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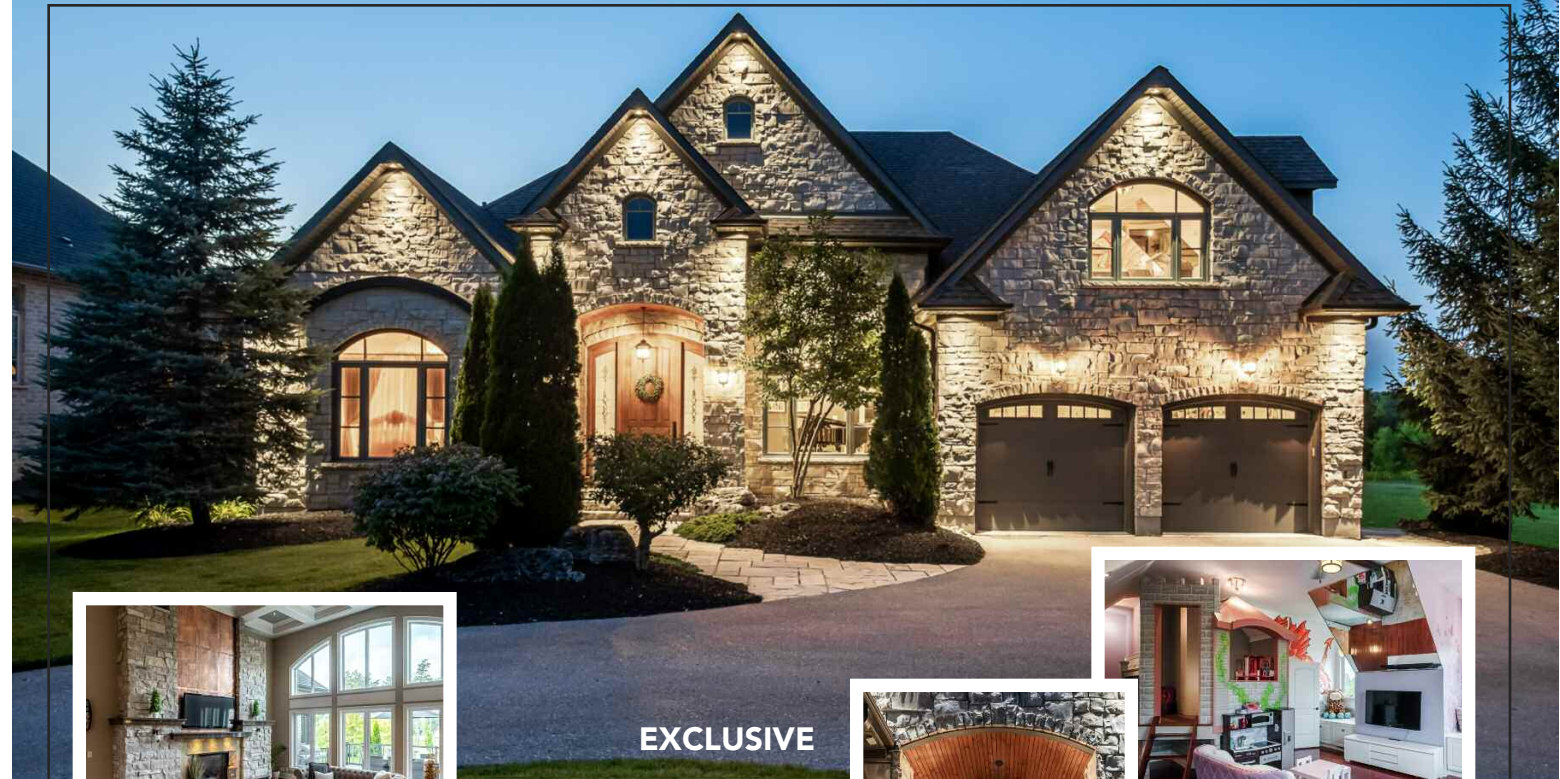
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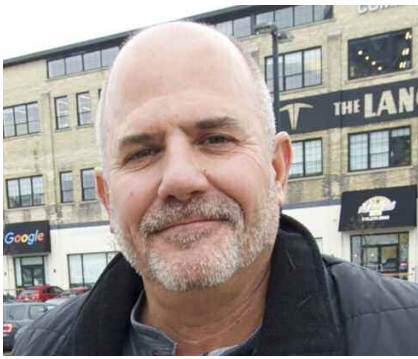
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ON THE COVER - IAIN KLUGMAN - PAGE 16

2020 BAKER'S DOZEN:

Stronger together..... 4
Simon Chan and the future of work
BY JON ROHR

E-commerce cannabis 6
Evan Adcock, CEO of Verda
BY PAUL KNOWLES

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CONTENTS

A community flagship 7
Andrew Bennett and the KW Symphony
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Collaborating on hunger 8
Wendi Campbell leads Food Bank
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Supporting artists 10
Cathy Farwell and Art\$Pay
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Go-to community hub 12
Bill Davidson and multi-purpose Langs
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Innovation at KWCF 13
Elizabeth Heald heads Foundation
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Easing the pain of divorce.. 14
Tony Keller's new book – "Cut the Crap + Make the Deal"
BY PAUL KNOWLES

People - key to innovation.. 16
Iain Klugman, on Communitech success
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Chief wants a think tank .. 18
Police Chief Bryan Larkin's vision
BY PAUL KNOWLES

Making data work for us .. 19
Dan Mathers and eleven-x
BY JON ROHR

Disruptive politics 21
Mike Morrice and the Greens
BY JON ROHR

Region's path is working .. 22
CAO Mike Murray, on transportation
BY PAUL KNOWLES

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STRONGER TOGETHER

Positioning Waterloo Region for the future of work

BY JON ROHR

Employers, post-secondary educators and recruiters are well aware of the "war for talent". Businesses operating in global markets are equally aware of the influence global markets play on our modest community.

The need to continually "raise the bar" and be prepared for changes has never been so important.

Communitech was founded by local HR professionals who saw the need to retain and attract talent for their fledgling technology companies. That was more than 25 years ago, and it's just as important today.

Today, successful talent attraction and talent retention happens because of the collaborative nature of Waterloo Region's peer-to-peer networks, and the value this brings local companies.

Enter 2020 with Simon Chan, VP of Talent, Academy, and Future of Work at Communitech. Chan has been with Commu-

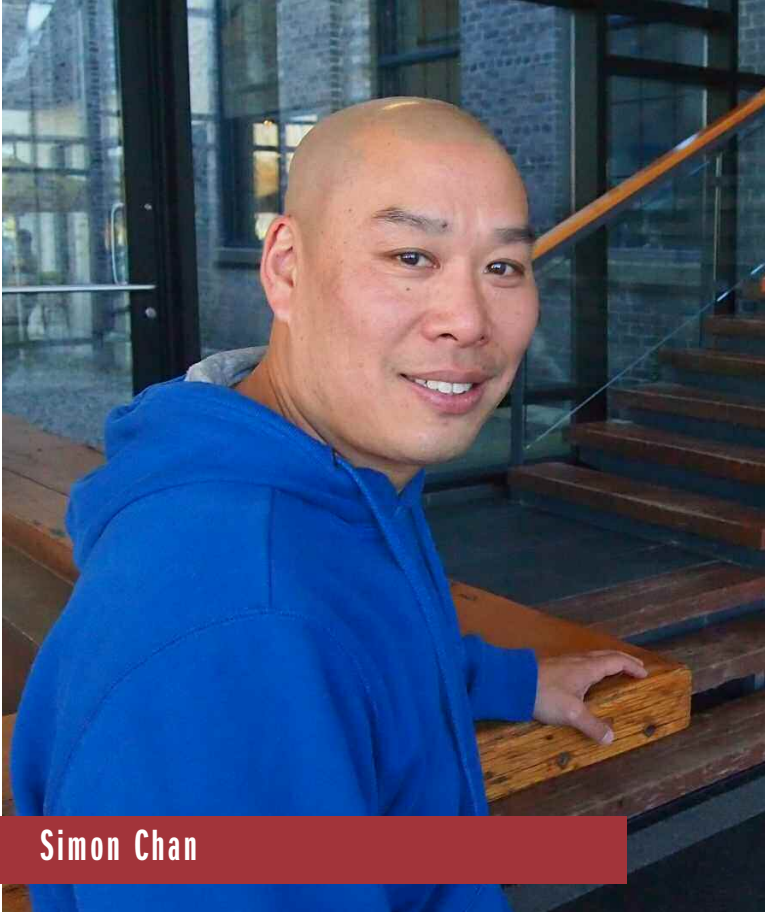
nitech for two years. Before that he worked in the financial service industry at institutions like TD, Sunlife and Manulife, leading strategy and product development.

To get to the future of work, let's go back two years, when Chan originally got involved with Academy, which he describes as "learning and development for companies". The program is designed to grow company leadership and development. "What Academy did was provide different formats of learning, such as six month workshops, or managers could send six people to a learning development course, while two others could go to cohort development with 15 industry specific peers."

Chan told Exchange that the "Future of work" was an initiative from an idea that surfaced in the last quarter of 2018.

It came about when Chan and his team were working with a number of Communitech's enterprise clients. "We were looking at the developing trends, the ones we need to focus on, as a region, and as an organization; this idea of the evolving work force and the future of work emerged."

Guided by the "Tech for Good" tenet, "making sure that we're cognizant of what technology does to the workplace, leaving



Simon Chan

nobody behind, etc.”, they decided to focus on the future of learning, to take a look at how learning is going to evolve, “as opposed to what you did to learn back in the day.”

The plan was to announce some conclusions concerning the future of work at the True North Conference last June (2019). Key partners in the early days included Manulife (the True North sponsor), the University of Waterloo and Deloitte.

Chan and his team started doing the research, and began to realize the unexpected scope of the challenge. “It quickly became evident,” says Chan, “that this isn’t something that one company could tackle, that it would be something that is going to impact communities and societies at large, including governments, private sector, public sector and academia. It was very far reaching.”

Organizing discussion groups, they continued to try to get a fix on a common understanding of “what the future of work is”. They invited community leaders, representatives from the municipalities, and participants from universities and colleges. Then, they went to entrepreneurs, from start-ups to those scaling their tech business and then to larger enterprises. Not wanting to limit it to just tech companies, they invited the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber to collaborate and get involved more traditional industries. “It was a community play,” says Chan.

The discussion groups confirmed for Chan the timeliness of his and the teams actions, “People in this community are interested in this.”

The next step was to host panel sessions where each participant talked about the revolving work place and their work place trends. Chan says that although they were coming from different sectors, “they were talking as though they all had a relationship with something developing.”

The goal was to bring to life how the future of work would impact people. Dozens of people were interviewed, representing a wide cross-section of the workforce: people in their early careers, mid-to-late careers, free-lancers from different sectors,

participants from the public sector, private sector, knowledge sector, tech sector, and manufacturing sector. It was a reasonable representation of the working population in Waterloo Region.

They then held a 125-person workshop, which, Chan says proudly, “was over subscribed”, where people from the community suggested solutions.

Chan says that, “the big things that came up were life long learning – how do we continue to up-skill and re-skill, not just at

“The Future of Work thing is important, not just to organizations, but as a community. It’s a talent attraction play.”

university or college, but afterwards throughout your career. How do we help people do that? Most people don’t even know where to start.”

Along with life long learning came the growing desire for more co-op like learning experiences or integrated learning. Questions arose like, “How do we make sure that we provide co-op, apprenticeships, internships, and more work place experience throughout one’s career?”; “What’s relevant to the changing workforce?”; “How do I transport my skills, because I know I have skills, to something that is on the rise?”

Given the scope of this emerging paradigm, the two earlier Communitech programs, talent and academy were wrapped into a new program called “The Future of Work”. Chan was named to lead it and it was to focus on three key areas:

- Life-long learning;
- Work-integrated learning;
- Changing work-place expectations.

Chan notes that in today’s marketplace, a large proportion of the work force have grown up with digital. This market group, known as the Millennials and Post-Millennials, have consumer, life and work/life expectations, that are intertwined.

Young employees, “just don’t become a different person” when they enter the workplace, “they expect that type of environment, that type of flexibility, that type of culture to be in the workplace, the ability to have flexibility, to have their experience customized for them, because that essentially is what digital has provided.”

Chan states, “The one size fits all approach doesn’t really work any more”, since workplace culture is further compounded by five generations working in the same workplace.

In the war for talent, an attractive location affects the engagement level of that particular cohort, and that influences societal and commercial results. This is why Chan believes that “the Future of Work thing is important”, not just to organizations, but also community. “It’s a talent attraction play – people who are talented, or the talent that we want, are going to want to work in organizations and communities that are progressive, going to embrace change by moving things forward and making a difference.”

Chan and his team feel strongly about developing the future of work coalition. On September 27, 2019 a “first-of-its-kind partnership” was announced, with Simon Chan, Vice-president of Talent, Academy and Future of Work, at its helm. “We are stronger together than apart, says Chan, whose future focus is on this adaptive and collaborative coalition, “will help us to meet these challenges in our community.”

X

AN E-COMMERCE CANNABIS MARKET-PLACE

Waterloo start-up working with governments to make legal cannabis more accessible

BY PAUL KNOWLES

It's hard not to use a lot of puns when writing about Verda Innovations, the first company in Canada to develop a legal cannabis delivery app. It's really easy to say that the three young founders of the company are high on its potential. And it doesn't lessen the temptation when Evan Adcock, one of the three co-founders and Verda's CEO, begins the interview by saying that "the seeds we have planted over the past two years are finally starting to bloom."

Verda is based in the University of Waterloo's Velocity Hub, at the Tannery. Adcock and his partners – Mackenzie Ferguson and Stephen Masseur – have moved rapidly through the incubator and accelerator systems in the region, starting with Wilfrid Laurier's

"We're the first company to combine public policy and convenience."

Launchpad, then Communitech, then Accelerator Centre (where they won the \$30,000 AC Jumpstart award), and in the fall of 2019, Velocity, where they have about 10 employees now on staff.

Adcock says that each facility has its strengths – mentors, expertise, and assistance concerning attracting investment. "They have all been very useful."

Adcock says he and his partners were already recreational consumers of cannabis before it became legal. But even now that it is legal, they don't grow cannabis. They simply have developed an e-commerce platform that allows customers to order cannabis on line for pick-up at a legal shop; or, in jurisdictions where it is

allowed, the product will be delivered to them, that same day.

Verda is already operational in Saskatchewan, offering ordering and delivery. The company expects to be offering the on-line ordering service in Ontario in the very near future, since the Ontario government has announced that the province will approve online ordering, via a non-government company, soon.

Adcock and his partners believe their innovation can be a big step toward eliminating illicit cannabis and ending underage use. And they stress that they have been working closely with governments in the provinces and American states where they are, or hope soon to be, in operation. Says Adcock, "We're the first company to combine public policy and convenience."

The ultimate goal is to not only provide on-line ordering, but also same-day home delivery, in every market they serve.

The three young entrepreneurs have been friends since they attended high school in Oakville. They have been interested in creating a start-up for several years; the Canadian government's announcement that cannabis would be made legal inspired them to focus on that market – not in production, but in delivery.

This all has happened quite quickly. They launched in mid-2017. Their first pilot was in 2019, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Adcock describes their innovation as a "marketplace". He adds, "We facilitate the relationship between consumers, retailers and couriers... our software connects everybody."

Adcock says that it is working in the pilot in Saskatchewan. The Verda partners are happy with the number of users, and the volume of sales through their app. October 2019 sales in Saskatchewan increased by 70%.

They believe they are ready to roll out the app in every province which will allow on-line ordering and, ideally, delivery. Saskatchewan allows delivery; but the initial change in Ontario will only be to allow a non-government on-line ordering and personal pick-up model. Adcock says that he personally believes the private, home delivery option will be added in Ontario "within 12 months."

They are also looking at markets in the United States, although that comes with a twist – in the U.S., cannabis is legal in a number of states, but illegal at the federal level. That means, not only can you not transport cannabis over state lines (not an issue for

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Evan Adcock

Verda), you also cannot move money made from the cannabis industry between states (which could be a significant problem for investors). This, admits Adcock, is a work in progress. "It creates issues for us," as they look to other North American models for a solution.

However, Adcock says "we are going to launch in Massachusetts in early 2020."

Verda is launching an on-line service that will be useful in jurisdictions where cannabis is legal, but where on-line ordering and delivery are not. Says Adcock, "We're launching a retail directory. There are a lot of illegal retailers... our focus is the legal way to find any legal retailer in the country. It will also function in the U.S." And he says that as their services become legal in these jurisdictions, users of the directory app will be immediately linked to the order and delivery options offered by Verda.

Adcock argues that their service goes a long way to moving people from the illegal to the legal cannabis industry. He told Exchange that 89% of Canadian and US cannabis sales are still done illegally, because "people are choosing convenience over legality." But he believes "People will move over [to the legal market] if we can provide accessibility."

X

SYMPHONY IS A COMMUNITY "FLAGSHIP"

Andrew Bennett leading KW ensemble into the black

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Andrew Bennett believes the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony is the "flagship" of the region's cultural scene. He's not entirely objective – Bennett is the Executive Director of the Symphony – but he makes a convincing argument that this long-standing musical ensemble is a key to life in Waterloo Region.

He would argue it is an important component that draws newcomers to the community, and provides a point of emotional contact for people coming from other countries, as well as for locals who simply "like to go out for a really damn good concert."

Bennett has been at the KW Symphony for five years. He came to Waterloo Region – his first-ever job in North America – after a varied and challenging European career. Bennett has been involved in arts and orchestra management throughout the UK, in

Northern Ireland, and in Porto, Portugal.

But his affection for symphony orchestras developed before that. He was born and raised in Bournemouth on England's south coast. Explains Bennett, "Unlike virtually any other place of its size in the UK, Bournemouth had a symphony orchestra. Which meant that although I never came from a conventional musical background, I am one of those people who made use of those tickets given to teenagers. I got into orchestras the way that, in theory, you are supposed to."

He has devoted his working life to providing that same opportunity to people, young and old, in Europe and now, Waterloo Region. Bennett sees his target market as all of the 600,000 or so residents of the region.

Bennett had been in Portugal for over 11 years when the opportunity to come to KW was presented to him. "What was crucial was me, realizing how vibrant a place this was."

"I think in this particular community, the symphony is even more important than a symphony in another community... an obvious flagship."

Bennett says KW "suits me... Although I have worked in all types of cities, I kind of feel happiest when I am in a community of broadly this size. I like it."

He also found he very much liked the KW Symphony, although the deep financial hole the symphony was in, in 2014, was "terrifying."

But he adds that he immediately appreciated "the 'we can do almost anything' attitude of the orchestra." However, while seeing great potential for the orchestra, he also knew there were serious problems. "I inherited quite significant financial challenges... we were up to an accumulated deficit of around \$1.2 million... We were close to the edge."

As well, Bennett says, "The orchestra isn't quite as large as it should be." There are 52 full-time musicians; Bennett would like to have at least a dozen more. He also adds, "I didn't like how badly paid [the musicians] are."

Five years later, Bennett sees improvements – and continued potential for even more. Financially, he says, "It's been a very long road, and we certainly aren't out of the woods yet. We're now down to [accumulated deficit of] \$700,000, and we're four years in the black. It isn't happy but it's a hell of a lot better."

Bennett says, "I think in this particular community, the symphony is even more important than a symphony in another community... an obvious flagship. That's not because there's something wrong with any of the other arts organizations – we have lots of great colleagues – it just happens that the symphony is head and shoulders above the others in terms of scale, the number of people employed, and our budget, which means that we carry a great deal of responsibility."

This year will mark the 75th anniversary of the KW Symphony, and Bennett believes the ensemble is poised to do great things, under new Music Director Andrei Feher. Says Bennett, "The artistic transition which we have undertaken a year ago has seen us build on the achievements of Edwin Outwater and those who came before, [including] Raffi Armenian. We're now about to go to the next level artistically. I think with Andrei Feher as music director, the sky's the limit. I have never worked with such an exciting



Andrew Bennett

young conductor in my entire career."

"Kitchener Waterloo Symphony is extraordinary," he says, but not everyone knows that... yet. "People are amazed at this orchestra. They hear it and they say, 'Oh my goodness, I didn't know.'"

He admits that one of the biggest barriers to that public recognition is "the outdated stereotype view of the orchestra." The answer is exposure. "Look at the season brochure... I challenge virtually anybody not to find something they would want to attend, because of the breadth and the depth of the work we do. We're very proud of that."

Bennett says, "When I look at the audiences that we are now

attracting, it's quite hard to pigeonhole why these people are there. I am very happy about that." He believes the future is bright. "Our reputation in this country is going to grow."

Statistics show that first or second generation Canadians are more than twice as likely to attend a classical music concert. "That," says Bennett, "is an opportunity."

He wonders, "if those of us in the arts could be thought of as a rapid reaction force. We're really good at connecting with people. Couldn't we be effective, saying to people who are new arrivals, 'You're really welcome here?'"

That's the message Bennett wants to communicate to all 600,000 area residents – Welcome to this "extraordinary artistic achievement."

X

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION TO FEED THE HUNGRY

Wendi Campbell leads the Food Bank of Waterloo Region

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Wendi Campbell and her team are making a huge impact in Waterloo Region, by making sure that 35,000 regional residents don't go hungry. In an era where poverty, homelessness, and "food security" are all issues that are top of mind for many community leaders, Campbell and her colleagues at the Waterloo Region Food Bank are providing a practical answer to thousands and thousands of people.

Campbell is CEO of the Food Bank; she's been with the organization for 20 years, and took over the top job there in 2007. When Exchange Magazine recently reached out to our readership, asking for recommendations of people we should feature on these pages, Campbell was an immediate suggestion. Upcoming issues of the magazine will feature others recommended by our readers.

Wendi Campbell heads a team of 25 employees at the Food Bank – and she has nothing but praise for her people. But she also admits that they could not accomplish what they do without the help of "thousands of volunteers."

People volunteer for the Food Bank in a variety of ways – from giving one-time help at third-party events to collect food, to coming to the Alpine Court terminus every week to help with food packaging, preparation and distribution. Campbell says there is a "core group" of 100-150 people who help every week. These volunteers are equivalent to 17 full time people. "They're essential," says the CEO.

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Campbell explains that Waterloo Region operates with a unique, collaborative model that sees most local food-related social services interconnected, with the Food Bank at the centre. "We operate as a food assistance network of 100 community partners." She adds that her organization is responsible "for all food acquisition and distribution," although there are exceptions to that generality. The rural areas of the region have food banks – like Wilmot Family Resource Centre – that collect food, but they are still partners with the regional Food Bank, and can access

"Our society has been supporting families and individuals in need for centuries. We've always taken care of our neighbours, as a community."

resources when needed.

Given the historic political dynamic of Waterloo Region, it's interesting that, when Campbell is asked to name her organization's greatest success in the past year, she points to a new, official agreement between the Waterloo Region Food Bank and the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank, which has resulted in the two organizations working much more collaboratively than ever before. Cambridge food bank Executive Director Cameron Dearlove confirmed that this new, signed agreement is creating a new level of cooperation between the two largest food bank organizations in the region.

Campbell believes that collaboration is a key to feeding the most hungry people, most efficiently. "It's a unique model, one of



Wendi Campbell

the most innovative food bank models in the country because of its collaborative nature."

Campbell says, "Our society has been supporting families and individuals in need for centuries," she says. "We've always taken care of our neighbours, as a community."

The concept of a food bank, she suggests, is simply a new label on a historic idea.

Campbell does explode a few "stereotypes". She points out that the need is not, in fact, growing – the number of people using the Food Bank "has been pretty consistent over the last two

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to three years.” Given the reality that the population of the Region continues to grow, this suggests that a smaller proportion of regional residents use the food bank.

Campbell also notes that while some people – those with disabilities, for example – may use the food bank for an extended period of time, for many, “it is an emergency service.” She cites figures indicating that almost half of the population lives from one paycheck to the next – which means that loss of that paycheck initiates an almost immediate crisis.

Nonetheless, it may be surprising to learn that the average number of times a person uses the Food Bank is only three times.

Campbell believes that there will always be a need for emergency food supplies for families and people at risk, and she says that this requires an ongoing partnership between the community, governments at all levels, and the corporate world – “a partnership of the community at large.”

Campbell says that access to and analysis of available data is going to help the Food Bank do the best job it can, going forward. This process will help to identify needs in the community, and allow the Food Bank to find the optimal solutions to those needs. As one example, she cites a pilot project involving a “mobile pantry” – a truck carrying food to communities with a high percentage of people in need. The residents no longer need to find their way to the food bank – the food bank is coming to them, based on analytics that identify specific need. **X**

SUPPORTING PASSIONATE PROFESSIONALS

Cathy Farwell created Art\$Pay to end the era of “starving artists”

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Cathy Farwell knows that, for visual artists, making art is a passion. She gets that, because she is a visual artist in her own right.

But she also believes – strongly believes – that making art is also a profession. And she knows that, at this point, it’s a largely underpaid profession. So she created Art\$Pay to start to solve that problem.

Farwell is as passionate about Art\$Pay as she is about art. She says Art\$Pay is “about value... the value of what artists deliver.” And she believes it’s time for the community at large – as well as the artists themselves – to begin to embrace this concept of genuine value.

For example, she points to the longstanding practice in which public spaces and private businesses do artists the “favour” of displaying their work. If a piece sells, the business or public institution usually takes a commission. But if things don’t sell, well, then the business has the benefit of nice décor, courtesy the artist.

This, says Farwell, is not right. “If you want a healthy arts community,” she argues, “This ‘free exposure’ has to stop.” She believes exhibition spaces – from coffee shops to public libraries to galleries – have a responsibility to pay artists for the



Cathy Farwell

use of their work, whether a piece sells, or not.

It’s that kind of thinking that has put Farwell at the forefront of the visual arts community in Waterloo Region. She thinks about supporting and promoting artists, to free them up to actually create art.

Art\$Pay is not her first venture into providing opportunities for visual artists. Farwell organized the Box Art exhibitions for five years, creating temporary exhibition spaces where artists could display and sell their work. She says that the shows became “a stellar success” – but at the same time she realized

Art\$Pay is “about value... the value of what artists deliver.”

that “there were some fundamental issues that had not been addressed.” Temporary shows were not the solution for struggling artists – the local scene offered no consistent exposure opportunities, few professional development opportunities for artists, a little advocacy.

Farwell did not immediately leap to fill these gaps. For three years following the final Box Art Show, she says, “I talked to everybody... I’m a grass roots organizer.” She found some surprisingly allies – she praises a number of local developers, including HIP developments, which provide the current facilities for Art\$Pay (which opened last May). “I couldn’t do this without a lot of developers” and other community supporters, she says. “The municipal governments have been supportive, too.”

With Art\$Pay, she believes she found a formula that begins to offer a solution to the challenges. She admits that the organization had to be created from the ground up – “there is model” similar to Art\$Pay. Some of the elements of the organization arose almost spontaneously. The original plan was to charge



emerging artists a minimal amount for studio space in the Art\$Pay buildings, but she quickly learned that “starving artists” can’t even afford minimal payments. So, “in the course of ten days,” she decided that Art\$Pay needed to provide “a sponsored incubator” for emerging artists, and proceeded to find corporate sponsors for seven young artists. Those sponsorships are not just cash donations – the artists get support and opportunities to exhibit, the sponsors get 10 to 12 hours of the artist’s time, bringing the creation of art right into the workplace.

Art\$Pay is a not for profit organization that organizes exhibitions, provides exhibition space in two repurposed homes on Regina Street in Waterloo, provides 15 studios for established artists and emerging artists, offers professional development and mentoring opportunities, and is a strong advocate for regional artists.

Farwell, as founder and manager, is a volunteer. In fact, she is also a donor to the organization – her commitment is that strong. And although managing the organization takes a lot of time, she continues to be a working artist, exhibiting in Art\$Pay exhibitions.

Three years since its founding, Art\$Pay now has 150 artist members. She sums up the value to professional

artists – giving them the tools and the opportunities “to develop a professional arts practice,” but adds that there is also value for non-professionals, through art lessons and professional development.

Farwell believes her mandate includes elevating the entire visual arts scene in the region. Art\$Pay shows are juried, which ensures ever-increasing quality of work.

And as the Art\$Pay brand clearly indicates, Farwell’s aim is to make sure artists are compensated fairly and consistently for their work. She is proud of “the strong advocacy role we play in getting artists paid for their work.”

She puts her organization’s money where her mouth is – Farwell seizes every opportunity to hire working artists to carry out a whole panoply of assignments, from graphic design to property management. “We employ our members,” she says. But Farwell, herself, is an unpaid volunteer. “I’m doing it for the community,” she says. X

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Bill Davidson

THE GO-TO COMMUNITY HUB

Langs is setting a standard for community health and wellness

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Sixty-five individual municipalities have sent their representatives on fact-finding missions to Langa, the multi-purpose community hub in Cambridge. That is because, explains CEO Bill Davidson, “we are the go-to community hub... probably the biggest... and we’re very proud of it.”

The organization was once known as the “Lang’s Farm Village Association” – which Davidson admits did not convey the vision and scope of services and programs offered at Langa. The origins of the name are simple – the land was donated to a church by a farmer named Eugene Langs; the church then sold it to Langa.

But they had grown, and when the new facility at 1145 Concession Road was opened in 2011, the place was rebranded simply as Langa, with the tag line, “Community. Health. Wellness.”

It’s not surprising that the people behind Langa had to struggle a bit to come up with a concise brand, because what happens at Langa is anything but concise. Today, Langa offers over 100 programs and services in six locations. About 18,000 individuals visit Langa each year at those sites. Twenty-seven different organizations are located or co-located at Langa. And Langa has 90 people – full and part-time – on the payroll. Langa, says Davidson, “does work Waterloo-Wellington wide.” The annual budget is \$11 million, 85 per cent of which comes from the province.

Langs has come a long way from the days when it was a small, community-service organization located in a rented townhouse.

Davidson remembers those days – because he was there, employed as a youth work under a federal youth employment program. (He’s proud that Langs continues to employ youth; 21 last year under similar programs).

Davidson has now been with Langs for 37 years, ushering his organization through multiple stages of growth, including, most recently, the “Hub” – a just-completed, 8,200 square foot addition to the Cambridge facility, which includes the Jane Brewer Wellness Centre, named in honour of the late Cambridge Mayor; and a new Langs facility in Ayr that is home to services offered by eight Langs partners. Davidson laughs that being located in the North Dumfries Community Complex means that “We’re the only health centre with an NHL-sized ice surface.”

Davidson says that whenever opportunities to partner with Langs open up, there is a long list of agencies eager to get involved. At the new Hub addition, for example, 17 agencies applied for seven available spots. One space remains open at the moment, though, because Davidson is committed to having an organization at Langs dedicated to Indigenous services, and that has not yet fully developed.

Davidson sees a strong future for Langs, and for community health hubs modeled on his agency. He thinks the current move from Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to Ontario Health Teams offers opportunities to “bring services together in an integrated, collaborative way” – exactly the philosophy at Langs.

Davidson believes that housing dozens of programs in one community hub makes it a friendlier, safer space for everyone. When someone walks through the door, no one knows if they are

“We are the go-to community hub... probably the biggest... and we’re very proud of it.”

seeking mental health counselling, youth cooking programs, or pickleball – and Davidson thinks that exactly the way things should be.

Davidson can talk for hours about the success stories that emerge from the programs and services offered by Langa and its partners. One striking stat involves a program offered by volunteer chiropractors. They offered therapy to back pain patients who could not afford to pay for chiropractic treatment, and those treatments “reduced opioid use by 60 per cent among people who came to the back pain clinic.”

Those kinds of results pop up across the board. One survey of people coming to community programs found 82 per cent found a new friend, and felt better about life in general. Important? Davidson cites figures suggesting that “loneliness is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day” in its impact on one’s health. “We just need to give people a place.”

The services offered at Langa range from medical care to community meals, from youth drop-ins to diabetes management, from exercise opportunities to sexual assault services. The list is almost infinite – see www.langs.org. Davidson says that, at the core of what they do, “health and education are the key.”

There’s something for everyone at Langa; Davidson says, “We just call it ‘community’.”

Life, he says, has become increasingly challenging for a lot of people. “Complexity has increased for people. We’re trying to make it easier.”

X

BRINGING INNOVATION TO KWCF

Elizabeth Heald brings new approaches to philanthropy

BY PAUL KNOWLES

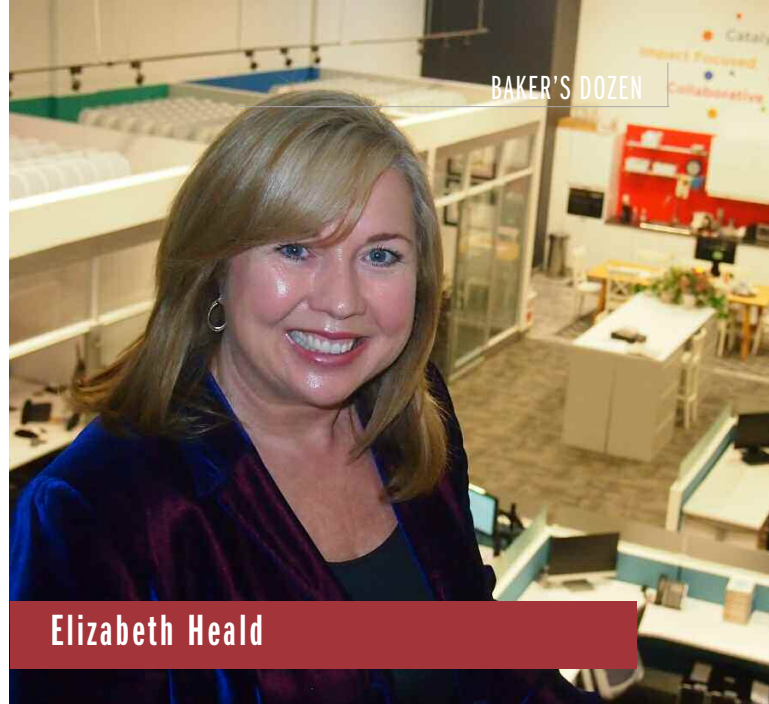
When Elizabeth Heald learned that the position of President and Chief Executive Officer of the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation was open, she thought it would match her experience and interests. She had a long career with Scotiabank, most recently leading the Estate Planning Client Group, but she also had personal experience with creating and running a charity. In response to the death of her six-year old son, in 2008, from undiagnosed Kawasaki Disease, she launched the charity, Kawasaki Disease Canada, which she continues to chair.

So she put her name into the hat, and in August, 2017, Heald moved into her new office, as KWCF's new President and CEO.

Changing careers was the right decision, says Heald. "While I was at Scotiabank, I thought we were doing good work. Now that I've transitioned into this role, this is 'Good Work' with a capital G!"

Since its founding in 1984, the KWCF has grown to hold over \$100 million "in total assets under management." In 2018, it granted over \$3.1 million to local charities and non-profits.

But Heald is not one to coast on past success, and she is leading the way through a full menu of new innovations. Although the Foundation manages over \$100 million, and distributes a large



Elizabeth Heald

proportion of the interest earned by those endowments to charities and not for profits, there is not a lot of flexibility as to how the majority of that money is given out. Many of the endowments are owner-directed. As well, about \$20 million is managed by KWCF for a number of organizations, so again, target recipients are pre-determined.

Heald believes there is a need for greater creativity in how some of the available funds are used. So while the Foundation continues to honour all donors' instructions, Heald is encouraged that an



increasing number of donors are seeking the advice of the Foundation's experts before naming the recipients of their funds. "It gets me excited," she says, "when we get an opportunity to put a program in front of someone, something they've never seen before, where their gift would be a catalyst" for a deserving organization.

The traditional model of a community foundation sees donors making endowments; that money remains in investment, with the interest earned being used for charitable donations, administration costs (2% at the KWCF), and sufficient reserves to permit consistent donations even in years of lower returns on investments.

And that is the core approach at KWCF. But Heald has led the way to using the capital to do more than produce interest. "We're starting to leverage some of these assets."

"Over the last two years, we have deployed about \$4 million in impact investments," she says. The goal is to have at least 5% of KWCF assets invested this way. That means investing in "social purpose organizations." The money is loaned to organizations "that have built a market return, and a social or environmental return."

It's a win-win – the Foundation is still receiving interest in their investments, but their investment is providing the capital necessary for socially-active organizations to build their programs.

"Now that I've transitioned into this role, this is
'Good Work' with a capital G!"

Heald wants her organization to be more proactive. The Foundation is helping to spearhead the "All In 2020 Fund", with the goal of ending homelessness in Waterloo Region by November, 2020. She believes this is "a way to engage the community... it arises from our renewed vision, to make it easy for the community to do more good." The goal is to raise \$700,000 by November.

And when she talks about making it easier to do good, Heald points to a change in investment minimums at the KWCF. Once upon a time, donors had to invest \$25,000 to start their own endowment. Today, that minimum figure is only \$5,000.

Heald points out that once the fund exists, the creators will point donors toward it – on special occasions, or for memorial gifts related to a loved one.

And speaking of lower financial thresholds, Heald says, "We're trying to make it easier for small not for profits and charities to apply," creating a simply application process for organizations seeking grants between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

Heald also addresses an ongoing concern related to granting structures – the reluctance of granters to fund operating expenses, which means many charities have to continually create new programs to qualify for grant money. She says, "We don't want organizations to continually re-invent themselves."

The Foundation has partnered with Communitech to hire former Christie Digital head Gerry Remers as a part-time "Community Impact Counsellor" based at Communitech. His role is to talk to start-up businesses about their corporate, social responsibility.

Heald sums up the goals of KWCF: "We make an impact in three ways – by granting, through impact investments, and by convening and facilitating" educational and networking opportunities for donors and recipients.

The KWCF has been named one of the regional partners of Community Foundations Canada, which is receiving a \$50 million federal grant funding an "investment readiness program," intended

to preparing social purpose organizations to participate in investment programs, including a still-to-be released \$755 million social finance fund.

Heald says, "Innovation in philanthropy is really important... especially to engage the next generation. We're really trying to understand our donors' passions." X

CUT THE CRAP + MAKE THE DEAL

Waterloo author promises to ease the pain – and the costs of separation and divorce

BY PAUL KNOWLES

For 42 years, Tony Keller represented thousands of men and women who were in the throes of divorce. He witnessed the sad, the bad, and the truly ugly of divorce battles. He also witnessed the incredible costs of divorce – emotional, social, familial and certainly financial.

When Keller retired from the practice of law in 2018, those lessons stayed with him. And he decided to try to make a difference – to write a book that could ease the pain and cut through the complications of separation and divorce. Those who know Tony will not be surprised by the straight-forward title of his new book: "Cut the Crap + Make the Deal."

The reaction of judges, members of the legal profession and former clients of Keller indicate that he has accomplished his goal. Responses from readers who were invited to comment on the book in pre-publication form have been overwhelmingly positive.

Roger Salhany is a retired Justice of the Superior Court of Canada. He writes, "In Cut the Crap + Make the Deal, Tony Keller, a family lawyer for 42 years, has offered common sense and important legal advice to separating spouses before embarking on a suicide course of waging war against the other in the courts. He explains how to choose a lawyer, explains the legal and court process, what to expect in costs and the alternatives to litigating in the courts. It is a book that must be read before embarking on separation and divorce."

Paula Ferreira is a Social Work and self-described "satisfied client". She says, "I am sure it is 'strange' to say that a book on 'divorce' is a good read, but this one actually is. There are many books on the market about divorce – all having their value during the process of divorce – and Tony's book 'Cut the Crap + Make the Deal' has a needed and welcomed place in this process... If you have had the opportunity to meet Tony, you will bear witness that his writing is how he talks in person – straight up, and real – making this book easy to read. It will have you thinking, laughing and looking at things in a different way."

"Cut the Crap + Make the Deal" is published by EBC Book Publishing, a subsidiary of Exchange Magazine. Publisher Jon Rohr says he is excited to be involved in Keller's book. "From the first moment I discussed this with Tony, I knew this was going to be an important book, one that will make a difference in hundreds of lives. We're honoured Tony has chosen EBC to publish his work."

Keller has explained, "The emotional and financial toll of divorce on spouses and children is tragic and often catastrophic. This book is intended to give common sense, rational advice to every reader contemplating texting, courting, dating, a romantic

relationship, cohabitation, a common law or same-sex marriage, a marriage contract, formal legal marriage, a cohabitation agreement, a separation agreement, having children, parenting, trial or permanent separation, divorce negotiations, litigation in court, mediation, arbitration and every other permutation and combination of partnering and un-partnering, and all other known forms of dispute resolution."

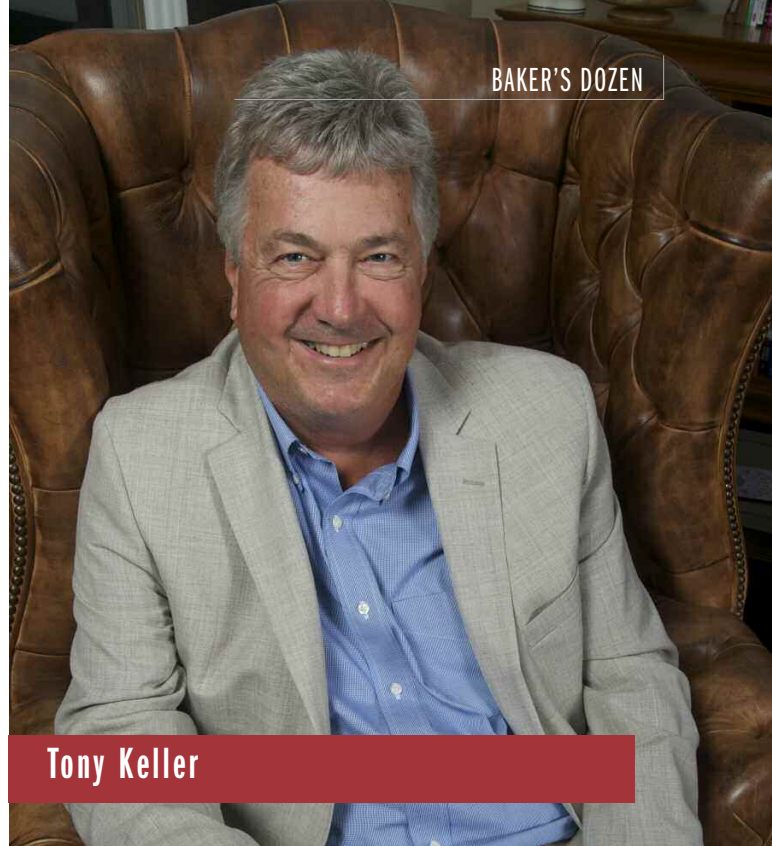
Alison Scott is the retired Executive Director of Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region. She writes: "In his humorous, often blunt, but surprisingly caring way, Tony guides the reader through the nitty-gritty of reconciliation, separation and divorce. He tells it like it is and reminds us that as humans and parents, we can always do better. Sometimes his lessons are subtle, sometimes – not so much, but what emerges is a common sense, compassionate road map to navigating the complexities of relationships, in their most challenging moments. I found myself laughing and musing, learning and unlearning, as I read this book. I was reminded of my own personal journey, and I also thought about the many parents and kids I have worked with who could have benefitted from Tony's insight and care."

Strong endorsements of the book have come from several advance readers. Peter Hambly, a retired Superior Court Judge,

"In his humorous, often blunt, but surprisingly caring way, Tony guides the reader through the nitty-gritty of reconciliation, separation and divorce." – Alison Scott

wrote, in part, "I recommend this book to parties whose marriage has broken down. As Tony points out, the cost is about 1/10th of 1 hour of the rate usually charged by a competent family law lawyer." Lawyer Ian Hull calls it "a sincere and valuable guide to those caught in the toils of a Family Law dispute, and a must-read for those looking for guidance through any family related legal dispute."

Lawyer Don McIntyre adds, "From a practical perspective, this



Tony Keller

book lays bare the pitfalls of an acrimonious separation. Not only for the parties but, more importantly, for children who are caught up in their parents' war. Tony holds nothing back when describing the emotional and financial harm the court system has on the parties. His personal, real life examples, illustrate there are better ways to resolve family law disputes than a battle between spouses/parents. The book is written for the 'non-lawyer' in a straightforward manner. It is meant to guide people through a process that can be mind numbing and exceedingly expensive. I recommend the book to anyone who is feeling the emotional and financial turmoil of an unresolved matrimonial dispute, or for someone just embarking upon the journey after separation."

"Cut the Crap + Make the Deal" will be available in paperback and in an e-version in January 2020. For more information, visit www.cutthecrap-makethedeal.com.

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PEOPLE: THE KEY TO INNOVATION

Iain Klugman, on 16 years as the head of Communitech

BY PAUL KNOWLES

For 16 years, the name Communitech has been inseparable from the name Iain Klugman. Klugman has been CEO of the innovation hub since 2004, but a year from now, in early 2021, Klugman will move on to his as-yet-unidentified “next adventure.”

When Exchange asked Klugman to name his most significant accomplishments at the iconic institution, he did not mention technological innovation or wildly successful start-ups. Instead, Klugman pointed to people: “The thing I’m most proud of is to build such a spectacular team and convince all kinds of people who are extraordinarily talented to come and spend some time

“I can honestly say that every assumption we made about how this place was going to work was wrong... We didn’t envision any of this stuff, but the world has changed five or six times since then. Thankfully, we’ve been able to change a little bit ahead of it.”

with us... To come up with some crazy ideas about what we might like to do, and sit back and watch things happen.”

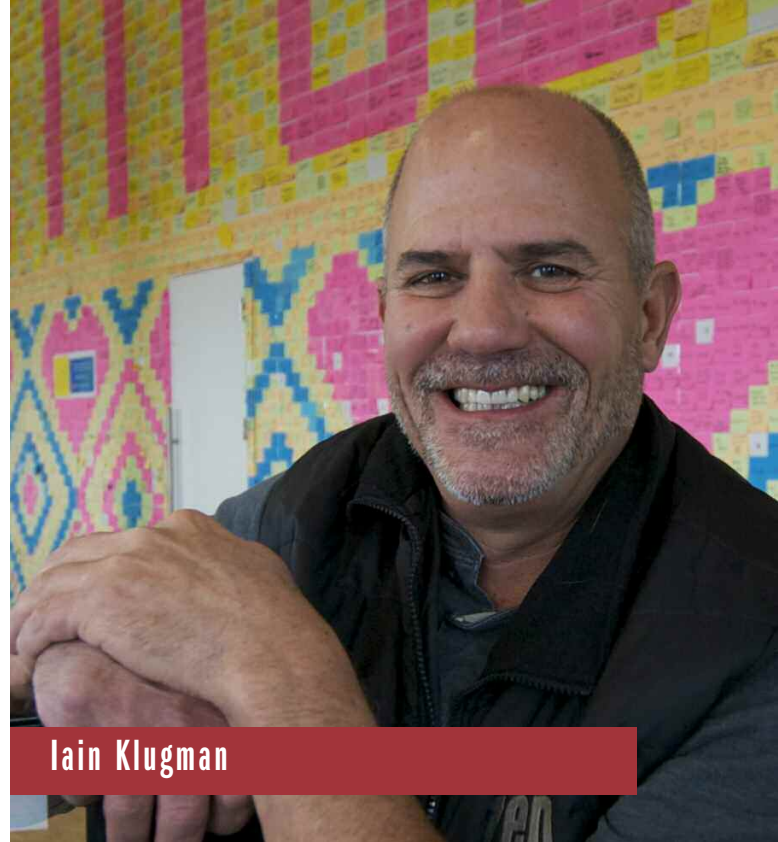
He added, “If I look back to where I started... I never anticipated we would be able to attract the kind of people we’ve been able to attract over the years.”

When he joined Communitech, the staff totaled five, and the budget was \$400,000 annually. Today, the Communitech team totals 100 people, and the budget is \$26 million. Klugman simply says, “We’ve made some progress.” Communitech past-chair Dave Caputo says, “Communitech is envied by cities around the world.... That has everything to do with Iain’s vision, drive and ability to rally people around a cause.”

Klugman does acknowledge that there have been myriad accomplishments through his tenure as CEO. In fact, he told Exchange that he was reluctant to identify any particular success stories for fear of “forgetting a thousand others.”

He says a key to Communitech’s growth and status is that “We’ve been able to stay nimble and quick even though we’ve grown to 100 people. We’ve paid attention to the needs of our community, the needs of our ecosystem, and the needs of our companies across the country.” He adds, “We’ve been constantly adapting, trying new things.”

The media release announcing Klugman’s upcoming departure noted: “During his tenure, Communitech partnered with local, provincial and federal governments to open collaborative work spaces and labs in Kitchener and Waterloo; launched Canada’s first accelerator for women-led companies; built a Canada-wide network of peer organizations; and pushed for policy improvements such as Canada’s Global Skills Strategy to help companies



Iain Klugman

hire top international talent.”

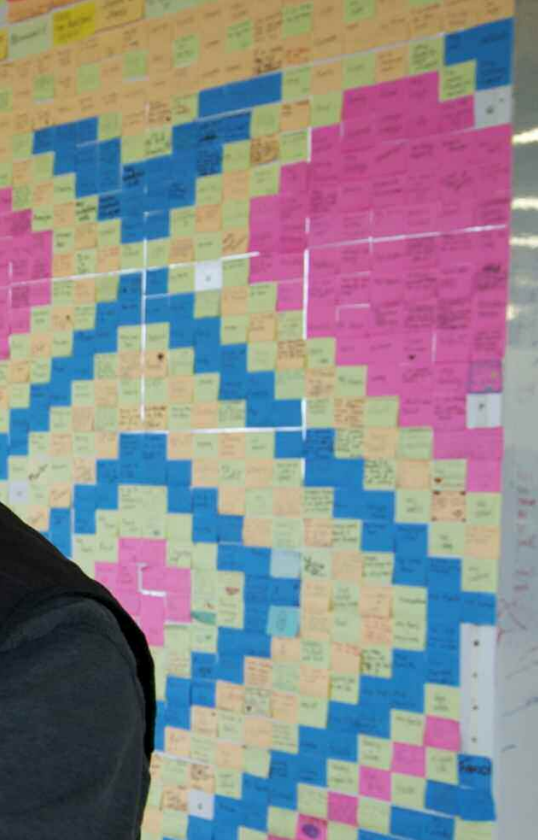
Klugman has brought a unique perspective to the organization. He talks about programs that didn’t actually accomplish what they were designed to do – like an early effort, the Apps Factory. He says, “I remember the person who ran it saying, ‘You talk about it and you’re so proud of it, but it’s such a failure.’ But I said, ‘It hasn’t been a failure.’ It didn’t work the way we thought it was going to work, but it ended up being the foundation for our corporate innovation program.... Now we run a corporate innovation program larger than anything in the entire world... If we’d not tried the Apps Factory, we wouldn’t have all this stuff.”

And perhaps that example illustrates the most important quality Klugman brought to Communitech – his undying and unassailable optimism. That optimism leaves room for surprises, and Klugman is delighted when an innovative idea takes a sharp right turn and something unexpected is created. He points to the Communitech Data Hub, in Waterloo, as an example of something created without a clear sense of where it might lead.

“It got us thinking about data for the first time, and then we ran the open data exchange – Canada’s national strategy for open data – and we started learning about some of the potential.”

“Now,” he adds, since 2012 when the Data Hub was opened, “we’re starting to see data as being so central not just to business, but data has become political, it’s about data sovereignty, it’s about personal data, it’s about data crime, it’s about data governance... it’s just become so central to all the conversations that are happening in the world. Everything’s about data.” And Communitech has been a leading factor in this life-changing metamorphosis, by being “willing to keep at it” for six years, even though at the beginning, the importance of their work was not at all evident.

He says, “When we launched the Communitech Hub, and the digital mobile strategy, nothing like this existed in the world, so we made it all up.... Every assumption we made about how this place was going to work was wrong. Every single one.... We didn’t envision any of this stuff, but the world has changed five or six times since then. Thankfully, we’ve been able to change a little bit ahead



of it."

Reflecting on his introduction to Communitex, Klugman laughs. "I don't know why I even came. I said 'No' about ten times to the job. But there was something that was going here... I felt that if I didn't take the opportunity, I was going to regret it in five years. There was this thing in the back of my head saying, 'Special things are going to happen and it's going to be fun, and you want to be part of this.'"

He suggests that the Waterloo community has an unusual combination of ambition and humility. "And there is also a social contract in this community, an obligation to give back and contribute." And Klugman adds that whatever his next "adventure," he will continue to live in Waterloo. "There's something about this community that's magical, and it's rare."

But he also thinks beyond the regional borders. Klugman notes that typically, economic regions with international clout have populations of 30-million plus; but that's the total population of the entire country of Canada. So Canadian centres need to think differently. "We increasingly are becoming partners with others across the country. Our motto has always been that we need to gang up together to take on the world."

Partnering is especially important, says Klugman, because Waterloo is actually an aberration. When compared to most economic regions, Waterloo should not be successful – it's just too small. Yet we are

successful. Klugman says this is why national and international partnerships become crucial. He adds that better transportation across the province is essential to future success; that the full potential of smaller centres like Waterloo will never be "unleashed" until the province takes action on high-speed, frequent rail links.

He is also blunt about the dangers of being complacent: "We always have to stay hungry as a community. In some respects, we're probably not as good as we think we are."

"We always have to stay hungry as a community. In some respects, we're probably not as good as we think we are."

We're still kind of parochial, small-minded about who we are... We have to start to be thinking bigger and bolder about ourselves.... We don't help ourselves with brand fragmentation."

He says he is leaving Communitex because he "wants to do one more thing, and I will be 59... and we're at that point right now where our financials are very strong, our board is very strong, our team is very strong, and if I am going to be able to sneak out the back door, now is the time."

He says he has no idea what his next challenge will be. And "for the next period of time," Klugman will still be working to fulfill his vision for Communitex. For example, Communitex is setting up "Communitex Outposts... legal entities, companies, in all of the G7 countries to make it as easy for our companies to hire sales people in those countries as it is to hire here. We think that will be a break-through in terms of global expansion. The U.K. and the U.S. are already set up, and we want to do the others, asap."

He says some of his focus over the next year will be Communitex's role on the national stage. As well, Communitex has just completed a strategic planning evaluation, and Klugman says, "We are re-tooling all our start-up, scale up, and large corporate programs. We're six months into the new model, and that's going to take a bunch of work. There is certainly lots to do."

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Bryan Larkin

A SOCIAL INCUBATOR WITH A DIFFERENCE

Bryan Larkin has a vision for a new way to consider “a firestorm of community issues.”

BY PAUL KNOWLES

Waterloo Region is known for having more than its fair share of think tanks and high-tech incubators. But Bryan Larkin thinks there is room for one more – and he wants to develop it at his place.

“His place” is, of course, the headquarters of the Waterloo

Regional Police Service. Larkin is Chief of Police, holding that post since August, 2014. He’s been a police officer with Waterloo Region since 1991. And he believes that policing is much more about community than it is about enforcement. That has led to his hope of creating a “Social Incubator Hub” at WRPS, similar to the start-up incubators and think-tanks in the community.

Larkin told Exchange, “The one thing I really want to create is a social innovation hub within our police service... a think-tank,” whose diverse members would be free to “work away and come up with solutions.”

He sees this Hub – which he admits exists at this point only in his personal vision – as a way of “looking at the issues differently. You can’t apply a traditional lens to some of these issues” currently facing the police service – and thus the community at large.

Police officers already do a great deal more than deal with crime. In fact, the Chief says, “75 per cent of our workload is non-crime-related... We’re integrated in all kinds of different societal challenges.”

He adds, “We have never had a more divisive, complex, intolerant society, and the police members find ourselves in the middle of all of this, as a peacekeeper.”

He says the local police service is keenly aware of the dichotomy of our “economically prosperous” region, where businesses thrive, there is competition for labour, and yet, we face “the challenges of homelessness, poverty, access to food, mental health, addiction... a firestorm of community issues.”

This creates a constant tension for a police force, since many members of the community expect the police to spend their time and resources “fighting crime,” when the answers may lay several stages earlier in the social processes that lead to criminal activities.

Larkin admits that there has been a recent uptick in crime statistics, including violent crime, but he points out that the Region has “a relatively low homicide rate,” and then returns to his theme – that many crimes are the result of homelessness, addiction and poverty. Solving those issues, he argues, will solve crime before crimes happen.

But solving those issues requires thinking outside the box – and a lot of collaboration among community organizations and leaders. “Fighting crime and enforcement is not the panacea,” says the Chief. “We still need to focus on upstream and long-term solutions.”

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There is another category of crime that police are increasingly encountering – cyber-crime, which has a global footprint, and often an international origin. He cites the stats: “Fifty per cent of the crimes we investigate have some aspect of technology” involved. “That,” says Larkin, “changes the world we live in.”

One needed response to that challenge is for the police service to become more digitally sophisticated in its own right. Larkin talks about the need for more Artificial Intelligence capacity – for example, for AI to be able to analyze all of the video available from many crime scenes. There are often multiple security and personal video cameras at the scenes, but today, all that footage has to be viewed by humans – a process involving hundreds, perhaps thousands of hours. Better AI at the Police Service could cut that time to a fraction.

Larkin notes that the Region's very growth creates a challenge. “We're the tenth largest community in Canada,” he says, that

“The one thing I really want to create is a social innovation hub within our police service ... a think-tank.”

means the region has attracted the attention of criminals, including street gangs.

But these inevitable downsides to growth are much more than compensated for by the plusses in the region, argues Larkin. “The beauty of our region is, our systems and our systems' leaders work phenomenally well. This is not replicated in many communities – we are trend-setters.”

Just as Larkin believes his police service can learn to do a better job by collaborating with community organizations and thinking outside the box, he believes the same of himself. “We are human. I'm learning. I'm a very different chief than when I started.”

He believes crime prevention is not just for the community, it has to be by the community. “I see a lot of finger-pointing, but in the communities where he have success, the ideas are driven by the people who live in those neighbourhoods.... At the best, it is community-based.”

He points to a police officer whose actions significantly reduced the number of police calls in a neighbourhood, not by increasing arrests, but by starting a fully-funded community soccer league.

Larkin believes there is real “return on investment” in taking a proactive and innovative approach to policing. “Policing,” he says, “is reactive in many ways... which never solves the underlying causes.” So the question is “How do we innovate differently?”

Chief Bryan Larkin is determined to find the answers to that question. **X**

COLLECTING THE DATA THAT WORK FOR US

eleven-x is making cities smarter and building more intelligent

BY JON ROHR

IoT and AI are everywhere. Internet of Things is deeply embedded in industry. Sensors – gathering data crucial to Artificial Intelligence – are plentiful, and embedded into our daily lives.

Dan Mathers, CEO of eleven-x, believes that AI can change entire cities. Smarter cities are more effective and more efficient. “We provide solutions,” says Mathers, “not only to cities but also to building owners, and a whole bunch of other customers, to basically help them do things they could not have done before.”

Mathers is an accomplished entrepreneur and has been involved in “a whole lot of start-ups”. Starting out at IBM in the mid eighties, he always considered himself an ‘intrapreneur’, an entrepreneur who starts a businesses from within a company. After IBM, Mathers was involved in an impressive number of tech companies, both established entities and start-ups.

One start-up was “eSight”; Mathers' vision to have “a company for social good”, led to eSight developing the first wearable for people with low vision. Today eSight has an Ottawa-based CEO, but Mathers remains a shareholder.

Mathers originally came to Waterloo in the late 2000's to run the

“We are really focused on two major areas – smart cities – helping cities become more efficient and effective – and intelligent buildings.”

Venture Services group at Communitech. He then became a VC, spending 10 years working with the Investment Accelerator Fund. He has made about 40 investments, including Aeryon Labs, Dejero, and Axonify – “a lot of great local companies”.

Mathers was excited when Communitech asked him get involved with a boot camp for ex-Blackberry executives. He says, “The people I was most closely aligned to, at the conclusion of that boot camp, were Ryan Hickey and Fraser Gibbs.” They became Mathers' co-founders at eleven-x. Today, eleven-x has 30 team members. Mathers is full-time CEO. He says the company is “well into revenues.”

He credits his co-founders: “They were able to assemble a tech team here that is second to none... We're quickly developing a reputation globally for really knowing what we're doing.”

Their first customer was Waterloo Region itself – monitoring the level of water in our aquifers. In the past the Region had sensors in the wells and was paying people to collect that data manually, once a quarter. “It would take three months to do the report,” says Mathers – a very expensive task, as there are 550 production monitoring wells and thousands of test wells. “So the information in the report could be six months old!”

He explains, “We made a device called an XIU. This connects up to the sensor of the well. This communicates to the wireless network in the region and now they get real time data, every hour.”

Mathers identifies two issues that can cause tech businesses to fail. One is, the technology doesn't work. “I wanted to work with two guys that I absolutely would know that the technology would work.”

The other stumbling block is lack of money. “I'm pretty confident that that's the area I can add value. So it's a really good match-up,



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Dan Mathers

me on the business side and those guys on the tech side.”

Mathers believes that to achieve success eleven-x has to be focused on the “DNA” of IoT: Device, Network and Application. The Device collects data, the Network is generally wireless, and the data goes into the Application software that makes sense of the data.

With even-more sensors placed everywhere, to make use of all that data, “you need some sort of automation – in many cases that’s machine learning, or AI,” he says. The company owns their own network. “Part of value proposition,” says Mathers, “is that this is very low cost,” using a technology called LoRaWan to make “very low cost devices” that will last over 10 years on a couple of AA bat-

teries.

Many fear IoT and AI, but Mathers believes that fear is misplaced. “We focus on helping customers do things they just couldn’t practically do before ... We are really focused on two major areas – smart cities – helping cities become more efficient and effective – and intelligent buildings.”

Mathers cites city congestion as a growing problem. “In a city, 30% of congestion in downtown cores is caused by people looking for parking spots.” He suggests a solution: “You have all these apartment buildings with lots of parking during the day. So why don’t we match up supply and demand?” eleven-x has already worked with Fredericton and the University of British Columbia to solve parking and traffic problems. Stratford has installed parking disks embedded in the pavement. Stratford, whose population goes from 35,000 to 150,000 in the summer now operates a way-finding site that tells visitors to the city where the nearest parking spot is.

Mathers’ team is working on an intelligent buildings project with the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier and the Conrad family, at Evolv1. “We have a suite of sensors in there to help us understand how people interact with building and the environment around them. Devices such as noise sensors, temperature and humidity sensors, waste bin fill level sensors, water metering at dish washers, people-counters to see who is using the elevator and who is using the stairs and a whole suite of other solutions.”

Recently, employee-owned GHD collaborated with eleven-x, to provide cities with wireless, real-time storm-water monitoring solutions. Mathers says, “The collaboration with GHD really brings together two companies with very synergistic areas of expertise. One of our big motivations is to make life better, for all of us.” X

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DISRUPTIVE POLITICS

Mike Morrice is not afraid to fight for his belief in this world

BY JON ROHR

It's got to be a good feeling, when 14,215 people, many of whom switched party's to do so, voted for you ... and in turn made a statement that might just get some traction. Although he is very disappointed he didn't win, it still felt good. Mike Morrice, 2019 candidate for Kitchener Centre, was 5799 votes shy of winning his riding seat from Liberal Raj Saini. Morrice also finished 1104 votes ahead of Conservative candidate, and former MP, Stephen Woodworth.

What drove this science-based environmentalist to run? Put simply, he was looking for a different approach to politics. "When we knocked on someone's door, the conversation started with 'What's important to you?'" Morrice says, "as opposed to 'can I count on your support?'"

Morrice found a lot of common ground, and he says he owes it to the Green party platform that allowed him to position himself with the community, against the overwhelming partisanship of the left and right parties. "To see that number of people step outside their comfort zone and say 'Yeah I'm going to get behind those ideas' – that approach to doing it and that level of trust in me – that's an honour."

In 2015 the Green party drew 3% of the popular vote in the riding; in 2019 Morrice turned that number into 26%. "People are recognizing that this is a viable option."

Morrice entered the race because he wanted to be a voice in Ottawa, particularly on science-based action on climate change. "I chose the Green Party because I felt like this was a party that would allow me to do it in a way that I could hold on to my integrity."

Morrice found that the priorities in Kitchener Centre have a lot to do with people. "There are a lot of people having a hard time affording day to day life," he says, "particularly as the price of housing, owning or renting, go up." He also discovered that seniors in the community have a really difficult time getting by.

He encountered concerns about mental health and health care. "The number of stories I've heard – people have been let down by the reactivity of our health care system".

Morrice was pleased with the extent to which climate change is among or at the top or priorities across our community and across demographics. "It didn't matter if I was in Stanley Park or Forest Heights, if it was a teenager or a grandparent."

Morrice is disheartened that he can't make the difference in Parliament. He says that, when income inequality is getting worse, climate crises getting worse, federal politics becoming more partisan and communities' needs growing, "that is the reason I decided to do this in the first





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place.” He believes that Canada needs “parliamentarians, not partisans”. He calls for a new way of campaigning: “My aspiration was to put democracy first and party politics second.”

Morrice says the strong Green vote is a call to all elected representatives, to listen to the wants and needs of the community.

He is confident that, with the right policies, the planet can be saved. “The fact [is] that in the past we have had many challenges, that we faced globally, like the ozone. We don’t hear about the ozone any more, because our elected representatives got together, and signed the Montreal protocol that banned chemicals that were leading to it.”

“My aspiration was to put democracy first and party politics second

Morrice sees two of the biggest issues facing the world right now as; 1) climate change and 2) income inequality. His view on climate change and the work he has done in the past are well documented. He’s now also focusing on income equality, “where in Canada we have 20% of Canadians owning 70% of the wealth.”

Canada has declared a climate emergency at many levels of government. “And yet,” Morrice says, “we continue to subsidize fossil fuels, 12 times at what we subsidize the green economy.” He feels politics is defined “by those being bought off for the sake of the party.”

He has not decided whether he will run for elected office again. But one thing is certain: Morrice will continue to look to find common ground between people, focused on making progress “on that common ground, and stay accountable to it”. That’s exactly what he did over the last 10 years developing Sustainable Waterloo Region and then the Green Economy Canada. It’s exactly what got him through the nine months of campaigning, and it’s exactly where and what he’ll be working on as he navigates the next three years until he’ll be faced with the decision to run again or not.

Morrice says his experience in running in the election has provided “more affirmation of doing things differently”. Going forward, he says, “My values won’t change, that’s my compass, to lead me toward what ever I can be a part of, to continue to be a catalyst as best I can and achieve progress with the big challenges we face”. X



Mike Murray

The CAO recognizes that the ION was the major focus in recent years, both because it is an innovative and highly visible addition to the cityscape in Kitchener and Waterloo, and also because its launch was delayed, a number of times. But even with the system successfully up and running, Murray emphasizes that the LRT is “not the only part” of the region’s plan for change.

He points out that the ION has a positive domino effect – “It let us reorganize our bus system,” in a more efficient grid. Ridership across the system is significantly up. So are the number of people cycling and walking – and the region is actively exploring ways of making cycling safer, both by development off-road cycling paths, and by experimenting with methods of separating bike lands from auto lanes.

But there is no doubt that a great many people continue to use automobiles as their primary means of transportation in the region. Murray points out that the four-wheel sector is not being ignored. “We’re investing in really leading-edge technology,” including partnering with local high tech company Miovision, to make red-light intersections as safe and efficient as possible.

Thomas Schmidt is Commissioner of Transportation and Environmental Services for the Region – an intriguing combination of jobs, since vehicular transportation is responsible for about 50 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the region. He points out that the roads, are changing in the region, with more pedestrians, more cyclists, the ION, busses, and cars. The one thing you can’t get more

Within Waterloo Region, I think we’re doing very well. But between here and Toronto, congestion and traffic just continues to get worse.”

– Mike Murray

REGION’S “PATH IS WORKING”

Waterloo Region transportation “in pretty good shape”; still a gap in infrastructure says retiring CAO

BY PAUL KNOWLES

When it comes to transportation, Mike Murray believes the Region of Waterloo is getting somewhere. Reflecting on the state of the region’s transportation system near the end of 2019 – the year the much-anticipated ION Light Rail Transit system finally launched – Murray said, “Overall, I think we’re in pretty good shape.”

This spring, Mike Murray will retire as CAO of the Region of Waterloo. He believes he is leaving the Region’s transportation matrix in good shape. “We have an ongoing goal to create more transportation choice.” That involves “a model shift,” to every element of transportation – “transit, walking, cycling.” “This is a path we’ve been on for the past ten years... and it’s working.”

of, he adds, is time – “you can’t manufacture time.” So the challenge for the region’s transportation leaders is to “manage green time” to make transportation as efficient as possible.

Efficient and, of course, safe. When road construction involves intersections – new or reconstruction – the region now studies “case by case” whether the best answer will be stoplights or roundabouts. And Murray acknowledges that while some people may still be nervous with roundabouts, all the evidence demonstrates that when collisions happen at a roundabout intersection, the results are usually less severe than at a red-light crossing.

But the Region doesn’t exist within a bubble, and CAO Murray acknowledges that. “Within Waterloo Region, I think we’re doing

very well. But between here and Toronto, congestion and traffic just continues to get worse." He's blunt in his assessment: "We need better train service."

Aging infrastructure

Looking beyond the transportation system, Murray and Schmidt talked about the overall infrastructure in the region – and admit there is a challenge. The CAO pointed out that Waterloo Region is in some ways unique. There are some municipalities – London might be one example, he said – with an aging infrastructure but limited ongoing growth. There, the challenge is to deal with aging water, sewer, and road systems, for example.

There are others – some of the new municipalities of the GTA – where building infrastructure for rapid growth is the challenge.

But Waterloo region faces a double whammy – our infrastructure systems are old and declining, but we are also seeing unprecedented growth, including in the dramatic redevelopment of the core areas of the cities. Murray says, "We're a growing community. We need to add capacity. But we've got old, aging infrastructure... That creates a lot of challenges."

Murray says that there is "a gap of about \$30 to \$40 million per year on infrastructure funding... so the problem won't be solved overnight." And there's a new wrinkle – development charges are a key source of funds for infrastructure costs, but the province of Ontario has just initiated a deferred payment plan for development charges, which means that money that would have come immediately from developers to the municipality can now be deferred over seven years. Says Murray, "the government initiated it to make housing more affordable... but we don't think it's going to work."

The immediate future

Gradual change is probably the theme of transportation and infrastructure development in the Region over the next few years. This is driven by necessity – the growth and intensification of the cities and townships of the region – and by environmental concerns. Says Murray, "One of our big emphases is on climate action." Lots is being done – and more will be – to convert from greenhouse gas emitting transportation systems to electrical systems (the ION is electrical; more busses are hybrids).

Of course, change is seldom universally popular. The ION, for example, caused the elimination of parking places along its route. So is parking now a challenge in the cities of the Region? Murray and Schmidt are unequivocal – "No." People may have to walk an extra half-block... but they point out with a wry smile that at holiday time, people park in suburban mall parking lots and walk much further than they will ever have to walk in the down- or up-towns of the region.

When it comes to transportation discussions about Waterloo Region, the elephant in the room is usually "Cambridge" – as in, "When will the ION service be extended to Cambridge?"

Murray says, "That's important. The LRT is the preferred technology. We need to build this from Waterloo to Cambridge. It's expensive. We need to build it in stages. We have a route that is practically settled."

He says that construction could start in 2028, "but that is highly contingent on funding," and he points out that the model for federal and provincial funding has shifted, to where the upper levels of government are actually assuming ownership of new public transit systems.

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