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COOPERATION IN CRISES
Help needed to mitigate the short term plan

Transformation can be a two-edged sword. There is no question that the cities of Waterloo Region are in the midst of an earth-shaking transformation. The coming of the ION Light Rail Transit, the transition of industrial buildings in the city cores into homes for high tech enterprises, the construction of condo after condo... our cities will never be the same again. Our cover story and several of our other articles, deal with this new reality.

And this is a good thing. Well-occupied city cores are safer, more environmentally friendly, more economically viable, and... well, exciting places to be. So that’s our future, in the longer term.

But short term, there are issues that must be dealt with. Many of the businesses in our city centres are suffering because of the massive inconvenience brought about by these massive changes. Customers are having trouble getting to their stores – and they may not show up at all.

This column is a call for cooperation. Our municipalities must do everything possible to mitigate the short-term suffering. The contractors carrying out the urban face-lift must be cooperative, too. This is not the time to nit-pick about where helpful signs can be placed. This is a time for complete collaboration.

And as for those of us who don’t have the say – this is the time to schedule an extra 15 minutes so we can continue to support the businesses that have served us when travel and parking weren’t a challenge.
At this time of year most media reports around income tax relate to personal tax planning and tax filings. However, there are a number of corporate tax and bigger-picture tax issues that can be reviewed not only now but throughout the year, as new events arise or actual results differ from earlier projections.

Compensation Planning

Individuals or families who own or manage multi-residential properties need to decide how they will compensate themselves over the tax year, as well as the amount of compensation they will receive. Compensation is typically in the form of salary or dividends. If the business has sufficient taxable income, other family members may also receive compensation. Their compensation would be limited to a reasonable salary unless they are shareholders of the business, either directly or a beneficiary of a trust and could receive dividends. Compensation in the form of salary allows for a deduction in the corporation and is considered earned income for calculating RRSP contribution room.

Dividends are a payment of after-tax earnings and do not create RRSP contribution room. Certain corporations may be able to pay eligible dividends, which are taxed at a preferential rate. If capital gains have been realized in the past or capital dividends have been received from a subsidiary, a company may have a balance in its capital dividend account and may be able to pay a tax-free dividend.

In addition, if a shareholder has previously

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advanced cash to a company, this can also be received taxfree and is an option to meet cash flow needs.

The bottom line is that compensation planning should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that tax is minimized and cash flow needs are being met.

Succession Planning
In most businesses, especially family-owned businesses, succession becomes an issue as the owner-operator advances in age. A well thought-out plan should be established and discussed with all of those impacted. Options range from having a family member take over the responsibilities, to promoting or hiring a non-family member to step into a senior management role, or a sale of the properties or business.

The key is to have a plan in place well in advance of the principal owner’s retirement date so the new leaders have a sufficient understanding of the business or have time to prepare the properties or business for a sale. Tax issues and planning opportunities arise when considering the sale of the principal owner’s shares either to a third party or to the next generation of family members. An estate freeze is a common tax planning tool that should be discussed with a tax advisor.

Construction Planning
Anyone considering building a new apartment building should plan – prior to construction – to see if there are any opportunities to implement an ownership structure that could allow for a faster deduction of or depreciation of construction costs. If a different structure is not implemented, a conversation should take place with your tax advisor. This ensures the appropriate level of detail is maintained in your accounting records to identify costs that can be deducted when incurred, or be added to depreciation classes that have a faster depreciation than the building category. A residential apartment building will have an annual depreciation rate of four percent while other expenditures such as paving (eight percent), equipment (20 percent) and landscaping (deducted in year of expenditure) have faster depreciation for tax purposes.

For major repair projects to existing buildings, a discussion should be held with the company’s tax advisor to determine if there is a tax position that can be taken to support deducting some or all of the costs in the current year. Canada Revenue Agency will look at a number of factors to determine if a repair is a capital repair or a current expense. Some of these factors are detailed on their website and include:

Does the expense provide a lasting benefit or is it a cost that reoccurs after a short period of time? Does the expense improve the property or does it maintain and restore it to its original condition? Does the addition represent the replacement of an asset that is used as part of the building’s operations or does the cost represent ordinary maintenance to existing assets?

The amounts CRA calculates for corporate or personal tax instalments for a given tax year are based on the taxes paid in a prior year. However, if the income tax for the current year is known to be lower than the year before, instalments can be made based on this estimated tax. For example, if corporate tax paid in 2014 was $60,000, then the amount of instalments owing for 2015 will be the lower of $50,000 and the estimated tax for 2015. Keep in mind that if an amount lower than $50,000 is paid but the actual tax at the end of the year is somewhere in between the amount paid and $50,000, interest will be charged on this difference. The current rate of tax charged by CRA is an annual rate of five percent and this interest is not deductible for tax purposes. Since repairs and maintenance is an expense that can fluctuate significantly from one year to the next, the estimated taxes payable and instalments for a year should be reviewed periodically.

Night for Honouring Family Businesses

- Attend the 2015 CFFB Annual Awards May 28, 2015 Bingemans Conference Centre
- Participate & Support Family business in Waterloo Region and Surrounding Area
- Register at cffb.ca and network with area family businesses

Watch for the Family Business Award winners in the July/August 2015 issue of Exchange Maga-

Plan to attend the 2015-2016 Program Launch/AGM is September 26, 2015
Participate in Exchange’s July/August Feature Section on Family Businesses
email familybusiness@exchangemagazine.com for more information.

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DELEGATES TO VISIT REGION

They’re coming to town... but who are they? With the ICF conference coming to Toronto, and touching down in Waterloo June 8, 2015, Justin McFadden, Director of Economic Development for the City of Waterloo, feels that he and his colleagues “have a pretty good read on what the attendee from the conference will look like”. McFadden is referring to the delegate, the individual or group who, at their organization’s expense, is coming to visit our community – but for what?

The ICF which stands for “Intelligent Community Forum,” is an annual forum that is usually held in New York City but in 2015 is hosted by the City of Toronto. Typically, ICF delegates are going to be from or connected to a municipality but why do they come?

In a lot of cases, says McFadden, “the folks who are there are showcasing their own municipality, or they’re learning how to become an Intelligent Community. Along with the municipal delegate you get some corporate folks, usually tied into the government’s presentation - they have some kind of company that’s looking to help municipalities, in like technology or broadband... so you get a cross section, but usually it’s tied at the core at the city level.”

ICF was formed over the years through an evolutionary process that started with the World Trade Centre Associations and the World Teleport Association. It has a global presence and has recognized 134 cities from around the world. It works with 23 Canadian cities, of which Waterloo is one.

John Jung, CEO of Canada’s Technology Triangle – the Waterloo Region economic development organization that is being wound down this year, replaced with the new Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation – says the focus is to provide the delegates who normally go to a New York City event, the opportunity to learn more directly about what the Toronto area is about.

This year’s event is in Toronto from June 8-12, 2015, Jung thought it would be great opportunity for at least a bus load of people to come from Toronto to visit the Waterloo Region. “They’ve heard so much about it, from people like the former Mayor of Waterloo Brenda Halloran, they heard it from me, they’ve heard from books that have been written about intelligent cities, smart cities, they’ve also heard about it through videos on YouTube and other things that ICF has promoted about the Region, but this is their first opportunity to actually get on site.”

ICF is focused on what they call “the triple helix”, made up of government, private sector, and institutions. “You’re going to see people coming from municipal government or regional governments, usually with a Mayor, a CAO or CIO. You have people who are vendors providing services to the community, or there are multi-national members like IBM and Cisco. Others are involved as partners and sponsors. You’ve got the universities, educational institutions including students, coming from all over the world, who are interested in what this region is doing.”

“The special thing here in Waterloo,” says Fred Kuntz, VP public affairs for the Centre for International Governance Innovation, dates back to the founding of University of Waterloo and its intellectual property guidelines. “They were one of the first universities in Canada to allow researchers to own their own ideas and profit from them.” That really attracted people in the computer science and engineering R&D areas, professors who would then work at Waterloo and do their research there. That spawned Research in Motion, which is now Blackberry, “which in turn,” says Kuntz, “spawned all sorts of other things in the sector”

Jung adds, the reason why people are coming to this area is because they have heard so much about the collaborative innovation ecosystem that Waterloo exhibits. Jung says people are now speaking about “creative destruction, and how successful cities are able to evolve, and transform. They also talk about the opportunities that cities are able to undertake by themselves, to get themselves out of a critical jam.”

Waterloo Region and more specifically the City of Waterloo have certainly been able to demonstrate that turn-around. Examples include the story of Blackberry and the creation new opportunities here, and there is Electrohome, transforming to Christie Digital, and other kinds of organizations that had transformed in this community. The DNA of focused communities is what it’s all
about; “that is a really terrific story for a lot of people,” says Jung.

Jung believes that “the key here is that Waterloo Region is a model for a number of places around the world.” He refers to the smaller to medium sized communities that mirror this area, those with a little more than half a million people growing to three quarters of a million. “The way we’re growing and taking on growth is a key issue for a lot of communities around that size.”

Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic just came back from a CTITrade mission to the Brainport Eindhoven Region in the Netherlands. As a delegate, he believes these kinds of initiatives are important: “In an increasingly global world, the reality is, that outside of North America, in Europe and Asia, there is a lot of value put on developing a personal relationship and particularly when those personal relationships see a collaborate between business, the not-for-profit/academic sector, and government coming together, which is very much how our delegation was shaped.”

While on the delegation, Vrbanovic says he “doesn’t represent the City of Kitchener, per se. We’re representing Waterloo Region and the CTI and we’re trying to attract businesses from the rest of the world, into this area. It’s about getting them into Waterloo Region.” And the reason is quite clear: “We’re competing not against each other, we’re competing against Vancouver, Toronto, Seattle, Boston, and Austin, Texas, places elsewhere in North America, so there is no point in trying to compete with each other. Let’s get the jobs and the investment into the Region, and where ever it lands, we know that it benefits everyone else in the region.”

Kuntz says that it’s “this tremendous community of people looking at innovation in a number of sectors” that people want to visit. “You can say they’re all related but actually CGI is looking at global policy and the political issues and economics [while] Perimeter Institute, another location of choice, is looking at string theory and calculations about the universe. There isn’t a lot of cross over between the two.”

What they do have in common – with the rest of the Region – according to Kunz, is the idea “that through research we can make the world a better place. If we study and learn and grow our awareness of our world and what could be better. It’s the approach we take with physics and the approach we take with policy, it’s research based.”

He adds that “like minded people interacting in a university setting then spills over into the community and creates a feeling of collaboration in that community, through Canada’s Technology Triangle, which is trying to market this region to the world, and now with the new Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation that launched late April, all of that works well together, all of it’s in sync”.

Kuntz concludes that as recently as 14 years ago, people assumed that New York, Washington or London were the important centres of innovative thinking, but today, there are hubs emerging all over the world where excellence and innovative thinking can emerge free from constraint. If you’re on the information highway and if you’re on the internet, and if internet is open, accessible and free around the world, anyone can have a global conversation about the important issues.

That’s underway now, that’s not tomorrow – that’s the present, that’s really happening and we are a very important hub in that world community. - Jon Rohr

Angie Scheid of Cloverleaf Farms, one of 70 tenants moving into the new market building at the St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market

Long-time vendors at the St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market are nothing short of delighted about the move into their brand new quarters at the market. June marks the opening of the new main building at the market, which replaces a building lost in a fire on Labour Day, 2013. The building that was destroyed covered 24,000 square feet; the new facility is 34,000 square feet.

Vendors that lost their venue in the fire have been accommodated in the “Market Barn”, which was quickly constructed as a temporary home for the vendors. It will continue to be used, as will the two buildings that continue to house the “Peddlers’ Village”.

Caudle’s Catch has been part of the St. Jacob’s Farmers’ Market for several decades. Owner Ron Caudle remembers their first move – into the building that was eventually destroyed by fire. Caudle’s Catch is doubling its space in the move to the new structure, and Ron Caudle says “We were really excited when they built the first one – we’re just as excited now as we were with the first building.”

The loss caused by the fire was estimated at $2 million, while the price tag for the new facility has been estimated at $5 million. The new quarters will house about 70 vendors; the entire market, in high summer season, has more than 400 vendors.

Cloverleaf Farms has been a vendor at the Market for 21 years. Cloverleaf’s Angie Scheid has nothing but praise for the owners of the St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market, and how they have handled the recovery from the disastrous fire. “The market did a fantastic job getting it up as quickly as it did.” She adds that, even in the temporary quarters, “we’ve been pretty busy” in their Market location.

Scheid commends the Market owners for ongoing communication efforts – “they’ve done really well, emailing the floor plans, giving tours…”

Cloverleaf, which is based in New Hamburg, has eight people at their Market location on Thursday and Saturday, year-round, and also on Tuesdays during the summer months.

Ron Caudle sees nothing but positives about the new building, “We really believe it’s going to be a really successful venture,” he told Exchange. “Our customers are excited, our staff is excited.”

He, too, has nothing but good to say about the Farmers’ Market management team: “They’ve been excellent, very accommodating.”

The new building will open in June, while an official grand opening is likely to take place in September. - Paul Knowles
LOTS OF GROWTH ... BUT POTENTIAL FOR MUCH MORE

Jason Martin says Kitchener-Waterloo’s core area “is certainly an exciting place to be.” He adds, “I can’t think of another community with so many things happening downtown.” The community, he says, “is transforming itself.”

Martin is uniquely placed to make such an assessment – he grew up in KW, but today, he is the youngest of three partners at Robertson Simmons Architects, and the lead architect on one of the projects transforming the heart of Kitchener – The Breithaupt Block, soon to be home to Google.

Today, Google occupies 58,500 feet at the Tannery. The long-term plan, according to Steven Woods, who heads the Google operation in KW, is to move a few blocks across King Street to the Breithaupt Block. The Block’s second phase is now under construction, a project of the Perimeter Development Corporation. Google has signed a long-term lease for 185,000 square feet in the new facility. Google, Perimeter and Robertson Simmons are all key players among the visionaries who are bringing what Martin called “transformation” to the cores of the cities of Waterloo Region – Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge.

Google is a prime example – the digital giant first moved into 34,000 square feet, in 2011. Six years later, they have almost doubled that footprint, but over the next few years, they will more than quintuple it!

Google currently employs about 325 people; Woods expects there to be more than 350 on the team by the time the move begins, later this year, and while he insists there is no specific target for employee numbers, he told Exchange that “these buildings, if everything filled up, could accommodate 900.”

Woods says there are no definite plans for the use of their current space at the Tannery building.

The Breithaupt Block is still a work in progress, according to Martin. The part of the complex which was completed more than two years ago, is occupied by existing tenants, while the majority of the space is still under construction. It’s major construction – Martin says they are “adding three additional floors on top.”

Existing industrial structures are being totally adapted to suit Google; Martin says the foundation walls and steel structure will essentially be all that remains of the original buildings.

He says that the construction will be completed by September of this year, with the exterior structure, washrooms, elevators, lobbies and such finished. At that point, Google will take over, finishing the space to meet the company’s needs.

Woods expects that the move to the Breithaupt Block will begin in 2015. “We hope to get into the new building later in the year,” he said, because their current quarters are “getting crowded. We’re moving our engineering teams across to the new buildings.”

Martin gives credit to Perimeter – a development company whose principals are Stewart Barclay, Craig Beattie, and David Gibson – “for their vision to create something. They’re the inception, the genesis of the project.” It was the Perimeter leaders that approached Google, and also brought in Martin and his colleagues. He says, “When Perimeter came to us with a goal of bringing Google over to their Block, I got involved.” He terms Perimeter’s plan, “something special... visionary... Class A.”

Martin and Woods are in agreement about the vibrant corporate community that is emerging in Kitchener’s core. But Woods believes that there is currently a missing link in the road to ultimate success.

He told Exchange that there is a superb source of employees, and that the local infrastructure developments, especially Light Rail Transit, are positive steps. But he argues strongly for better transportation links in the corridor that stretches from Waterloo Region to Toronto.

Concerning the talent needed for enterprises such as Google, Woods says their “steady” growth has been largely a factor of “talent in the area”. He says this region has “a lot of great people, very productive,” and adds that University of Waterloo produces “very high quality graduates.”

He says that having the right people is the first priority for growth: “Growth is a factor of hiring and keeping people. It’s the Google way. We have a lot of great people. We also have a very strong product focus.”

He adds, “The success of our team gives us the right to grow.”

Woods is clearly proud that in 2015, Google has once again won the award as the Best Large and Multinational Workplace In Canada.

He praises his people; he’s also please with the vision of the community in which Google now has the majority of its Canadian employees. Woods says, “We thought very hard when we made the decision to set up shop. We’re in the transit hub of KW. We paid a lot of attention to the transit routing. We’re at the main station of the LRT. That means the engineering and computer science facilities at UW are just a few steps away.”

But much farther away – inconveniently so – are the other bits of the economic engine located elsewhere in the GTA. Woods laments the challenges of travelling to Toronto – both downtown and to Pearson International Airport. Currently, Google runs a bus for employees, but that is a stop-gap measure. He says the lack of effective transit links along the Toronto-Waterloo tech corridor is a problem.

Until very recently, provincial leaders talking about improving GO Transit services seemed focused on getting people from this area into Toronto. That’s a faulty perspective, says Woods. “The reality of it is, inbound traffic to KW is at least as high
as outbound community traffic," he says. "We need trains that run into Kitchener on a commuting schedule, and should run more frequently. We need to accommodate the flow of commerce."

Woods points to the challenge of getting from the airport to areas west of Toronto. Google hosts visitors from all over the world, who fly into Pearson, and "frankly, it's hard to get here," says Woods. He contends that, "it's crucial to get good access to the airport and to downtown Toronto."

Woods cites some figures to support his cause. He says that between 70% and 80% of all new tech start-ups in Canada are happening in the KW-Toronto corridor. And, perhaps more surprisingly, he points out that there are "well over 1,000, perhaps 2,000 tech jobs open in KW right now." And he believes that many of those remain unfilled because the right employees have no effective means of commuting to jobs in Waterloo Region.

The transportation gap is "a hindrance to commerce and to growth," he says. "It's a severe problem... I'd like top see it solved faster. We're waiting."

Woods adds, "We have an opportunity to make it great." — Paul Knowles

**REMERS TO CHAIR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

After heading the advisory committee that recommended the establishment of a new Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation, local business leader Gerry Remers has been chosen to also head the board of the new organization. A selection committee made up of public and private sector representatives has chosen 13 board members, from more than 100 applications received during a public application process; the selection committee has also appointed Remers as CEO. Remers is President and CEO of Christie Digital Systems Canada.

Bruce Gordon, Chair of Manulife Canada, was spokesperson for the selection committee. He said, "The quality of the applicants was extremely high, which made this a difficult job, but we're confident that we've appointed a diverse, highly skilled Board of Directors that will set the new Corporation up for success."

Inaugural WREDC Board members will include Jane Black, former regional vice president of the Royal Bank of Canada; Charles Cipolla, former president of Rockwell Automation; Robert Crow, executive in residence at the Institute for Quantum Computing; Chris Donnelly, of Manulife; Arnold Druing, president of Conestoga Meat Packers; Barbara Fennessy, of Conestoga College's Centre for Entrepreneurship; Murray Gamble, president of the C3 Group; Martha George, president of the Grand Valley Construction Association; Mike Kirkup, Director of Velocity at University of Waterloo; Carol Leamon, president of Axonify; Greg McCauley, of Ernst and Young; Jeff Machny, Overlap Associates; and Remers.

According to Bruce Gordon, the selection committee sought community members knowledgeable about the local economy, displaying a keen interest in the ongoing success of the region's overall economy and well-being.

New Chair Remers has served in leadership roles for more than 20 years. He was Chair of the Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy Advisory Committee and has taken an active role in the economic development of Waterloo Region for many years. He has extensive Board, Advisory Board and Leadership Council experience having served in these capacities for the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada's Technology Triangle Inc., Communitech, Perimeter Institute, and Shad Valley.

Remers says, "It’s a fabulous board, a great mix of skills, it’s a skills-based board,. What I really like is the representative nature of the board in terms of the different businesses and skills sets that the board members are representing, whether it's small or large businesses, professional organizations, entrepreneurial organizations, educational institutions. The mayors were on the steering committee, as well as business people — they really had a sense of what it takes to create a balanced board that can represent agriculture, as well as engineering, law as well as finance. University of Waterloo, Conestoga College, as well as different institutions and high tech of course."

Exchange caught up with Remers a week following the announcement of the board to ask 'What's next?' The new board had already held an informal "meet and greet" at Christie Digital, while the first formal meeting was scheduled for the end of May.

Remers intends to have “a fairly intense number of meetings” as they work through the setting up of the corporation, explaining that it’s going to require a lot of effort from a number of people. “In particular,” he says, “as we set things up, and we understand better our role, we’ll try to have an immediate impact.”

Remers has already started providing some tasks to the board members, to effectively “hit the ground running.”

There are three different areas the board will be looking into, says the new chair. The first thing, he says is, “we need to hire a CEO, we need to put an organization in place underneath the CEO, so the first thing is the Chief Executive Officer that would report to the board, that would be responsible for implementing the Waterloo Economic strategy, the regional strategy.”

The roadmap is already laid out, says Remers. “The role for the corporation is to actually implement the strategy, that’s the mandate, and when we look at articles of incorporation, it will actually say in the article of incorporation, for this corporation, that this is what this board is all about: to implement the vision that the community has put together, that is the region-wide strategy document.” That strategy has been adopted by all the municipal councils, and funding has been put in place.

Remers says the second priority is to agree on corporate bylaws, article of incorporation, and memorandum of understanding with the municipalities. “Because the municipalities want to understand what their relationship to the new corporation is going to be [in contrast to] the historical relationship with the CTT. They want a slightly different relationship and the memorandum of understanding between the corporate board and the municipalities will spell out in detail what’s expected of each of the two groups. Because the two groups provide parallel activities but a different levels.”

Remers added, "The third task is to really start thinking about the transition of the organization from CTT into this new entity - what’s ongoing, what are the key issue that the CTT is looking at, what are the opportunities that they are looking at. What are the challenges that the local economic development officers are facing in terms of these priorities. So that’s kind of operational – what can we learn in a very short period in time. What are the key operational issues.”

The corporation’s budget is significantly more than the CTT’s. But there is also a list of more than 100 actions that have been put in place in the strategy document, and it’s anticipated that the board and the CEO of the corporation have to execute that document. That will require prioritization.

Once the CEO has been hired then MOU can begin, and it will include fine-tuning the relationship between the new Corporation and the Economic Development Officers of the municipalities. Says Remers, “We want to ensure there is a
good working relationship between the people who are have their feet on the street but also the people in the corporation that are going to be at a director level, the ones that are doing Foreign Direct Investment.”

Going forward, Remers says “We’ll have two tiers of meetings. I will meet and the CEO will meet with all of the CAO’s of all of the eight municipalities and the Region, 2-4 times a year. So we have the high level meeting regularly scheduled. Then we have the local EDO for each of the cities and then a number of EDOs for Woolwich and Wilmot, they will meet monthly with the director levels. That’s something that doesn’t happen today. The director levels in the corporation will be equivalent to the director levels in the CII.”

“We’re going to be making a transition, and we’re going to be making it as smooth as possible,” says Remers. He notes that the CII does a great job, but their focus tends to be on foreign direct investment, while the mandate for the new corporation is going to be broader than that. “It’s more than just foreign direct investment. We’re trying to align a lot of the economic development activities on the parts of the different players in the community – Communitech, the universities, the Chambers – are we all aligned in terms of economic development?” He answers his own question: “I don’t think so – there are some friction points. One of the areas of the CEO and the board is to try to see what friction points exist and trying to work them out in a way that we’re actually working to the common goal of prosperity for the Region. How are we maximize that with out tripping over one another?”

He adds, “We also want to understand what frustrs the universities and other institutions in town have.” As an example he looks to the growth in Chinese funding to the University of Waterloo, which is actively trying to bring research dollars in from China to the University. “They have a lot of Chinese profs, there is a lot of investment money from the Chinese. Creating a cooperation agreement between researchers here that are making fundamental discoveries at the University of Waterloo and Institutions/Universities in China, which is what the University of Waterloo is doing –they are creating funding opportunities for the researchers here, to spend money here. One of the areas [of consideration] is how can we help with that.”

Remers is quick to say it’s “not just foreign direct investment, it’s research investment. It’s bringing capital to the area; what can we do to bring capital here, venture capital?” After that, he would like to look beyond just bringing businesses here, saying “How do you make this a community more amenable to businesses and being creative?” The new corporation will look at the fundamentals of creating a sustainable business in Waterloo Region. He points out that to create business you need capital, some form of research, joint ventures and an attitude for business, but he says, “we have to have a deeper understanding – we’re not just providing someone a tax incentive to get them to come here”.

Exchange has been writing about Waterloo Region and the municipalities for the past 32 years. One of the strengths of our economy is the diversity of industries we have. The region still has 20% of its work force in manufacturing, but we also have agricultural business, retail businesses, financial sector, education on all levels and Remers’ own sector, high-tech.

The new Chair points to “The benefits of having a diverse economy,” but he also believes the new corporation needs to prioritize its efforts, “at the same time saying, ‘Where do we have a competitive advantage?’ because if we have a sector that is stronger than any other jurisdiction in Canada, it makes sense to say that this sector needs support because it’s on a different growth trajectory than the others.”

And this is one of the aspects of the new corporation – to find and focus on that sector or multiple sectors in terms of marketing, investment and the trips that might be made internationally. Do you go to Europe or do you go to California, do you focus on high tech or do you focus agricultural business?

One of Remers’ first jobs as Chair of the WREDC was to meet with a Saudi group, thorough a delegation set up by the Canada Middle East Connections President and CEO Shawny Fahel, which came to tour the community in late April. The group was led by Dr. Emad A. Al Thukair, leader of the Saudi-Canada Business Delegation. Members of this delegation represented a broad cross-section of Saudi businesses interests.

Remers doesn’t shy away from competition, in fact he embraces it. “I think competition is healthy. I think again there has to be a lot of dialogue and there has to be vision of hope of what we’re trying to accomplish in terms of strengthening and leveraging the resources that we have. Canada tends to be a resource-based economy, it’s one of the reasons why the Canadian dollar is the way it is – oil collapsing. The extraction industries can’t be the basis for Canada’s future success. It has to be the additive industries.”

Remers ends the interview by extolling the virtues of the human condition: “the human resource is the only resource that you can mine and it ends up increasing in value.” - Jon Rohr

STRESS A GROWING ISSUE IN CANADIAN BUSINESSES

Stress is taking its toll in the workplace. According to Stephen Liptrap, Executive Vice President of Morneau Shepell, his company has seen “an increase of 50% over the last four years, in terms of people coming to us for help [because of stress]” He adds that, “People tend to come to us for issues that range all the way from addiction, and suicide, on one extreme, all the way to help dealing with elderly parents, and financial debt on the other extreme.”

Liptrap adds, “Also, in the last couple years we’ve actually seen an increase of around 62% in people coming to us for help around depression.”

Liptrap describes his company, Morneau Shepell, as “the largest family and employee assistance provider globally, and in Canada.”

He recently spoke to the Human Resource Association of Grand Valley, focusing specifically “about some of the ways you can help employees in your work place, because stress has obviously has a significant impact on the productivity of people, whether they’re dealing with things themselves, or dealing with things in their family.”

Liptrap’s company does significant research into the causes of employee health issues, and their studies have focused on the problem of stress. He says one cause of the increase in stress-related, on-the-job issues is “all of us being on call 24/7, needing to respond to people instantaneously.”

He told Exchange, “I think back to when I started in business – you would respond with a letter and could have it in the mail, and now if someone doesn’t respond to an email, quite often the person will pick up the phone and say you haven’t responded to my email yet. So I do think the expectations on people are quite a bit more than what they were before.”

Liptrap added, “I do think demographics is making a difference. Because many of us are having to deal both with children and with support for our elderly parents. I do think our generations are sandwiched in a different way than they had been before and I think that that makes quite a bit of difference.”
Morneau Shepell has offices across Canada, with over 8,000 clients. Liptrap says, “What our clients really value is our information. We sit down with them either annually or quarterly and we go through the data, at a mega level, so nothing is ever identified at an individual level. But we would say, across your work force, 20% of your work force are accessing us every year, and the number one issue people are coming to us is from stress. The number two issue might be from issues that they’re having at home.”

“So we would give them a little bit of a sense of what we’ve seen, why people are coming to us... We can actually provide a return on investment for the organization.”

Liptrap says corporate leadership is a key to successful employee assistance. “We had one client where the CEO got up in front of the employees and said, we really need to address mental health issues... it’s OK to ask for help if you have mental health issues. The number of people that came to us, just for that one work place, in that one year, increased 50%. And it was only because the CEO gave them permission to go and get help if you’re facing depression or other mental health issues.”

He adds, “It has a real impact on productivity, and if we can get Canadian organizations moving on this productivity curve, that’s good for all of us.” For more information, go to www.workhealthlife.com. - Jon Rohr

**HACHBORN INDUCTED INTO CANADIAN BUSINESS HALL OF FAME**

Walter J. Hachborn, Co-Founder of Home Hardware Stores Limited, has been inducted as a Companion of the Order of the Business Hall of Fame. Established in 1979 by the Junior Achievement of Canada Foundation, the award celebrates the extraordinary lifetime achievements of Canada’s foremost business owners. “Walter’s innovation, hard work and commitment have led him to be recognized by many as a true Canadian business legend. Walter’s reach extends past just Home Hardware - he has influenced the Canadian hardware industry as a whole,” said Paul Straus, President Home Hardware Stores Limited.

Over the course of his almost 80 year career, Walter dedicated his life to a vision of helping Canadians grow their businesses while maintaining individual ownership. His leadership and entrepreneurialism have had tremendous impact on the national hardware industry and the survival of the independent home improvement retailer in Canada. “Our Inductees are leading examples of achievement in business and in life. By celebrating these remarkable individuals we will inspire young Canadians to develop the business skills that they need to become Canada’s next generation of leaders,” said Keith Publicover, President and CEO, Junior Achievement of Canada.

The award was accepted by Paul Straus, President of Home Hardware Stores Limited on behalf of Walter Hachborn.
According to the GSP Group’s website, their mission involves planning, urban design, and landscape architecture. And that’s all true, of course.

But if you sit with GSP founders Bill Green, Chris Pidgeon and Glenn Scheels, in their large-windowed boardroom that looks out over the heart of Kitchener, it doesn’t take long to realize that their real mission is to revitalize the most important parts of the cities in Waterloo Region, as well as other urban centres further abroad.

Their footprint is everywhere in Waterloo Region and Guelph, especially in the hearts of the cities, the areas that have been transformed from problem to potential in the past few years.

In Kitchener’s hub, alone, GSP has played a key planning role in the Kaufman Footwear building, the University of Waterloo Health Services Campus, the 1 Victoria condominium, and Kitchener’s Multi Modal Transit Hub. Scheels points out that “we’ve worked on all four corners of King and Victoria.”

Take those projects away from the heart of Kitchener and what do you have left? A field of empty dreams, perhaps – but GSP’s team has ensured that the dreams of Kitchener visionaries are anything but empty.
Founded in green beer
GSP Group got its start over green beer in a pub on St. Patrick’s Day, 1995, according to Chris Pidgeon. He, Green and Scheels knew each other as fellow planning consultants, and somehow the green suds inspired a shared vision. Glenn Scheels says, “we wanted to create a really great planning consultancy that would focus on this area, and would grow through this area. We knew Waterloo region was starting to become an area of growth and activity. We knew this was a good opportunity.”

And so it began. Bill Green says, “Glenn and Chris and I were the original shareholders. The three of us were the directors, the management committee, up until five years ago when we expanded the management committee to include two others.”

The ownership model has changed of late. The company that began with eight team members now includes 33, and 14 of them are shareholders, today. The rather cumbersome original name was Green, Scheels, Pidgeon Planning Consultants, but clients simply called them GSP, and the owners went with the flow, adopting new branding as GSP Group.

Five years after the group was founded, they moved to their ideally situated headquarters at 72 Victoria Suite, in a renovated industrial building. Pidgeon laughs that they looked at that site first, then considered “50 properties,” and finally came right back to 72 Victoria. Considering the amount of work they have carried out in their immediate neighbourhood, it was a propitious choice.

Focus on service
Originally, Green held the post as President, but he is stepping back in a rather undefined way – he rejects the idea of retirement – and Pidgeon now holds the title.

But it’s clear that titles don’t matter much in this company that is celebrating 20 years of success. Green says the focus is on “service” – success should follow. “We’ve served our client base very well. We have hired and built a very good team, who are all about service.” Scheels adds, “We put an awful lot of importance on our hiring. We have created a good environment for them to work in.”

Over the two decades, their mandate has expanded. Scheels says, “We started out doing primarily land use planning. We branched into landscape architecture and urban design,”

“We knew Waterloo region was starting to become an area of growth and activity. We knew this was a good opportunity.”

A talented addition to a winning team
KPMG is pleased to announce that Rob Lamka has joined the firm as Canadian Tax Partner in our Waterloo office. Bringing almost 20 years of experience in professional services to public and private technology, manufacturing, distribution and real estate companies.

Rob joins a talented local team of Tax professionals. We offer in-depth knowledge in Canadian, U.S., international and specialty tax matters – advice and planning tailored to your business.

Connect with Rob at 519-747-8865 or rlamka@kpmg.ca

kpmg.ca

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Members of the GSP management team (from left): Chris Pidgeon, Principal Planner; Steve Weaver, Senior Planner; Brenda Khes, Hamilton Associate, Senior Planner; Chris McBride, Landscape Architect Practice Lead; Bill Green, Principal Planner; Glenn Scheels, Principal Planner; Eric Sauleskie, Associate Senior Planner; Brandon Flewelling, Senior Planner; Melissa Laming, Accounting and Office Manager; and Hugh Handy, Associate Senior Planner.
recently acquiring a company that specializes in designing cemeteries – Hilton Landmarks Inc., founded by Rob Hilton, who remains with GSP, along with several members of his team.

The three-pronged skill set “gave us the ability to look at the three-dimensional development of the city,” Scheels adds. The GSP team is required to consider “what could and should happen” in the projects in which they are involved.

Their influence is not limited to Waterloo Region, although they are involved in a surprisingly number of key projects in the region. The company also has a three-person office in Hamilton, and they have also consulted on major projects in London, Stratford, the Niagara Peninsula – in fact, to quote Pidgeon, “from Windsor to Fort Erie to Barrie to Own Sound to Richmond Hill… but Waterloo Region is still our base.”

**Greenfield, brownfield**

But there is no doubt that one area of great importance to GSP is the neighbourhood in which they live – the hub of Kitchener.

Pidgeon notes that “we moved here before” the decision was made by city council to commit significant resources to the salvation of the city centre, including a $110 million
economic development fund. “We’ve been able to watch the transformation of downtown.” However, that sounds a lot more passive than their actual involvement in urban core renewal.

But while they have consulted on major revitalization and brownfield projects, GSP also works in greenfield development – although the proportions have shifted from their earliest days, with the majority of work now involving revitalization. Sometimes, that involves working with historic buildings – such as the Cambridge Mill. In other cases, the buildings are relatively new, but will be re-purposed – such as the former Blackberry buildings that have been purchased by Michael Wekerle. GSP has the challenge of transforming a group of office buildings into a multi-purpose community.

Pidgeon says that a key part of their skill set, from the very beginning, was the ability to recognize opportunity.

Scheels adds that “what sets us apart are the public spaces we have done,” citing the new entrance to Victoria Park in Kitchener, and the Uptown Waterloo public square at the Shops at Waterloo Town Square.

**Light Rail Transit**

There is no question that the much-discussed ION Light Rail Transit project is a key to the revitalization of Waterloo and Kitchener. But what impact will the LRT have in the long term?

Green says, “The LRT is going to be a very positive thing. Redevelopment in the downtown core is going to be accelerated.” In fact, he says, “people are trying to assemble sites for redevelopment.”

However, Green says that the changes in the wind – or on the rails – will be dramatic in the core, but limited geographically. “The biggest challenge is the market threshold and land supply,” he says. “The corridor is only a block deep.” He points to the fact that, beyond Park Street to the west, “things aren’t going to change,” and that the city intends to protect those neighbourhoods from change.

So while the LRT will indeed change the city cores, Green believes that impact will not be felt beyond a block, on either side.

Scheels suggests that one area that will experience huge change will be the Schneiders lands, once home to the recently-closed Schneiders Meats plant. “There’s a significant opportunity to have an entirely new neighbourhood there, focused around the LRT development,” he says.
New challenges

New projects, new challenges and new visions are the lifeblood of GSP Group. Although the three founders are celebrating their 20th anniversary, they are looking back only briefly – their real focus is on the future. They have new projects, and an entirely new branch of the company – Hilton Landmarks. Pidgeon explains that acquisition as “a completely different business... a completely different opportunity.”

Scheels points to the significant potential for revitalization in Waterloo, involving the former Blackberry properties at Phillip and Columbia in Waterloo, which will see “a much greater variety of uses,” than when they were built in the 1970s and 1980s.

Scheels cites that project – dubbed WIN (Waterloo Innovation Network by Wekerle and his CEO, former Waterloo Mayor Brenda Halloran) – as one of the “really exciting” projects now underway.

“You’ll see that whole area transform into a more mixed and diverse neighbourhood,” he says. Green adds, “not just office use,” and Pidgeon chimes in: “services, restaurants.” Clearly, they are genuinely excited by the plans.

Pidgeon comments on lands near the Blackberry buildings, greenfield sites north of the University of Waterloo that are owned by the university and slotted for development. Clearly,
for urban planners with a vision, there is a lot of empty space on the urban canvas of Waterloo Region.

The three senior planners see change everywhere. They have been involved in condominium and loft developments, including the Arrow Lofts, and they believe the shift to condos is sustainable – the market crosses demographic categories, including young professionals, boomers, and the newly retired alike. Although Pidgeon makes the point that “there is still a market for family housing,” and Green argues that the conflict about greenfield development on the urban fringe is not yet settled, with the region wanting to stop development, and developers arguing there is a need to build more single family homes.

The GSP planners seem to show some sympathy for some development; says Pidgeon, “we cannot accommodate projected population growth through re-urbanization,” and he notes that people’s chosen lifestyles and family lives must be considered. “Not everyone is going to live downtown,” he adds.

But while GSP Group will continue to be involved in greenfield projects, Pidgeon says, “we see a lot of brownfield development.” The three men point to projects in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, sites they refer to as “jewels”, “catalysts” and “transformative”. In other words, they will make a fundamental difference to the community – making the kind of impact the GSP has been having on important urban projects for the past 20 years.

So while the LRT will indeed change the city cores, Green believes that impact will not be felt beyond a block, on either side.

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ON JUNE 11, TWO FOREST HEIGHTS TEACHERS, Robert Waldeck and Mark Tonin along with a cinematographer Erik O’Neill will be debuting Waldeck’s fifth documentary on Jamland. Jamland is a by-invitation-only mini-music festival that is held in the woods along the Nith River by New Dundee. It was the brain child of Tonin and land owner Joni Hatashita. Waldeck’s most recent work was on aboriginal artist Carl Beam, from Manitoulin Island, who had a retrospective at the National Gallery. It premiered there and also was screened as part of the Real Artist Film Festival at the Bell Light Box, produced by Canadian Art Magazine. It was also screened at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Waldeck is enthralled about the Jamland documentary: “It’s been a great project to work on.” He says that he now hopes the project – and Jamland TV, the website associated with the documentary – will have a continuing life so “down the road so maybe we can build on this and grow further. We’re brain storming around how we can spin this thing into something that has some legs and is sustainable.”

The documentary surrounds three key human interest stories, all wrapped around the Jamland theme and jam music. Tonin, who is a business teacher and has been involved in community educational programs for youth, such as Junior Achievement, says he hasn’t “felt this excited about a creative project since Jamland itself was created. This has been a really fun project for me - I never thought I would make a film in my life.” The film debuts June 11 at the Princess

CELEBRATING THE YEARS 1995-2015

July 17th marks 20 years since Susan Taves joined BDO to become the Partner leading the Financial Restructuring Services division for Kitchener and area.

Since 1995, she and her team have worked with hundreds of companies and thousands of individuals to manage change. They have worked with many other professionals and advisors while assisting those in financial distress.

Since 2000, she has served in various leadership and management roles within BDO, including national and regional responsibilities, as well as oversight of offices from Welland to Owen Sound and Windsor.

After two decades, Susan is retiring from BDO on September 30th to start a second chapter of board work and consulting.

She has enjoyed her years at BDO and is proud of many individuals, successes and achievements.

The BDO team looks forward to continuing to assist financially challenged individuals and businesses in Kitchener/Waterloo and Southern Ontario.

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www.bdo.ca
Cinema, Waterloo. Tickets are available at jamland.tv.

**Technology Entrepreneur and Philanthropist**

Mike Lazaridis (above) has pledged $20 million to Wilfrid Laurier University to create a management institute that will enhance business programs and support the growth of a globally competitive technology industry in Canada. The Ontario government is providing $15 million to support the initiative, as announced in Thursday's provincial budget.

The Lazaridis Institute will be housed in the $103-million, state-of-the-art Global Innovation Exchange.

**The University of Guelph’s** Ontario Veterinary College placed fourth worldwide and tops in Canada in a new global ranking of veterinary schools. This year’s ranking by Quacquarelli Symonds includes nearly 900 univer-
sities in various categories. Veterinary science schools around the world were included for the first time this year.

**AN INVITATION ONLY EVENT** at Bingemans Conference Centre, was held to honour local, remarkable women in business. Honourees included (from left) Debora Ritchie, recognized for Community and Charitable Giving, Jamie Burton, recognized for Innovation and Global Growth, and Willie Martin, recognized for Expansion and Growth in Small Business.

Guest speaker at the event was Elizabeth Witmer, Chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

**WATERLOO-BASED NAVTECH** has acquired **DW International**. The acquisition of DWI is part of Navtech's continued investment strategy to accelerate global growth and expand its product and service offerings. Based in the UK, DWI is an industry leader of Performance Based Navigation solutions.

Navtech also announced a partnership of with **Airbus**, to integrate electronic flight bag applications into Airbus aircraft.

A **$1.6-MILLION GIFT TO UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO and Technion-Israel Institute of Technology** by **The Gerald Schwartz & Heather Reisman Foundation** is enabling world-changing research in a range of disciplines, including lung diseases and quantum computing.

**SATURN POWER INC, OF NEW HAMBURG**, has completed construction of the **10 MW David Brown Solar Park Project** near Ingleside, Ontario. The Solar Park is expected to produce 16.8 Gigawatt hours of energy annually, enough to power 1800 households.

**PEACWORKS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS** of Waterloo has been recognized for creating the most positive overall social and environmental impact by the nonprofit **B Lab** with the release of the fourth annual ‘B Corp Best for the World’ list. In addition to ‘Best for the World’ overall impact, PeaceWorks was also recognized as ‘Best for the Worker’ and ‘Best for Community’. The ‘Best for the World’ lists honour businesses that earned an overall score in the top 10% of more than 1,200 Certified B Corporations from over 120 industries.

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### A EcoSystem Equation:

it’s not just the part about [business and economics] + not simply the part about [technological advances and research] + not only the part focused on [education and personal development] + more than the part about [engaging government and changing dogma]

\[ \text{it’s the SUM of these parts } \times \text{ by the character, charisma and drive of an entrepreneur} \]

**the part we’re writing about!**

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

Alan Broadbent, Chairman and CEO of Avana Capital Corporation. Born says, “Alan approached me and asked if I would start an institute with him. His words were ‘if I could free you up to do what you do, what would it look like?’ And he’s been the chair of Tamarack ever since.”

And so, the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement was created, founded by Born, with the support of Broadbent.

Says Born, “Our work is to come in and help cities, to figure out how to work together around major social issues that are facing them, and to make [the city’s social service structures] more resilient, and effective.”

He adds, “We want to talk to you about how whole cities work together to create a healthy community. And let’s work through the process – we call it ‘collective impact.’

The ultimate objective is world-changing. According to Born – and right at the top of Tamarack’s self-description on its website – “Founded in 2001, Tamarack is a charity that develops and supports learning communities to help people collaborate and to co-generate knowledge that solves complex community challenges. Our deep hope is to end poverty in Canada.”

Tamarack has several action arms. One, named “Vibrant Communities Canada”, now counts 47 Canadian cities as members, and 63 more than are affiliated with the network. Vibrant Communities Canada is described as “a Learning Community for cities with comprehensive poverty reduction strategies led by multi sector roundtables.” Born says that poverty reduction is a primary focus on this program, which has been in existence for more than a decade. The communities that are formal members – which include Waterloo Region – each pay $1500 to support the program; more importantly, says Born, they “have to commit to deep learning and to a joint evaluation process, and to follow the core principles of vibrant learning community, in terms of how we lay out the work of a whole city coming together to reduce poverty.”

Born says that when it comes to working with cities, “we’re an institute for community engagement. Our job is to make the work of community change, easier and more effective.”

He adds, “We’re particularly interested in the kind of community change that is large scale – systems change, that allows people to collaborate.”

Other Tamarack programs differ in methodology, but not in ultimate intent. There is “Tamarack CCI (Communities Collaborating for Impact)”, a learning community for collaborative leaders utilizing a multi-sector approach to solve complex challenges including Alumni of Tamarack’s workshops and institutes. There is also “Seeking Community,” described as “a learning community for participants of conversations held to recapture the idea of community and make it a guiding force in organizing our neighbourhoods and institutions; and, for envisioning policies that foster wellbeing.” Tamarack also offers what they describe as “custom services”, tailored specifically to meet the needs of individual clients.

Born is utterly enthusiastic about Tamarack, but he admits that he initially struggled with Broadbent’s proposal; and he also admits that some of his initial fears were well-founded.

When Broadbent offered to back an organization headed by Born, “It wasn’t that easy for me to say ‘yes’, because when
you are asked a question like that, all of your self doubt arises at once. So I had a little bit of a crisis answering that question.”

Born adds that “I knew what it would take.” He envisioned a great deal of time spent on the road, although he had children. He was right. “My doctor did the math for me – he figured out I’d been on 1,200 planes in the last 10 years.”

A lot of those were domestic flights, but in the past two years, says Born, “our board has allowed us to go into the United States, so we’ve been doing more support of cities in

the United States. On occasion we accept global activities, primarily in Australia and New Zealand. As well, I was in India last year.”

At the time of this interview, Born had just returned from a five-week teaching stint in Australia. “It was a nine event tour. We sold 800 tickets, $275 a ticket. That’s how we operate and pay for it. It’s one of the ways we do it, because we don’t receive a lot of government funding.”

Almost every statement describing Tamarack Institute involves the work “learning”. And at the heart of the organization is what Born calls “a learning centre”, which operates in a number of ways. First, says Born, “We run exceptional face to face events. In the last eight months every event has been over-subscribed. We’re running four national events this spring alone. So every month there is a national event.”

He says that people come from all over the world – increasingly including Australians and New Zealanders.

The learning centre has “16,000 members – these are people who sign up for our material and ask us to communicate with them regularly. Of those 16,000, around 70% are women who are executive directors, or upper middle management of not-for-profit organizations or government.”

Born describes Tamarack’s “primary audience” as thought leaders and innovators – “Those are the two factors of organizations who are interested in large scale change. They’re interested in changing their city, not just in moving their issue
forward. They want the whole thing. They want the region to be a place where people with disabilities thrive. They want to be the best place for an aboriginal person to live. They want to make their city the lowest level of poverty in Canada. That’s the kind of thinking that almost all of our learners are after.”

“These, he says, are not pipe dreams. “It’s very possible.”

As well, Tamarack produces publications, and also runs courses and offers resources online, through five related websites.

Tamarack is no stranger to on-line connections. In fact, says Born, the organization with 18 staff members located across Canada is “very virtual. We just decided that our staff was committing so much we wanted to let them to live where they wanted to live. So we invested in technology so we could just press a button and see each other, and then we said either work from home or we’ll rent you office space within walking distance of your home. That was our goal - that every staff could walk to work, and now we just build our organization that way. It’s been two years. We fly everybody in, every two months, for a two-day team meeting. Cause communication is key to us, learning is key to us.”

Tamarack tracks its results, collecting information on how effective collaboration on a large scale has been, on the impact made, on effectiveness in “deepening” community; on poverty reduction; and on community change.

There’s no question that the program has been effective, he says, When the Vibrant Communities program was initiated, the goal was to help 5,000 families move out of poverty; within eight years, they had multiplied that impact many times over.

And so, says Born, while his personal concerns were well founded, it has been worth it. “If I had my ‘druthers’, I’d be spending all of my time here in Waterloo Region. I love this place. The thing I’ve given up, more than anything, is the deep connection that I had here. Now, I’m never home for more than two weeks at a time. That’s taken a toll.”

But he insists, “I don’t regret it, because it’s not a sacrifice, it’s an honour. It feels like a calling to me, and when you are called to do something, you just do it. I don’t live life ever with regret. I feel honoured that I’ve been called to work at something that has the potential for large scale change.”

But he adds that his work “isn’t any more important than the work that people are doing here to help people who are living in poverty on the streets, helping people with disabilities live better lives. We need all kinds of people to make change happen and to make this a better world.”

*
Sometime in 1998, Paul Born had an epiphany. In fact, maybe more than one. Born was a founder of CODA – the Community Opportunities Development Association – where he had seen significant success, building the organization from a two-person operation to an service that employed 80, and provided key social services to people in need, in Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph and beyond.

In 1998, CODA merged with Lutherwood. Born remembers, “That was the time when there was so much downloading to local governments, and we were finding that local governments was absorbing so many of the services, and we felt it very important that we have a very strong community player... We created this mega charity, [called] Lutherwood/CODA at the time,” now known as Lutherwood.

He adds, “It’s now over a $30 million charity. We were $8 million when we merged.”

As most Waterloo Region residents know, Lutherwood has continued to provide important service to the community.

However, Born went in a different direction – and that was the first epiphany. “I had this idea that we wanted to figure out how you actually reduced poverty, not just help people who are in poverty be better poor.”

“I had this idea that we wanted to figure out how you actually reduced poverty, not just help people who are in poverty be better poor.”

His second revelation came after a health services networking meeting in Orangeville. He was approached by a prominent health official who admitted that he’d been attending health care meetings for 15 years, but while they had introduced the players to one another, and built some networks, the meetings had never led to any concrete results.

Born realized there was an unfulfilled need to tackle the systemic reasons for poverty and its associated ills, and to move official bodies out of inertia into action.

His first response was a program called Opportunities 2000, focused on Waterloo Region. Says Born, “We ran this campaign all through to the end of 2001, and the goal was to create the lowest level of poverty in Canada. And just about everybody who was anybody came together – all the agencies came together.”

Born says proudly that “we won the United Nations top 40 projects in the world.”

He recalls, “We raised lots of local money.” Some key local leaders included Rick Brock, Jim Gordon of RBC, and regional chair Ken Seiling. Says Born, “It had tremendous success.”

One other businessperson who backed Born’s vision was
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