tip our hat to Gerry Remers, the man who has headed the highly innovative Christie Digital Canada operation for more than two decades. He's been in charge of one of the most innovative companies in the world, and he is leaving the CEO's office, to bring his expertise to a new consulting business – and, as a volunteer, to the Waterloo Regional Economic Development Corporation.

Innovation may be common, here in the region – but we should never take it for granted.

X



CONSTRUCTION SUPERHEROES FROM THE GVCA BUILDING EXCELLENCE AWARDS FROM TOP, LEFT: JEFF SHANTZ, MARTHA GEORGE, PAUL SEIBEL, TED DREYER, STEVE STECHO, ALLEN SCHIEDEL: BOTTOM – JEFF KIENAPPLE, MIKE GEORGE
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GVCA AWARD-WINNING BREITHAUPT BLOCK, HOME TO GOOGLE, BUILT BY ZEHR LEVESQUE INC.
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Bookend mayors are talking innovation to innovation clusters everywhere

John Tory is Mayor of Toronto. He's located at the east end of the newly touted Toronto-Waterloo Region Innovation Corridor. At the other end of the corridor is a triad of mayoral types – Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic, Waterloo Mayor Dave Jaworsky, Cambridge Mayor Doug Craig – as well as a Regional Chair, Ken Seiling– listed in no particular order of preference.

On a joint mission, Tory, Vrbanovic, Jaworsky, and Craig spent an April week together in San Francisco, with a focus on Silicon Valley.

Included were representatives from innovation centres like Communitech and



Toronto Mayor John Tory and Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic.

MaRS Innovation Centre, and the newly appointed CEO of the Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDC), Tony LaMantia.

How did this excursion all come about? In the beginning there were two mayors – Tory and Vrbanovic, who hosted a meeting of “the talented [business] individuals who are creating new ideas and new industries,” where they expressed a vision for this community, and with that, “have a world of options in front of them”.

What came out of that meeting was that the two regions – Toronto and Waterloo, represented by Vrbanovic– will join forces to promote the area as an international innovation corridor. The two will step up their advocacy for vital infrastructure, including all-day/two-way GO Transit service connecting the two communities, and focus will be on keeping talented individuals here in Ontario, their ideas and the industries they spawn. It was a meeting where the two mayors concluded they had to work together, not only in marketing this area as unique in global landscape, but to the provincial and federal governments, to provide needed infrastructure fulfillment of such a vision requires.

“This was the impetus of a joint mission we took ... to San Francisco and Silicon Valley”, said Tory and Vrbanovic in a joint statement. “We were there to put the Toronto-Waterloo corridor on the map as a global hub of innovation, to broadcast our accomplishments, and clearly state our ambitions as part of a longer play to attract and retain investment and talent to the region, while cultivating growth”. In addition they were “there to compare ourselves to Silicon Valley. The corridor has a unique story to tell: an ecosystem built around a highly educated, diverse workforce as well as a diversified economy,” like ours.

The Toronto-Waterloo corridor is experiencing rapid growth within the tech sector, with some tech companies on the verge of hyper-growth or start-ups on the verge of a major scale-up. Waterloo Region has attracted 1,800 startups and \$650 million in investment capital in recent years. The Toronto-Waterloo Corridor combined has 5200 start-ups, with 15000 business in technology. In fact, Waterloo Region has the second-highest density of startups in the world.

Tory points out that, “Toronto has the most PhDs in artificial intelligence”, a field that is transforming industry. Both agree that this talent is “being recruited out of the country at an alarming pace, and we should all be doing more to keep them here”.

During the visit the Mayors and the economic development entourage met with San Francisco's chief innovation officer, who champions the use of data, technology and citizen engagement in an effort to increase trust in his government. The group hosted three receptions (with the C100 Association, the Digital Moose Lounge and Maple SoCal) for expat Canadians, “many of whom don't know about the tremendous growth that's taken place in the corridor”.

A report indicates that “more than 300,000 Canadians work in Silicon Valley, where they've gained valuable experience in scaling up companies.” This experience is sorely lacking in the Toronto-Waterloo corridor, “and we must attract individuals with the promise of leadership roles and the chance to work on big problems”.

As a closer, it was evident in their published report to the Globe and Mail, that their trip “made it clear there's much more work to be done. No one region has a corner on innovation or the wealth it can create ... and there are lessons to be learned from San Francisco, where people gravitate to work on challenging projects, to be a part of something big.”

WREDC will prepare a menu of “shovel-ready” sites

Waterloo Region's new business development and marketing organization, WREDC, is assembling its team and developing the narrative that will be shared with prospective foreign investors and local businesses in the throes of scaling up their businesses. Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDC) is charged with executing the economic development organization's mandate, as agreed to by the several governing municipalities operating within Waterloo Region – whose tax dollars are footing the bill.

One aspect of the WREDC portfolio is to create an inventory of “shovel-ready” sites, those sites that are ready to be built on.

Land developments are divided between green-field developments and brown-field developments, both exist within WREDC's portfolio. Historically, the municipalities developed green-field sites like Waterloo Business Park, Huron Business Park and the David Johnston Research and Technology Park for commercial and industrial purposes. More recently, as in the last decade, focus has been on density, building up not out, so what's become ‘sexy’ are brownfield developments – old warehouses located in heavily populated areas, like downtowns and uptowns. These are projects like the redevelopment of one half on the City of Waterloo uptown district to the more recent award winning Breithaupt Block transformation into the state of the art office and recreation centre of Google and not to forget their former location at the Tannery, now home to the recently expanded Communitech and Desire to Learn, a block away.

‘Shovel ready’ really hasn't been on the minds of our local economic developers. Most attention and accolades have been focused on brownfield development and figuring out what to do with large parcels of land, like the Budd plant, a 50-acre site that became a vacant Brownfield after it was shut down in 2009. Brownfields take up more time, with usually a large degree of demolition. Depending on intended use, “shovel-ready” could mean different things, and perhaps that's causing some confusion among municipal leaders.

“Shovel-ready” is defined by Wiki as a political term. It most commonly identifies with large-scale infrastructure projects, where planning and engineering is advanced enough that with sufficient funding – usually by an investor or land owner – construction can begin within in “a very short time”.

The term was first used by President Obama during an interview with Meet the Press back in 2008. Obama used the phrase to describe infrastructure projects that were ready to immediately receive stimulus funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Wiki reports that later the phrase denoted projects which were able to begin construction within a specific time-frame of three to four months; however from a sales perspective, you need inventory to sell, knowing what you have to sell, is the first step in the process.

Timing is crucial. Once a decision is made by a purchaser/investor, time becomes money. As WREDC CEO Tony LaMantia mentioned in the previous issue of Exchange Magazine, investors, he said, “are looking to de-risk their timelines and execution”.

So why look at a political US term for our infrastructure investment communication? In a recent report from Statistics Canada, in 2015 the “United States is



The inaugural Stavros Niarchos Foundation Institute's Aristarchus Chair in Theoretical Physics at Perimeter Institute was announced late April, naming Asimina Arvanitaki (left) as its first chair. Arvanitaki's research is described as broad and interdisciplinary, research that tests theories beyond the Standard Model. Her focus includes dark matter, supersymmetry and extra dimensions. Arvanitaki becomes the first woman to hold a research chair at Perimeter. The new position, announced with Andreas Dracopoulos (second from right), Co-President and Director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation in attendance, is expected to strengthen the Institute's ties with Greece, where directors feel lies "untapped potential". The Stavros Niarchos Foundation believes in pure research and the need to support it. As a leading private international philanthropic organization it has deep ties around the globe and with Greece's education system. The foundation makes grants in the areas of arts, culture, education, health, sports and social welfare. The foundation funds those groups looking to make a broad, lasting and positive impact on society. The chair is named after Aristarchus, an ancient Greek mathematician and astronomer who proposed the first-known model for placing the sun at the centre of the solar system. Also shown are Mike Lazaridis and Neil Turok (right).

behind most of the increase in foreign direct investment in Canada". In 2015, the US investment position rose 10.5% to \$387.7 billion.

To speak the same language makes a lot of sense. All development lands go through development stages that lead to the site been suitable to inventory for immediate development. A menu of parcelled shovel-ready sites is a necessity, if WREDC is permitted to do their job. The ebb and flow of business makes brown-field development an ongoing challenge. To attract new global investment, like those in advanced manufacturing where location and plant design is crucial to success, ramping up services to these green-field locations is a "must do now".

The province of Ontario has a program called Investment Ready: Certified Site Program Certification. It's a province-wide investment attraction program, to promote an inventory of sites that meet a set of minimum requirements. Certified is as close as Ontario gets to the equivalent meaning.

A shovel ready site is more attractive to potential investors and purchasers because it reduces some of the unknowns associated with development by disclosing detailed information about the availability utilities servicing, access and environmental concerns. It avoids some of the "no brainer" mistakes, such as proposing a site for a municipal recreation centre in a flood plain, or where major upgrades to residential sewer services may add significantly to the cost of the project, foregoing future expansion and growth of an area.

The Ontario program was designed by Deloitte Consulting. The program includes items most commonly required by those making site selections decisions for foreign direct investment or expansion projects.

The program criteria follows:

Site Ownership: The program is open to public and privately owned land. Property owner(s) must be willing to enter into a funding agreement with the Province to receive reimbursement through the grant program.

Applicant Eligibility: Applications must be submitted jointly, either by municipalities or Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) and the owner(s) of the site. Applicants are limited to submitting two sites for certification reimbursement per year.

Commitment to Make the Property Available for Sale/Lease: The property owner(s) must agree to make the property available for sale or lease for a period of two years following the date of certification.

Minimum Property Size: The site must consist of at least four hectares (ten acres) of contiguous developable area. If the site is an assemblage of multiple properties, the properties must be contiguous and have the same registered owner on title.

Existing Public Road Access: The property must have existing road access from a public right-of-way or have plans to be able to extend road access within six

months of becoming certified.

Official Plan and Zoning: The property must be located within an urban or rural area designated for employment uses or industrial development in an in-effect municipal Official Plan and zoned to permit a range of industrial uses.

Servicing and Utilities: The property must either be serviced by existing water and wastewater systems, natural gas (for sites in municipalities with existing natural gas service), utilities and telecommunications or, alternatively, will be serviced within six months of becoming certified.

Major Development Constraints: The property must be free from development constraints that could reasonably impact the developable area or range of industrial or other employment uses on the property. Potential constraints include restrictions on title, identified flood zones and the presence of significant natural environmental features or easements and existing Rights-of-Way.

The program has some benefits as in financial and international marketing support along with the designation as a Investment Ready Certified site. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-investment-ready-certified-site-designation-your-industrial-property#section-3> - Jon Rohr

Velocity Director joining Encircle as CTO

Mike Kirkup, the Director of the University of Waterloo's renowned Velocity startup incubator, is leaving Velocity to become Chief Technology Officer of a company launched through Velocity.

Kirkup made the concise announcement on his own website: "After four amazing years, the startup bug has finally bit me. I am leaving Velocity to join Encircle as their new CTO."

Encircle Inc. is a provider of real-time documentation and collaboration software for the Property/Casualty insurance industry.

Kirkup told Exchange that the move is "a big change, leaving something as awesome as Velocity." The adjective is valid – under Kirkup, Velocity has grown in every way, occupying significant real estate in Kitchener and Waterloo, and offering six distinct programs to budding entrepreneurs. Velocity has proven successful by any means of measurement – it has graduated leading-edge companies including Kik, Thalmic Labs, and Vidyard. Velocity grads have raised more than \$250 million from investors. The Velocity Garage, opened in 2012, is now North America's largest free startup incubator at 36,711 sq ft. With recent expansion, the facility's capacity has risen to 120 companies. As of late 2015, a total of 163 companies had entered Velocity during Kirkup's four-year tenure, with more than 40



Mike Kirkup: leaving Velocity

graduating from the program.

Kirkup says that his goal now is to help carry Encircle to the highest level of success. In an open letter, he wrote, "After four years of working to make [Velocity] the best place in the world to build a startup, the time has come for me to go help a startup become the best in the world."

He told Exchange that his decision to make the move was inspired both by the people he will work with, and by the potential of Encircle. First, though, he says, it's the people. Two of the co-founders of Encircle have spent the longest time in the Velocity program of any participants; the third partner worked with Kirkup in his days at BlackBerry.

He says that Velocity and Encircle have an important asset in common: "an amazing team... really good relationships."

The business plan at Encircle is also important in his decision, he says. "It's the people first, for sure... but they're going after an industry that's ripe for change. They have a very compelling concept."

Encircle currently employs 12 people; Kirkup expects that number to grow, quickly. The company has been based at Velocity, but moved into space at Communitech on May 1. Kirkup remains with Velocity until May 20, and officially joins Encircle on June 6.

In his letter announcing his decision, Kirkup referred to the gamut of emotions involved in working with a start-up – experiences he will now, once again, live through as CTO of Encircle. He wrote, "I truly love the team we have built at Velocity and will miss working with them every day. It has been an incredible experience working with some of the most innovative companies in the world. I have seen some of the best days and many of the worst days in founders' lives. It has been an honour to help celebrate their success or help push them forward towards it. I will also miss working with students on campus and in the Velocity Residence, as it has been a great privilege to meet so many passionate entrepreneurs who continue to inspire me."

But looking ahead, Kirkup added, "There is only so long that you can sit on the sidelines helping instead of doing... The time has come for me to work at a startup myself... I am jumping into the fintech world with both feet.... Insurance is undergoing a massive transformation whether the industry wants to or not. At Encircle I will have the opportunity to work with an amazing team to help shape that future."

Kirkup is a UW alumnus; he told Exchange that the fact that Encircle is based in the Region – in the same Tannery/Communitech complex that houses the Velocity Garage – was a significant factor in his decision to join his new company. "It was a non-starter, to leave [the region]," he told Exchange. "I've invested the last four years of my life here," building the start-up community in Waterloo. – Paul Knowles

Health researchers recognized as top in country

Two researchers from the University of Waterloo, specializing in population health, have won the prestigious Trailblazer Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Institute of Population and Public Health. The one-time awards recognize Canadian researchers who are making exceptional national and international contributions in the area of population health interventions.

Professors Scott Leatherdale and David Hammond, both of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences and the School of Public Health and Health Systems at Waterloo, are leading experts in developing and evaluating strategies for reducing the prevalence of chronic disease among the Canadian population. They both hold CIHR-PHAC Applied Public Health Chairs.



Caption: David Hammond (left) and Scott Leatherdale (right) won the Trailblazer Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Institute of Population and Public Health. Photo credit: Jonathan Bielaski, Light Imaging.)

Professor Leatherdale's COMPASS project is the world's largest and most comprehensive study focused on chronic disease prevention among youth. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States recently identified COMPASS as the new standard for advancing traditional prevention research methods with youth.

Professor David Hammond is recognized internationally as a leading expert on tobacco control. Hammond has served as an advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO), and is frequently called upon by governments to testify against tobacco companies seeking to strike down new tobacco control laws. In a new study spanning three countries, Professor Hammond is testing how regulations on e-cigarettes might influence vaping and smoking behaviour among youth. Hammond also specializes in nutrition policies, including ways to improve nutrition labels on food products and promote healthier diets. His research on the effects of plain packaging on smoking behaviour has shaped legislation in countries around the world including Australia, the UK and Ireland.

search on the effects of plain packaging on smoking behaviour has shaped legislation in countries around the world including Australia, the UK and Ireland.

Grand River Hospital's automated lab celebrates its first anniversary by decreasing wait times by 10 percent

Grand River Hospital celebrated a productivity milestone in April with the one-year anniversary of their automated laboratory which uses the latest technology to simplify laboratory processes, increase quality, reduce errors. The new system is said to have improved test turnaround time for nearly 2.2 million patient tests in that same year.

On day one, the GRH laboratory team saw an immediate 10 per cent reduction in test result turnaround times. Improved test turnaround times means reduced treatment delays, wait times and patient length of stay.

"The automated lab uses state-of-the-art equipment and technology to ensure to a greater degree than ever before that the hospital's lab performs the right test for the right patient and an accurate result in the fastest possible time," says Dr. Dimitrios Divaris, Chief of Laboratory Medicine and Medical Director of Laboratories for Grand River and St. Mary's Hospitals. For Cherrie Martinez, a medical lab technologist at GRH, the automated lab has helped her focus more time on reviewing patient test results and on quality improvement. "The system also sends results electronically to physicians," she adds.

Eighty five per cent of clinical decisions are based on lab test results, indicated a release from the hospital. "The automated lab ensures standardization, efficiency, timeliness, and quality among all of their functions that lead health care providers to make the best care decisions for patients".

The now one-year-old, fully automated specimen testing system is linked through a single integrated track. It uses high-tech equipment and software to carry specimens to various pieces of equipment that prepare, test and retrieve samples for further testing.

"The ultimate goal for having an automated system like this is seeing the benefit to the quality of care to our patients. The system gives better service with improved turn-around times and clinicians are able to receive patient results faster," says Martinez. The automated lab system, manufactured by Ortho Clinical Diagnostics, Sysmex and Stago, was installed at a cost of \$3.2 million in 2015 and remains the first of its kind in Canada. A team of medical lab technologists, medical lab assistants and other support staff work within the automated lab to complete nearly 6,000 tests a day received from across the hospital. Lab automation



Dr. Dimitrios Divaris, Chief of Laboratory Medicine and Medical Director of Laboratories for Grand River and St. Mary's Hospitals.

will allow more tests to be done faster, without increasing staff as demand for health care grows in the coming year.

It's about full disclosure

Transparency is on its way and with it a boon to sales of ETFs, or Exchange-traded funds.

When the second phase of the Client Relationship Model (CRM2) comes into effect, it will be mandatory for investment advisers to disclose all investment fees and investment performance directly to their clients. Investopedia defines an ETF as "a marketable security that tracks an index, a commodity, bonds, or a basket of assets like an index fund". Unlike mutual funds, an ETF trades like a common stock on a stock exchange. ETFs experience price changes throughout the day as they are bought and sold.

The CRM2 is about the customers' hard-earned dollars, the reason for the transaction and what percentage was going to paying investment fees as opposed to ensuring a healthily retirement income. The CRM2 comes at a time when investment advisers concerned that technological personal money management tools (TPMNT) will disrupt their "traditional means" of delivering wealth management services, including research, advice and most important to the customer results.

The industry seems to be expecting a "seismic shift", although other outcomes are possible as well. Most talked about is Australia's recent experience which had a reportedly whopping 25% of the advisors leave the industry. It was later acknowledged that some went back to school, "polished up" and then re-entered the industry later on.

We'll see what happens soon because as of July, 2016, it will be mandatory for "investment advisers to disclose all investment fees and investment performance directly to their clients".

Disclosure to the customer includes all the embedded compensation added to the cost of them researching, advising and growing the investment. In effect, two things will occur: the customer is learning what they are really being charged, and those who are "not proficient" in the industry will be "chased out".

Special to Ontario is that the Ontario Securities Commission (OSC) is reviewing whether regulators will "ban trailer fees altogether". Trailer fees or trailing commissions, are paid to an investment adviser for every year an investor holds a spe-

cific mutual fund.

Industry insiders say that CRM2 is going to further drive the growth of ETFs simply because it provides greater information on fee transparency. The sheer newness and perhaps surprise will have some investors looking for other ways, or become DIY (Do it Yourself Investors) which is a goal most investors should strive for, because knowledge will open ways to leverage the the new tools that Fintech industry will use to disrupt the North American financial sector, which may have been triggered in the Commonwealth countries by the need for transparency as a social norm.

Hyper-growth holds key to a global economy

Adopting hyper-growth into business practices could unlock "huge value" for the global economy, says a study by the World Economic Forum on Mastering Hyper-growth, released in April 2016.

Businesses that are successful in mastering "hyper-growth" are increasingly likely to come from a diverse cross-section of industrial sectors as the world enters the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Hyper-growth is defined in the report as "having a compound annual growth rate of over 40%". As the world enters the Fourth Industrial Revolution, evident in Waterloo Region through the current and expanding transition from software to hardware manufacturing, hyper-growth is one mark of the initial success of a relatively early-stage company.

Throughout the globe, jurisdictions are focusing on scaling-up models for their local economies. No more, it seems, will a local business, with the opportunity for hyper-growth, be shunned by governance bodies, including municipal councillors. The City of Kitchener's long-time investment history, leading and adapting to new business environments, has economic benefits that are only now being recognized world wide.

The study concludes that the convergence and interaction of breakthrough technologies and disruptive business models that represent the Fourth Industrial Revolution are increasing the possibility for companies to achieve extraordinary rates of growth. Indeed, the study finds that 63% of rapid and hyper-growth businesses experience their most dramatic growth six years or more after inception, with 36% only hitting their stride after their 10th anniversary.

"Mastering Hyper-growth" is the product of 10 months of surveys, interviews, workshops and meetings with leaders of businesses experiencing a wide range of growth rates. It aims to demonstrate that hyper-growth can apply to businesses ranging from start-ups to those with over 70 years of experience – with the right access to new markets, business models, company cultures and agile leadership, and to technology for scaling and expansion goals.

Waterloo area has long been an innovative and manufacturing-based region. The region is experiencing continued growth in graduating engineers from University of Waterloo mechatronic engineering stream, accompanied by the Lazaridis School of Business's focus on managing technology in particular large-scale, fast-growth firms, not only to create managers, but through networks and relationships generated by these "experienced managers", who are key to the success of the next generation of Canadian tech companies.

In the announcement of the collaboration between the Lazaridis Institute, the TSX and Deloitte, it was highlighted that research by the Lazaridis Institute found that "reaching a globally competitive scale in the fast-moving technology sector requires executive leadership that understands how to grow sales, manage operations, access new markets and build appropriate organizational structures in a dynamic and global marketplace. Such talent is in short supply in Canada". It further stated that the reason was largely due to a lack of "anchor technology companies".

"We are living in a world where disruption is a constant force that threatens the very existence of incumbent players and long-held business models. Hyper-growth companies, however, are seizing this as an opportunity and leading the way in establishing new practices and ways of doing business in the market. By learning from these experiences, we can build new businesses that have the potential to realize the disruptive, innovative power of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to create new sources of wealth and better outcomes for society," said Uschi Schreiber, Global Vice-Chair for Markets and Chair of the Global Accounts Committee at EY, which collaborated in producing the study.



Peter, left, and Todd Cober

SMASHING STEREOTYPES

A century of innovation and adaptation

by Paul Knowles

Most businesses, upon reaching their 100-year anniversary, might take some time to look back, savour their accomplishments and ponder the past. But at the Kitchener firm now known simply as “Cober,” there’s not a lot of time for such nostalgic reflection – they’re too busy creating a dynamic and ever-changing future.

The leaders of the company sat down with Exchange to talk about their impressive history – but the focus kept shifting to latest innovations and future possibilities. This is a company that understands and embraces change, even while the venerable local family that founded it remains in charge, now into the fourth generation.

Cober is remarkable in a number of ways, and perhaps the most obvious is simply the fact that it exists. The stereotype of a company that crashes in the third generation is surprisingly accurate, but Cober is into the fourth generation, beating the odds and growing exponentially.

More importantly, Cober is a remarkable example of constant innovation and adaptation. It’s significant that while the original name – Cober Printing – is known far and wide in the region, that’s no longer the corporate brand. Because it tells only part of the company’s story. Thus it became, simply, “Cober”. What was once a printing firm now calls itself a fully integrated marketing and communications company. Which is still happy to do your printing, by the way.

Peter Cober – grandson of founder Vernon Cober – is President of the company.

Peter’s son, Todd, is Vice President. Peter says that grandfather Vernon originally owned a small grocery store on Samuel Street in Kitchener. Vernon bought a small printing press, so he could print advertising flyers for his business, and soon began to offer printing services to his customers.

To Vernon’s surprise, the printing business soon surpassed the grocery business, and it had grown significantly by the time Vernon’s son, Lloyd, took the reins in 1945, although Vernon remained involved for another 30 years. By the mid-1950’s, the print shop occupied three floors of the building; a new wing was added, and a neighbouring building purchased in the 1960s.

It was truly a family business; by the time the company moved to new quarters on Courtland Avenue East, in 1985, Peter and his sister Billie-Anne Gural were integral parts of the company, along with Billie’s husband, Jon, and eventually, their daughter Cara Knight and Peter’s two sons, Brock and Todd. Brock eventually moved into the financial world.

Peter and Billie-Anne became co-owners; Billie-Anne still works with the company, although Peter has purchased her shares. Expansion of the firm was both rapid and continual. The Courtland Avenue location covered 23,000 square feet; at the turn of the 21st century, they moved to a Wilson Avenue facility twice that size. And now, Cober’s home is a huge, 80,000 square foot facility, on 12 acres of land, at 1351 Strasburg Road in Kitchener, where they moved in 2010.



Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbancovic with Peter, left, and Todd Cober

One of Canada's largest

Peter says they need every square foot of that space. Cober is one of the 40 largest businesses of its kind in the country, certainly "the largest this side of Toronto."

There are a lot of ways to assess the size of a business, but one of the most dramatic is that Cober produces four million pieces of mail, every month – four million items that the company's clients send out through Canada Post.

A lot of those pieces are direct-mail items – digitally tailored to each recipient, although they are produced in bulk. Cober has been a pioneer in the area of digital printing.

In fact, Cober has been a pioneer or an early adapter in communications, across the board. Peter points to a new app that allows smart phone users to read a two-dimensional ad, and then watch as the screen converts it to 3D. He leads his interviewer past large-format printers that can print darn near anything, including on media up to two and

Vernon Cober bought a small printing press, so he could print advertising flyers for his business, and soon began to offer printing services to his customers.

a half inches thick. In fact, the plant has several sofas that are covered with upholstery with logos and graphics

printed at Cober.

Cober's success has come even when some key customers have lowered their demand. Blackberry has been a major client; there was a secure area created in the Cober plant, where new – and at that point unreleased – Blackberry phones were prepared and packaged. Cober had to install a unique wifi system. Employees wore special clothes that prevented any chance of taking anything out of the area with them, and unknown to the staff, Blackberry had "embedded" an undercover observer to heighten security.

Peter points out that Cober is essentially a "business to business" enterprise, and the list of Cober clients is very extensive, including many major regional entities.

"On your watch"

Peter remembers his Dad's words when Lloyd handed over the responsibility for his family's firm. He told Peter, "You're the boss. If it fails, it's on your watch." Not the most optimistic mantra – but one that has stuck with Peter ever since. It's still his watch, and it is darn well not going to fail. Peter's dedication to the industry has been honoured – he has been named "Printer of the Year" by his peers.

Todd, the heir apparent, is equally adamant about the future of the company, which he sees as much more than a family business. He believes that Cober has a huge responsibility to the entire, larger "family" of stakeholders – employees, customers, suppliers, and the community at large.

He emphasizes that the strength of Cober is "our people... an amazing group of people," and he adds, "We've reached a point where Cober really isn't a 'family business'. If Peter and Todd got hit by a bus, this thing would keep chugging along."

Todd is said to have "ink in his veins". He worked evenings and weekends at Cober while completing his degree in graphic communications management at Ryerson University, and the joined the



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company full-time in 2005.

Cober now has 160 employees – 130 in Kitchener and, Todd adds, another 30-40 at Kampenfelt, a company they purchased in Barrie, now also branded as Cober. As well, two and a half years ago, Cober acquired a Kitchener company named CuteGecko, and brought that firm's experience in marketing and design in house.

Peter says that both he and Todd are very aware of the challenges of succession planning – perhaps the number one issue facing every family business. Todd says, “We are cognizant of the percentage of family businesses that don't make it to the third or fourth generation.”

And even though Cober has seen succession success through three generations, that doesn't necessarily make it any easier, the next time around – especially because the business is so much bigger and involves so many more people than in previous generations.

“We're always aware of that,” says Peter. “Todd and I are in the midst of doing that,” but always insuring that there is no negative impact on the ongoing operations of the company – no easy feat, but a goal that “makes us work harder,” says Peter.

Working smarter

They may work harder – but there is no doubt at all that at Cober, they also work smarter. This is leading edge stuff – digital printing, large format, customer service above and beyond (and sometimes not actually involving printing at all), 3D apps, smart tech, social media management, programming, web portal construction – in fact, whatever the customer demands. A tour of Cober is full of surprises for anyone not thoroughly up to date with the technology of 2016.

All this, in the face of the common misconception that “print is dead.” Google that phrase, and you'll find thousands of references; visit Cober, and you'll know beyond doubt that it is not vaguely true.

What is true is that “printing is changing,” and changing fast. Cober's leaders

have made the decision – and the financial commitments – to be a leader in that ever-changing field.

Peter recalls, “Fifteen years ago, I was at a crossroads. Digital printing was coming in,” and it was expensive. It was also the future – and Cober leaped into that future with enthusiasm. Peter also

Peter remembers his Dad's words when Lloyd handed over the responsibility for his family's firm: “You're the boss. If it fails, it's on your watch.”

remembers discovering that his customers were not entirely governed by the lowest bottom line – as Cober was able to offer superior quality, state of the art service, and features no one else could provide, clients climbed on board.

Today, Peter adds, “I truly believe we're a few years ahead of most of our competition. The challenge is to stay that

far ahead of everybody.” One tactic Cober employs is to maintain a special relationship with suppliers like HP, to ensure that they will be at the front of the queue for any new equipment. “We get involved with technology, way upstream,” he says. Todd says his company is “on the edge of innovation.”

“A great internal culture”

That does create one ongoing challenge for Cober – it's not easy to find properly trained employees. Printing is not an apprenticed trade in Ontario – so training has to be done in house – and Todd believes that the industry, itself, “has not presented our industry as a ‘sexy’ operation.” He adds that Cober has attracted some excellent young employees: “We're fortunate to have young people committed to our business,” but still, “as an industry, we're aging... not attracting the youth as we need to.” And yet, “printing is growing at a crazy rate.”

Peter agrees. “We're always looking



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"We have to be the keeper of our customer's brand" – Peter Cober

for the right employee." Todd nods. "Actively looking!"

Of course, the kind of employee Cober is seeking has evolved to include developers with the same skills as those hired by a company like Google; the challenge is obvious. But Todd says that employees soon learn there are real advantages to working for Cober. "We have a great internal culture than breeds innovation. The field of marketing strategy will never go away. Deployment of communication will never go away."

"Business partner"

Todd adds that Cober has also learned that their relationship with their customers has evolved. "Over the last decade, we have focused on being a business partner, and not a print supplier," he says. And that has led to their ever-expanding menu of communication services, "multiple forms of communication."

He adds, "Our conversation with clients starts off with, 'What do you want to

"Over the last decade, we have focused on being a business partner, and not a print supplier."

achieve?"

And Peter adds, "The days of Cober printing and signing off are long since gone. We have to be the keeper of our customer's brand."

All of this means that the Cober team has to stay ahead of developments in their field. One example? Peter recalls the realization that "we had better find a way of using the internet to our advantage." They did – internet-related services are very much a part of their suite of solutions offered to customers.

Todd points to a contradiction in people's view of social media – a contradiction that creates an opportunity for a company such as Cober. "People understand the value of social media, but it scares the hell out of most businesses. If you don't do it right, it's a catastrophe in some cases.

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Businesses are looking for people to manage it.” And so, Cober has grown its services to clients. And that spectrum continues to expand. Peter and Todd say the company is now involved in QR codes and new ink-jet technology, and is exploring digital signage and PURLs (Persistent Uniform Resource Locators).

But the surprising thing is, this diversification has had no negative affect on their historic mission. Todd says, “We print more now than we ever did.” That’s largely because Cober has grown its market share, and it’s also because, adds Todd, every contact with a customer seems to lead to more business, as clients become aware of the broad spectrum of communications services offered by Cober.

But while the word “printing” may no longer be in the company’s brand, it’s still a vital part of the Cober enterprise. Todd gets a little feisty when he hears the phrase about print and death.

“Print,” he says, “is doing a damned good job of being relevant.” X



“Print is doing a damned good job of being relevant.” – Todd Cober

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GVCA honours the best in building

The area's best builders were honoured in late April as the Grand Valley Construction Association presented the 2016 Building Excellence Awards at the GVCA Gala, held at Binge-mans in Kitchener. More than 50 construction projects were nominated for awards – projects involving hundreds of contractors and sub-contractors, and thousands of trades people.

The Awards added a new element in 2016, presenting awards of distinction, including some to companies for their community contributions, and not tied to a specific project.

These included Community Builder and Lifetime Achievement Awards of Distinction, presented to MTE Consultants, S.G. Cunningham



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Ltd., Melloul-Blamey Construction, and Steed & Evans Ltd.

MTE Consultants were honoured for their “30 Acts for 30 Years” project – the company chose to celebrate its 30th anniversary with 30 acts of kindness in the community.

S.G. Cunningham Ltd. was honoured for support for arts and culture groups, local sporting organizations, and various local social services. Currently, the company is celebrating its 40th anniversary by raising at least \$40,000 to support the St. Mary’s Regional Cardiac Care Centre to bring a new Heart Rhythm Program to Kitchener-Waterloo.

Melloul-Blamey Construction received a Lifetime Achievement Award, honouring ongoing community contributions, and its newest initiatives, supporting the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, and installing Light Armoured Vehicle monuments in communities across the country to recognize the service and sacrifice of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan.

Steed and Evans Ltd. were also honoured for Lifetime Achievement, including annual contributions totaling about \$100,000 to local



Conestoga College Welcome Centre

hospitals, participation in the Adopt a Road program, giving back to organizations such as Anselma House and Lutherwood, bringing co-op students on board to help them learn about the industry, supporting Conestoga College, and more.

The rest of the evening was about specific construction projects, and the excellence that GVCA Award winners brought to them.

The Innovation Award of Distinction went to Collaborative Structures Ltd. for the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre Regional Intermittent Centre.

The group was faced with the challenge of anchoring a concrete-block wall to a flexible structure in such a way that not only met code, but which also took into account complex fireproofing, flexion and lateral-load

requirements. The innovation: a post-tensioned system that solved all problems, shaved a month off the construction scheduled and saved the owner about \$150,000. So successful was the change that the owner has incorporated it into six similar, future builds.

Restoration/Conversion Award of Distinction was presented to Zehr Levesque Inc. for Breithaupt Block – Building One.

Zehr Levesque Inc. was the lead contractor behind a massive project to turn Building One at Breithaupt Block—a 1950s era rubber factory—into an ultra-modern home for tech giant Google.

The scope of work called for the construction team to strip back the brick and stone façade to make way for a new and strikingly complex curtainwall shell. The team added



Breithaupt Block – Building One



Woolwich Bio-En



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Innisfree House



The Institutional – up to \$2 million award went to WalterFedy for the Conestoga College Welcome Centre.

This challenge was particularly complicated. Not only did the build team, which was led by WalterFedy, have to deal with the realities of running a safe, clean construction site that was always at least partially open to the public, but it also had to pick up where two previous contractors left off. In the end, the team delivered a 6,000-square foot renovation for the college on time and on budget.

three floors to the building—an addition that demanded new structural supports. It also peppered the new building with LEED-friendly features such as high-performance glazing, a roof-top garden and high-efficiency mechanical systems.

Community Builder Award of Distinction was won by Gateman-Milloy Inc. for Innisfree House. The team from Gateman-Milloy Inc. asked each of its subcontractors, suppliers and construction partners to help them build Innisfree House – Waterloo Region's

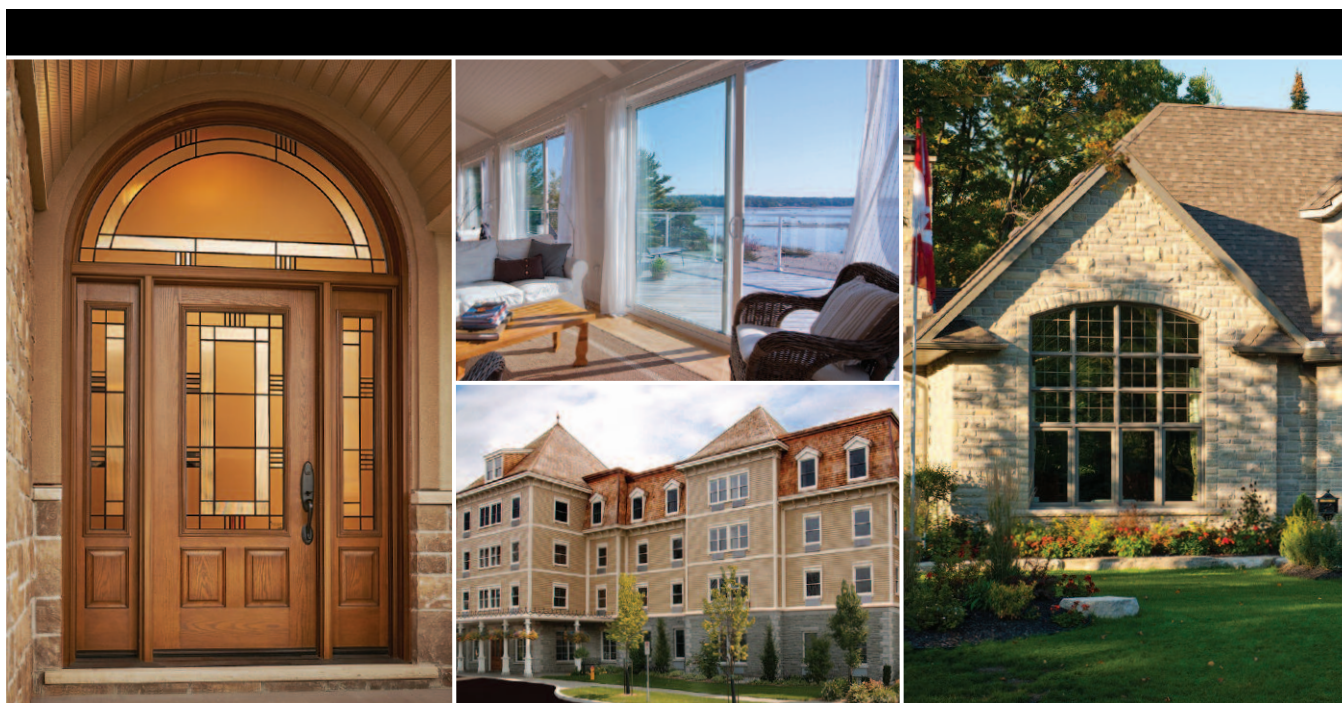
newest palliative care hospice – at as little cost to the owner as possible. The team succeeded through the generosity of an aligned and generous group of partners.



Conrad Grebel Academic Building Expansion

The Institutional – \$2 million to \$5 million award also went to Gateman-Milloy Inc. for Innisfree House, a facility for patients in need of palliative care.

The ten extra beds it provides are in great demand. Second, located across the road from the Doon campus of Conestoga College, the home is also a teaching facility for nursing students wishing to learn about palliative care.



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University of Guelph Livestock Research Innovation Centre

Research Innovation Centre.

The building houses 600 free-stall dairy cows for research into enhancing livestock health, improving the quality of the milk and meat they yield, and supporting innovations into livestock management. The construction team on this 170,000-square foot build worked closely to observe stringent design criteria: over-the-norm firestopping details, a highly involved wood-framed structure, and complex concrete requirements to name a few.

The Institutional – \$3 million to \$10 million honour was presented to Nith Valley Construction, for the Conrad Grebel Academic Building Expansion.

The scope of work on the project originally called for a three-storey addition to the building, but when the college received a generous benefaction from a donor, it decided to add a fourth floor. Nith Valley and its team adapted quickly, and responded to the larger challenge. On budget and to the owner's delight.

The Institutional – \$10 million to \$20 million award went to Maple Reinders Constructors Ltd. for the University of Guelph Livestock



David Braley Health Sciences Centre



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Handtmann Canada Ltd. project



Certified Gold Seal, the building includes numerous striking interior and exterior architectural elements – including a signature two-storey atrium and a wide variety of exterior

claddings, such as aluminum, glass, copper, stone and metal—and has achieved LEED Silver status (with Gold status pending).

The Industrial – up to \$2 million award went to

Schiedel Construction Inc. for their Handtmann Canada Ltd. project, a fresh new look for a major manufacturer of food-processing equipment.

The finished product is a remarkable facility that incorporates striking interior and exterior design elements (such as stainless steel—a nod in the direction of the materials with which the client works most) and high-end equipment and finishes, and which allows for greatly improved workflow.

The Industrial – \$2 million to \$5 million was picked up by Melloul-Blamey Construction for



Mammoet Canada's new eastern head office

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Brick Brewery Expansion

the Brick Brewery Expansion.

Brick's newly expanded, 14,600-square foot location showcases its new custom brewing tank and brew house, and features a new retail store for visitors, as well as expanded spaces for operations, administration and warehousing.

The Industrial – \$5 million to \$10 million honour also was won by Melloul-Blamey Construction for the new, 119,000 sq. ft. Hammond Manufacturing project.

Butting up against a naturalization pond, the plot of land could be worked only once city inspectors approved a detailed environmental plan that took into account water con-



Hammond Manufacturing Project

tamination and shoreline erosion. Plans for the building called for complex mechanical and electrical systems as well as a super-flat floor that ensured continuity of manufacturing equipment.

The GVCA Industrial – \$10 million to \$20 million award went to Zehr Levesque Inc. for Mammoet Canada's new eastern head office, a showpiece for the company and its green technologies.



Breithaupt Block - Building One



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Mammoet Canada Eastern



Union Gas Parkway West



Located in a new industrial park surrounded by rural properties, the 85,000-square foot facility features a great deal of heavy equipment, including 10, 15 and 35-ton cranes. Because the site is connected to a large septic system, water re-use had to be considered in order to avoid system overload. The team installed a grey water circulating tank to meet this need and to save fresh water from being used in shop-floor related activities.

The Industrial – more than \$20 million award was won by Aecon Industrial, for Union Gas Parkway West, an entirely new build on a 43-hectare site.

The project was the largest ever commissioned by Union Gas and the first greenfield compressor station built for Union Gas in 20 years. It features three metering stations, two natural gas compressor stations, an administrative building, the replacement of 1.5 kilometres of pipe, and general site works.

The Commercial – up to \$2 million award was won by Collaborative Structures Ltd. for the Holiday Inn Building Envelope project, at a downtown Kitchener Holiday Inn.

The scope of work was extensive and required interior as well as exterior finishes, cladding and mechanical and electrical systems.

The Commercial – \$2 million to \$5 million award went to Gateman-Milloy Inc. for their BMX Supercross Legacy Project in Etobicoke, a 517-metre closed-loop track built for the 2015 PanAm Games.



BMX Supercross Legacy Project

It is the only park of its kind to be designed, built and certified to Union Cycliste Internationale—the sport's governing body—standards. And since opening, it has received a fair bit of use in major national and international competition.

Commercial – \$5 million to \$10 million honours went to Schiedel Construction Inc. for King & Albert Developments, a development project at the corner of King and Albert streets in St. Jacobs.

The site owner wanted a building for his lot, and the local Home Hardware shop across the street wanted to expand. And since the site zoning allowed for a taller building, all concerned agreed to add a series of residential suites on its second and third floors.

The Commercial – \$10 million to \$20 million



Holiday Inn Building Envelope project

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honours went to Ball Construction Ltd., for Meridian Centre in St. Catharines, an entertainment centre that is home to the Ontario

award went to Melloul-Blamey Construction Inc., for the Acton Arena Expansion, a 47,000-square foot space that featured a new NHL-size ice pad, new dressing rooms, referee rooms, seating, a community room and associated facilities.

The project began with extensive site works: re-routing roads, re-allocating parking lots and re-designing building services. Installation of the pre-engineered building system, including its sloped roof, required a great deal of attention to detail. As did placing and pouring the slab on grade that would support the ice rink itself.

The Commercial – more than \$20 million

Hockey League's Niagara IceDogs.

The construction team negotiated its fair share of hurdles on the job: complex site conditions, rough winter weather, a tight budget



and an aggressive deadline, all in the middle of a busy downtown core with next-door neighbours operating their own performance facilities.

The awards were presented at the annual GVCA Gala, this year with a superhero theme!



Thanks GVCA!



Congratulations to all the BE winners and thank you to the Grand Valley Construction Association for recognizing the outstanding effort and care we put into every project.

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(L to R) Dan Perry, Cameron Ball, Claire Morwood, and Al Dobson receiving Award of Excellence Institutional - More than \$20 Million, for the David Braley Health Sciences Centre, McMaster University, Hamilton.



(L to R) Doug Fehrenbach, Braden Strik, and Robert Nippell receiving Award of Excellence Commercial - More than \$20 Million, for the Meridian Centre, St. Catharines.



Tim Jackson - moving to SHAD.

TIM JACKSON, A WELL-KNOWN local technology entrepreneur who most recently has been Executive Vice President at the **MaRs Discovery District** in Toronto, has left that position to

return to Waterloo to head up the prestigious national program **SHAD**.

In the late 1990's, Jackson was one of the leaders who put Waterloo on the map as it became known as Cana-

da's Silicon Valley. Jackson has joined SHAD because he says it is crucial that exceptional youth are given the support they need to reach their full potential, especially if Canada wants to be a leader when it comes to innovation and entrepreneurship.

"Tim is the perfect leader to take us forward from the strong position we currently have," said **David Hay**, Chair of SHAD's Board of Directors.

SHAD is a unique not for profit organization that serves as an incubator for innovation and entrepreneurship for Canada's best and brightest students while they are still in high school. Its focus is to empower youth to become change makers and global leaders.

Top students from around the country apply for coveted positions to take part in SHAD which is hosted at 12 different university campuses. The students are immersed in an intense one month enrichment program in



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July focused on STEAM subjects: science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

Jackson was one of the senior executives of **PixStream**. He later served as CEO of the **Accelerator Centre**. He also spent several years in executive roles with the **University of Waterloo**.

THE NUMBER OF CANADIAN VETERANS DIAGNOSED with post-traumatic stress disorder has almost tripled since 2007, creating an increased need for mental health services to aid their recovery.

A new partnership between the **Centre for Mental Health Research** at the University of Waterloo and Parkwood Institute's **Operational Stress Injury Clinic**, part of St. Joseph's Health Care London (St. Joseph's), will deliver specialized mental health services for Canada's veterans, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP closer to home.

"We know from decades of research PTSD tends to develop into a chronic condition that rarely gets better on its own without effective psychological treatment," said Professor **David Moscovitch**, executive director of CMHR at Waterloo. "Providing culturally aware, evidence-based assessment services through the CMHR will allow better access to care for those in our community who are struggling

with service-related psychological injury."

"We are proud to partner with the CMHR to increase our service reach for Canada's military and RCMP personnel," adds **Heather Tales**, director of veterans care at St. Joseph's. "This partnership also furthers St. Joseph's academic mission and will provide unique research and clinical training opportunities for Waterloo students and residents in clinical psychology."

CONESTOGA'S ROBOTICS INNOVATION GROUP has partnered with **Proto3000**, a Vaughan-based engineering firm. Through the partnership, Proto3000 will provide \$40,000 of engineering and 3D printing services to RIG to support the group as it builds and programs its humanoid robot, RIGbot.

RIG is a student group formed last year by School of Engineering and Information Technology faculty members **Dalibor Dvorski** and **Jane Carr**, and Computer Engineering Technology student **Tarek Rahim**. Their goal was to open up the realm of robotics to all students through extracurricular and multidisciplinary activities. The group provides students with training and access to robotics software and hardware to promote innovation outside of course work.

"The RIG/Proto3000 partnership allows our students to focus on building and programming the robot, and the creation of mobile and computer vision applications. At the same time, we will benefit from Proto3000's expertise to evaluate and 3D print our models," said Dvorski, who led the finalization of the partnership.

The group successfully built RIGbotArm, the arm unit of the humanoid robot, last summer and is currently building and programming the remaining parts of the robot. To date, there are only two other known academic institutions in Canada that have attempted the project.

"The coming together of Dvorski's



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students and colleagues and now Proto3000, we believe, will result in very exciting robotics and engineering solutions that will be of great value to everyone," said **John Frangella**, owner of Proto3000. "We believe this is only the start of a long-term partnership between Proto3000 and RIG."

A TEAM OF MBA STUDENTS from **Wilfrid Laurier University's Lazaridis School of Business & Economics** once again claimed first place at the **Aspen Institute's** 2016 Business and Society International MBA Case Competition April 29. This is the third win in a row for the Lazaridis School and the fourth in the competition's seven-year history.

Team members **Doryan Bondor**,

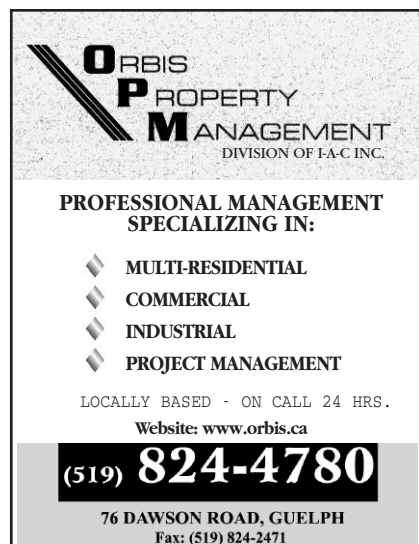


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Gautam Khanna, Marshall Peters and Amanda Tong travelled to New York City as one of two Canadian teams competing among five finalist schools. The Lazaridis School's participation in the competition was made possible by the **P&G Centre for Business and Sustainability**, which sponsors the team each year. The

Lazaridis School MBA team won a grand prize of \$15,000.

JAMES ETIENNE HAS BEEN HIRED as Cambridge City Engineer. A long-time resident of Waterloo region, Etienne holds a BSc in Civil Engineering from the **University of Waterloo**. He comes to Cambridge from the **Grand River Conservation Authority** where he served as Senior Water Resources Engineer for the past ten years. He also has more than 20 years of municipal experience with the City of Kitchener in transportation planning and construction and the City of Guelph as a development engineer, infrastructure planning engineer, and director of environmental services.

Etienne is coordinator of youth training at the Waterloo-Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival.

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seven public artworks at **ION Light Rail Transit** (LRT) stops. "These art installations will be an important part of creating a sense of place at each of the seven selected ION stops," said Regional Chair **Ken Seiling**. "It will be exciting to see what artworks are proposed and how they will reflect our neighbourhoods and community."

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Proposals are being accepted until June 15, 2016, at 2 p.m. for artworks to be located at the **Conestoga, Research and Technology, Grand River Hospital, Kitchener Market, Mill, Block Line** and **Fairway** ION LRT stops.

ECONOMICAL MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY announced that **Richard M. Freeborough, Micheál J. Kelly** and **Michael P. Stramaglia** were elected to the board of directors of Economical Mutual Insurance Company for a three-year term.

TWO WOMEN AND TWO SISTERS from Kitchener-Waterloo have been honoured with 2016 **'Leading Women, Building Communities'** awards.

Catherine Fife, MPP Kitchener-Waterloo, presented the awards to this year's winners: **Dr. Diana Parry, Jean Cull**, and sisters **Kia and Leela Taggar**. Each winner has demonstrated exceptional leadership in working to improve the lives of others in their communities. This year's recipients represent numerous sectors in which women from Waterloo Region excel: academics, ending violence against women, and youth activism.

CANADA'S AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLY CHAIN is at the centre of Canadian automotive innovation, from the software and systems that will define the autonomous and connected cars of tomorrow to the lighter and stronger parts that will help make cars more environmentally friendly. The Automotive Supplier Innovation Program supports this innovation and helps Canadian suppliers take full advantage of new opportunities in a sector that is driven by modern technologies.

As a result the Federal government will invest approximately \$19.6 million in seven new projects under the Government of **Canada's Automotive Supplier Innovation Program**.

The announcement was made at **Pravala Car** in Kitchener, which will

receive a contribution of up to \$9.7 million to develop a platform that provides reliable and uninterrupted Internet connectivity in vehicles.

DAVID JOHNSTON RESEARCH + TECHNOLOGY PARK, University of Waterloo and tenants have come together and committed to a Greenhouse Gas reduction target through **Sustainable Waterloo Region's** Regional Carbon Initiative Program. Using 2014 numbers as the baseline, a 10 year and 40% reduction goal was set by the R+T Park building owners and tenants. Through all the hard work and commitment towards this initiative, the R+T Park and its tenants have been nominated for the 'Rookie of the Year' award.

LOCKHEED MARTIN HAS INVESTED \$1.1 MILLION into a research project that explores the design and feasibility of a mobile system that would reduce the work required by the heart and cardiac system for people engaging in a sustained period of exercise. The project will be carried out in partnership with the **University of Waterloo**, and was announced at UW's Aerospace Defence Industry Forum.

The Second Heart project explores the design and feasibility of a mobile system for calf muscle pulsation. The intention of this system is to provide workload reduction on the heart and cardiac system for athletes and people with regular and sustained periods of exercise such as soldiers on watch or delivery personnel.

CAMBRIDGE MPP KATHRYN MCGARRY'S Private Members Motion on workplace sexual harassment has passed with support from all three parties. McGarry's motion called for the definition of employment within the **Ontario Human Rights Code** of work place harassment, to be updated to include activities or events that happen outside of normal business hours or off business premises, but are linked to the workplace and employment.



"Sexual harassment in the workplace is never acceptable. Increasingly, more and more people are working beyond the traditional 9 to 5 workday, and employment increasingly is taking work beyond the four walls of an office. This motion acknowledges that workplace harassment and sexual harassment policies should also apply in settings outside of business hours."

AN INVESTMENT OF UP TO \$3 MILLION has been made in **Grand River Foods Ltd.**, to increase production and explore new export opportunities, through **FedDev Ontario**. Through this investment, Grand River Foods Ltd. will expand its Cambridge-based processing operation by 16,150 square feet, and will install a new production line and spiral freezer. These efforts will enable the company to scale up, meet the needs of existing and new customers in Canada, and enter new U.S. markets.

BIOREM INC. HAS ANNOUNCED financial results for the twelve months ended December 31, 2015. Revenue increased 58% to \$16.9 million from \$10.7 million for the same twelve months in 2014. Net earnings for the year were \$1.7 million compared to a net loss of \$1.7 million in 2014. Gross profit was \$5,995,000 for the year, a 169% increase from gross profit of \$2,231,000 for the year-ended December 31, 2014. **X**



"I want to see whether I can add any value here in the region, to help it grow and be successful."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

of the time, slow down, and maybe find a couple of days a week when I can do other things."

Later in the interview, though, Remers admitted that this vision of leisure time is probably a pipe dream – his role is a special advisor to Kline is half-time; he is launching his new consulting firm, Gerry Remers Consulting Inc., and he's continuing to head the board of the new WREDC, among other community activities.

"My wife's a little concerned that 'retirement' is looking to be full time... I think it will be pretty well full time for at least a year. I may be lucky to get a day off a week. We'll see," he admitted.

So leisure is not the reason for Remers' decision; change,

is. He believes that the change will be a good thing for him, and equally beneficial for Christie Digital.

He said, "People do need change in their lives. Sometimes you need fresh blood, fresh energy, fresh perspectives, and I think the organization needs that as well. Ihor is going to take my place, but frankly there will be a few other senior changes over the next few years. It's an opportune time to kind of clear the field for other changes."

He explained that as he looked at his own "next years", he asked, "Do I want to commit all my available time to one company, or do I want to mix it up a bit. I'm looking forward to mixing it up."

Gerry Remers Consulting Inc., will focus on strategic consulting – "it could be Mergers & Acquisitions, or technology innovation, or Lean manufacturing."

Remers has been involved in mentoring a few of the start-ups that have been launched in the fertile eco-system of Waterloo region, but he told Exchange that he does not see this as his ideal field.

"I wonder if my experience is relevant to smaller companies," he said. "I have the sense that my experience is more with global and high-level strategies for corporations that are larger – they are looking to scale, they're looking at

"People do need change in their lives.

Sometimes you need fresh blood, fresh energy, fresh perspectives, and I think the organization needs that as well."

Lean manufacturing, cultures of innovation. You're looking at hundreds of employees and millions of dollars in sales."

Remers admits he is excited – and a bit nervous – as he launches his own enterprise. He realizes that there is a vast difference between occupying the CEO's office in a large corporation, and operating a small consulting business. But he welcomes the challenge – and told Exchange that he has sought advice from some key people who have walked the same path, including Thorsten Heins, former CEO of BlackBerry.

He's also continuing in his role at WREDC – Remers not only chairs the first official board, he also chaired the strategic planning committee that devised the structure of WREDC, and he was involved in hiring CEO Tony LaMantia. He says, "I think I still add value there, working with Tony and trying to build the organization."

He adds that such efforts also provide opportunities for networking. "It does expose me... to what's going on in the community. That's always a nice plus, to have relationships with a lot of people. It's a great board, and a great connection to the political leaders. I have enjoyed it over the last year, but it's been a lot more work than what I expected it to be."

So now, as he leaves his post at Christie, Remers is focused entirely on the future.

He's thinking about potential clients for his consulting business: "One of the challenges will be selecting the kind of company to work with. The people would be very important... I think the key criteria would be having a good working relationship with somebody. You're looking to provide advisory services and leverage your experience, probably at a very high level."

He's looking at international potential. "The WREDC has also allowed me to welcome foreign companies to the region. I like the German connection because of my German background. If I were going to look at one area of the world, I'd probably look at that connection."

But he is also committed to his own community. "One of things I did want to do is see whether I can add any value here in the region, to help it grow and be successful."

His roots in the region run deep – his family moved here in the 1960s; he holds degrees from both Waterloo universities (MA in Philosophy from Waterloo; BA in German and Philosophy from WLU, as well as an MBA from York and

post graduate credentials from the University of Cologne, Germany).

And even as he moves out of the CEO's quarters, he is still talking like a leader. Remers says, "In terms of any successes here, people are congratulating me, but the key decision you make is really getting the right people... making a strong team, and once you've done that, the rest is a lot easier, to tell you the truth. They bring so much, they make so much change, they create the success."

"You just set everything in motion in terms of hiring the first tier. You surround them with the right philosophy, the right culture, the right values, and you kind of just let them go... There are other things you can play with, but if you don't have the right people, you're going to struggle."

But even as he commends his colleagues, Remers says he has no regrets about his decision to change course. "It's a good move. I feel it's time to move on. It's time to let someone else come in and put their stamp on the company."

"Time for a change."

X

"People are congratulating me, but the key decision you make is really getting the right people... making a strong team, and once you've done that, the rest is a lot easier, to tell you the truth."



The advertisement features a large, stylized portrait of a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a white shirt. The portrait is framed by white geometric shapes against a blurred background. To the left, there is a purple geometric shape containing the HRPA logo and the text 'Human Resources Professionals Association'. The central text 'your business in focus' is written in a white, sans-serif font.

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TIME FOR A CHANGE

Christie's Gerry Remers looks for new challenges

BY JON ROHR & PAUL KNOWLES

After 22 years, Gerry Remers is stepping down as Christie Digital Canada's CEO.

Gerry Remers has been making a major difference in Waterloo Region and beyond for more than two decades. He's received many honours, including the 2015 "Barnraiser Award" in 2015. And now, as he steps down from his position as President and COO of Christie Digital Systems Canada, he plans to keep right on making a difference, both in his community and in the corporate world.

Remers has headed Christie for 22 years (including five years as president of Electrohome, "a forerunner" of today's Christie). Under his watch, the company grew ten-fold; number of employees increased from 120 to today's total of 1,600. During those decades, Remers and his team have impacted everything in the field of visual projection technology – if you watch a projected image in 2016, it's probably sharper, bigger and better, because of Christie innovations.

But Remers' impact has not been limited to movies and other visual technology. He is the inaugural chair of the Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation; he

has just completed six years as a member of the board of the University of Waterloo; he's been involved with Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada's Technology Triangle, Communitech, the Perimeter Institute, Shad Valley, and more.

"My wife's a little concerned that 'retirement' is looking to be full time... I think it will be pretty well full time for at least a year. I may be lucky to get a day off a week."

And he plans to continue to play a role in such organizations, after his final day as the head of Christie, July 8. He remains Chair of WREDC, even as he launches a new career as a consultant – with Christie being his number one client. Remers told Exchange that he will serve as a special advisor to Jack Kline, Chairman, President and CEO of Christie's operating companies, world-wide.

At Christie Canada, Remers will be succeeded by Ihor Stech, currently Executive Vice President of Operations.

All of this comes as Gerry Remers turns 60. A thoughtful Remers told Exchange, "After 22 years here, it's time for a change. I've been doing the same kind of role ever since 1996, and two years before that as director of marketing. It takes a lot of energy to play this role and to do it well, and I'm thinking, turning sixty, maybe I can stop working 100%



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