



# GNCC

GREATER NIAGARA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# 2021 NBAA

Niagara Business Achievement Awards

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An Evening Celebrating  
Business Excellence

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

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# AGENDA

## **Master of Ceremonies**

Tim Denis, Newstalk 610 CKTB

## **Greetings from GNCC**

Mishka Balsom

## **Welcome from Title Sponsor**

Stephen Otten, Regional Vice President, Business Banking, Meridian Credit Union

## **AWARDS**

### **Entrepreneur of the Year**

sponsored by Entrepreneurs' Organization

### **Young Professional of the Year**

sponsored by Bell

### **Outstanding New Business**

### **Excellence in Business:**

#### **Up to 10 Employees**

sponsored by MNP LLP

### **Excellence in Business:**

#### **11 or More Employees**

sponsored by Alectra

### **Excellence in Business: Not-for-Profit**

### **Community Leadership Award**

sponsored by RBC

### **Technology & Innovation Award**

sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

### **Excellence in Manufacturing**

sponsored by Niagara Region Economic Development

### **Excellence in Tourism & Hospitality**

sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

### **Environmental Leadership Award**

### **Excellence in Agribusiness, Farming & Rural Achievement**

### **Innovative Leaders Award**

sponsored by Walker Industries

### **Business of the Year Award**

sponsored by  
Meridian Credit Union

### **Closing Remarks**



#2021NBAA

Cheer on the finalists and congratulate the winners!  
Tag us @The\_GNCC

# ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by  
Entrepreneurs' Organization

🐦 @EOCanada\_



Entrepreneurs'  
Organization

RECIPIENT:

**Geoff Dillon, Dillon's Small Batch Distillers**

🐦 @dillonsdistills

When the COVID-19 pandemic first hit our shores, Geoff Dillon wondered how he could help — and he made a rapid transition from distiller of fine spirits to manufacturer of free disinfectant and hand sanitizer. For this extraordinary transition and community service, for selflessly giving to a community in dire need, and for working so hard to keep those we depend upon safe, Geoff Dillon and his team at Dillon's Distillery are thoroughly deserving of this award.



*Dillon's*  
SMALL BATCH  
- Distillers -



# YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Bell

🐦 @Bell



FINALIST:

**Emily Butko Wallis,**  
Signature Sign & Images  
🐦 @Signature\_Sign



Emily Butko Wallis of Signature Sign and Image has had nothing short of an interesting career path. Graduating with an Honours Degree of Fine Arts from University of Toronto, she went on to complete an advanced diploma in Graphic Design and Production from Niagara College, paying her way through post-secondary as a freelance graphic designer, writer and small business consultant. Butko

Wallis made the difficult to decision to leave her role in Public Health to join the family business alongside her husband and his parents.

At Signature Sign and Image in Niagara Falls, she quickly grew from Jr. Graphic Designer to take on larger roles such as safety representative, project manager, business development, sales, human resources and more. Within three short years, she helped restructure the business to become more profitable and opportunistic.

Butko Wallis has been recognized for various achievements in graphic design, writing, sign making and design from 2014 through 2019, being named Sign Maker of the Year at least three times. She is currently on the Board of Directors for the Sign Association of Canada's Young Professional Network and a number of other impressive associations and committees.

Over the years, Butko Wallis has frequently partnered with Niagara College to talk to students and classrooms, about the pursuit of careers in the signs and visual communications careers in the sign industry. She recognizes the importance of promoting these careers to young people and showing them that it is a viable opportunity for growth, continued learning and development.

Her promise and vision for the future is to continue to volunteer her time to spread awareness about the importance and growth potential within the sign industry. She hopes to further her own knowledge to promote the welfare and safety of employees while contributing to the visual landscape of the Niagara region.



# YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Bell

🐦 @Bell



FINALIST:

**Meghan Chayka,**

Stathletes

🐦 @HockeyAnalytics

🐦 @MeghanChayka

Meghan Chayka is an entrepreneur and the co-founder of Stathletes, a sports analytics and insights business that provides industry leading data precision within the sport of hockey. She has successfully built a team in Niagara, Waterloo and Toronto, working on creating the new era of sports technology.



Having a wide variety of clients, Chayka was named in the 2018/2019 season Top Young Entrepreneur of the Year (Ontario Chamber of Commerce), Top 40 under 40 (The Athletic NHL), and on the Top 100 of Power & Influence in the Hockey News. At Rotman, she plays a key role in shaping the data science education and research through her work at the TD Management Data and Analytics Lab, including involvement in external, internal, and student-led events focused on data science.

A well-rounded individual, Chayka has spent her time volunteering for the 2020 Hockey Analytics Night in Canada in ongoing free events to connect the analytics and academic community during the pandemic. She has put together COVID-19 data for the Toronto Health Community and built a dashboard to prepare for PPE requirements.

Chayka is part of the Board of Ivey MSc, Task Force of Women in Sports for the State of Michigan. Her vision and promise for the future is to become a dominant international brand in sports analytics. She is committed to expanding her business in Niagara, leveraging the universities and resources of the region.

**STATHLETES**

# YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Bell

🐦 @Bell



FINALIST:

**Brandon Currie,**  
C.R. Smith Financial  
🐦 @BCurrieFinance



Brandon Currie, a family man and active member of the Niagara community is particularly well-versed in the Financial Sector, currently working for C.R. Smith Financial (Sun Life) for the past five years. Spending more than 10 years in the industry, Currie has split his time with FirstOntario Credit Unkion and Meridian prior to his current role.

Some of his notable volunteer efforts include being an active participant in the Wise Guys Charity fund, having raised over \$3.9 million for the Niagara Community, 100% done by volunteers. He has also been involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Community Care since the age of 16. Currie was most recently nominated for the Board of Directors for the Foster Festival.

In his third year at C.R Smith Financial, Currie was only 1 of 700 advisors to qualify out of 3,000 nationally, for Sun Life's National Convention. Further, he has qualified for Sun Life's Order of Merit every single year he has been employed at C.R. Smith Financial, to qualify for this award successful winners must meet a minimum sales production, which is set nationally by Sun Life. Prior, Currie won top Health Sales Advisor for the region along with top wealth sales for an advisor under five years. Most notably, he won the 40 Under 40 Award in 2015.

In addition to his community and volunteer work, Currie is committed to his continued education, where he sits in the elite top 2% of advisors holding a number of exclusive these designations nationally. Currie's promise and vision for the future is to continuously evolve in the industry and help guide his clients to financial success.



# YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by BELL

🐦 @Bell



FINALIST:

**Christopher Paley,**  
Halucha Cost Consulting Inc  
[in /company/halucha-cost-consulting-inc/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/halucha-cost-consulting-inc/)



Paley, a cost consultant at Halucha Cost Consulting (HCC), had initially been unaware of this line of work until meeting his current business partner Jim Halucha, during his employment at the Welland Recreational Canal Corporation as the Facilities Manager.

Prior to working in Welland, Paley received a Bachelor of Arts in Economics at the University of British Columbia. He later met Halucha and started working for him full time while working towards an advanced diploma in Construction Engineering Technology. Due to his education in economics and interest in construction, the cost consultant opportunity seemed like a perfect fit for Paley. He was eventually promoted to Quantity Surveyor and Cost Consultant, earning various designations.

During his time at HCC, Paley has been involved in over 150 projects, including over 1 billion dollars in project value over the last three years. Since finding his passion, Paley was promoted to VP of HCC and accepted an become a partner, where has increased revenue by a whopping 650%.

Paley graduated at the top of his class in the Construction Engineering Technology program at Niagara College and has been recognized for a number of other technical achievements. His commitment to the future includes continuous professional development through education and self-directed learning.

The plan at HCC, is to partner with clients to help them succeed on their projects with a dedication to superior customer service and success-driven results. Paley's portfolio also includes the recent launch of a land development firm alongside his partner, several properties within Niagara and part ownership of Polar Park Brewing Co. in Edmonton.



# OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS

FINALIST:

**Accel North**

🐦 @Accel\_North

**ACCEL NORTH**  
Work. Meet. Grow.

Accel North is Niagara's premier destination for flexible workspaces and coworking, boasting a motivating, and eco-friendly space that is dedicated to providing members with the opportunity to work, meet and grow. The goal is to provide flexible membership options for entrepreneurs, solopreneurs, working professionals, remote workers, start-up companies and small businesses to scale their business from a single co-work desk to private office or turnkey suite, based on their ever-changing business needs.



The multi-story building includes up-to-date renovations with new offices, meeting and board rooms and a large event space. Some other additional amenities include, free coffee, tea, water along with high-speed internet and mail services as part of the all-inclusive package. Accel North currently has just under 50 active members, which could not have been made possible without the efforts of the hard-working team. At this time, the new workspaces are almost sold-out, while renovations are being expanded to support more remote workers, entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Accel North's continued commitment is to be the premier destination for companies to have flexible workspace options that fit their individual and growing business needs. Accel North promises the best-in class, fully renovated spaces that are unmatched in the Niagara Region. Not only are the spaces bright and colourful, but they are well-maintained with strict cleanliness standards. The commitment at Accel North extends beyond their members, with a local-first approach, AC is proud to support the community.



# OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS

FINALIST:

## Bella Painters

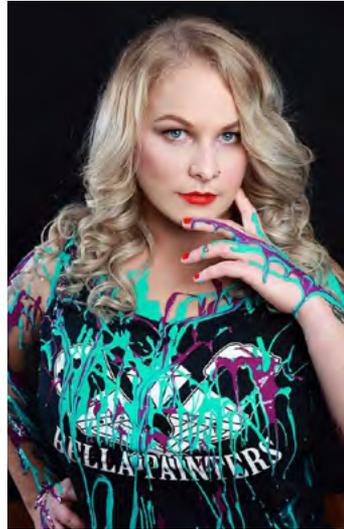
@bellapaintersinc



Bella painters is a team of professional painters servicing residential and commercial clients with the experience and tools to make any painting project a hit. The company is owned and operated by Michelle Borgatti.

By taking a customer-first approach, the team ensures they make the clients feel comfortable when they are inside the home or on the job, making sure the job is completed to their liking. Bella Painters uses a combination of expert skills, knowledge and products to take on new projects and complete them in a timely, effective and accurate manner.

The business has been nominated for multiple Readers' Choice Awards in 2017 and has seen large success over the years, respectively in large part to their bookkeeper, who handles all of the financials so the focus can be on the projects at hand.



Bella Painters' commitment to the future is to one day have multiple crews, navigated by strong leaders that will be personally trained by the owner Michelle, learning and applying her expert techniques. They hope to see employee retention through not only reward, but job satisfaction.

Bella painters plans to continue to donate to local charities and one day, have a charity set up in Bella's name to help guide young women to be strong and successful.

# OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS

FINALIST:

## Essentials Cremation and Burial Services Inc

🐦 @EssentialsCBS



Essentials Cremation and Burial Services opened three and a half years ago, is family owned and operated with Krystal Riddell leading the team. It is a licensed funeral establishment that give families an alternative choice. The establishment boasts a beautiful and comforting space for families to visit and arrange services for their loved ones. Should families request that they assist with the planning and directing of the service, Essentials supports the Niagara community by partnering with local businesses to utilize their venues and services.



Riddell is proud of the growth her business has seen over the past three years, as a large number of families come to Essentials through referral, it indicates excellence in service. Upon opening Essentials, the plan was to care for five families per month. After the first year, they ended up serving 74 families and nearly 200 closing in on their third year. The business is based on endless hard work and dedication by the whole team and family. Essentials' philosophy and core values meet the financial and emotional needs of families seeking their services in a time of need.

Essentials is known for providing the best aftercare to the family available in this type of industry, seen through their Google reviews and client testimonials. From beginning to end, the Essentials team ensures to be there every step of the way to provide the most professional and compassionate service possible during the most difficult of times. As a small business owner, Riddell recognizes the importance of giving back to the community where she can.



Riddell is involved in a number of organizations, including sitting as the current President of the Niagara District Funeral Service Association. She could not be more pleased with the growth and success her business has achieved. The plan for the future of Essentials is to expand and continue to serve and care for local families in need.

# OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS

FINALIST:

## Frontier Barbers & Company

@FrontierBarbers



Frontier Barbers & Company is a family-owned local business run by newly-weds Matthew and Brittney Bodis. Frontier strives to offer a one-of-a-kind experience which guarantees to satisfy the urban gentleman providing more than just a haircut; the barbershop provides an unforgettable experience. Featuring quality haircuts, head massages, straight blade shaves and beard trims, along with the standard barbershop services, Frontier likes to raise the bar. The barbershop offers an atmosphere like no other, equipped with a fully licensed bar stocked with an assortment of beverages.



The barbershop has seen some notable successes. Since opening in 2019, Frontier has seen over 1600 unique clients. They are best known for their friendly service, quality cuts and unique product line and merchandise with the Frontier Brand. One of the Bodis' proudest achievements was the ability to takeover a corner of St. Catharines, previously known as an eyesore and turning it into a location people are excited to visit.



Frontier Barbers & Company strives for excellence in business in different avenues including their clients, staff and the local community. The Bodis' go above and beyond to ensure customers feel welcome and are treated as friends and family. Top of the line service is offered at reasonable prices and the staff is both professional and respectful. The business also offers educational opportunities and strives to invest in the best interest of all team members, recognizing both work and life balance.

The Bodis' vision and promise for the future is to continue to work towards building multiple locations for Frontier throughout the Niagara region. They are constantly working on crafting specialty products with a focus on education and development for all staff and partners.

# OUTSTANDING NEW BUSINESS

FINALIST:

**Victory & Co.**

**f** victoryandco



Established in 2019, Victory & Co. believes that human resource departments have the biggest opportunity to impact the overall success of an organization through ensuring the right hiring process, engagement and contributions. The team is passionate about client success, creating exceptional workplace culture and improving the communities in which we live and work.

Victory & Co. works with small to mid-sized organizations to create human resource strategies for talent acquisition, total rewards, employee relations, and works to improve organizational culture through coaching, engagement and performance strategies, and hiring top talent.

Victory & Co. brought DisruptHR event to Niagara with the goal to energize, inform and empower business leaders and human resource professionals through this global information exchange network. In November 2019, 15 speakers each had 5 minutes to teach the sold-out crowd how to change their thinking around the future of work and leadership. This annual event will continue to challenge Niagara to embrace forward thinking human resources and leadership strategies.



The company has seen success in business, specifically working Overall Net Promoter Score (NPS): 95 Overall Client Satisfaction Score (OSAT): 95 Year Over Year Client Growth to date and 267% First DisruptHR event, which was sold out. Victory and Co. works with clients to create performance targets and total rewards plans that align with the organization's strategic plan. This is executed by setting up employees for success with clear expectations and goals for moving forward.

Victory & Co's vision and promise for the future is to continue to lead the way in human resources and leadership strategies by working with leaders to improve their small to mid-sized businesses and their employee experiences, while coaching and mentoring clients to become capable leaders for today and tomorrow.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: UP TO 10 EMPLOYEES

Sponsored by MNP LLP

🐦 @MNP\_LLIP



FINALIST:

**Giant Shoe Creative Agency**

📍 @giantshoecreative



At Giant Shoe Creative, Brad Moore and his team create tailored marketing for growing companies who want to gain exposure and boost sales for their business. Businesses need a clear and responsive marketing plan but oftentimes, the team is busy with other daily communications work and that is where Giant Shoe comes in to save the day.

Since day one, the agency's mission has been to bring their client's goals to life through, strategic and creative solutions. Ultimately, through these victories, Giant Shoe is able to grow their internal capabilities and strength external relationships with valued partners. The business itself, is built on creative and adaptive solutions that not only help them stand out but, help their clients to stand out as well.

Relying on psychology and design, Giant Shoe is able to clear away the noise for a direct path from client to customer. While the past year has seen many diverse challenges for businesses, the agency has had the opportunity to grow while bringing their client's online and building digital infrastructure right into their processes. By doing this, the agency has generated new revenue streams and freed up more of the client's time to focus on their businesses.

The team recognizes that positioning is the main element in today's marketing strategy. Giant Shoe hyper-focuses on their mission to ensure that the right conversation is happening with the right customer every time. The team has seen success in that, not a single one of their clients have had to shut down their business.

Giant Shoe offers its full marketing services to The Shoebox Project St. Catharines program by completing video, social media, graphic design and content marketing for the charity. The Shoebox Project St. Catharines donated over 1000 shoeboxes valued over \$50 each to women in need and/or in crisis.



# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: UP TO 10 EMPLOYEES

Sponsored by MNP LLP

🐦 @MNP\_LLLP



FINALIST:

**Intuitive Shipping**

🐦 @ShipIntuitively



Intuitive Shipping Inc. is a software start up specializing in building powerful tools that allow online merchants to execute a strategic approach to shipping. Since inception, the company has helped thousands of merchants worldwide control their shipping costs at checkout, ensuring profit on every order. As ecommerce continues to grow, shipping is a reality for every online store, while the shipping requirements continue to evolve.

At Intuitive, the products are inspired by the merchants they're built for and they work with users regularly to expand features. By working one-on-one with users, Intuitive identified the need for a standalone dimensional shipping app, in 2020 Smart Boxing was born. This is an app that lets online stores charge their customers accurate live rates at checkout, which also gives them the ability to have a predictable profit on every transaction as well as the confidence to sell to anyone in the world.

When the pandemic hit, the Intuitive Shipping app became a go-to solution for businesses across the world. The team worked together tirelessly to support the immense influx of stores moving online. Even with hundreds of unexpected new users, the average support time increased by less than an hour thanks to teamwork. Six months into the pandemic, 99% of these stores remain operational and continue to make profitable sales.

Intuitive Shipping recognizes the importance of mentorship and is proud to provide it to entrepreneurs worldwide, using ecommerce to guide them in the best direction for their goals. Some notable achievements of excellence include the 2020 'Emerging Business' award winner at the Niagara Women in Business Awards, Automate Shipping Profiles (app) recognized as 'Staff Pick' by Shopify's App team and winning the 'Breakthrough' award with ActionCOACHbusiness coaching.



# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: UP TO 10 EMPLOYEES

Sponsored by MNP LLP

🐦 @MNP\_LLIP



FINALIST:

**Osborne Law**

🐦 @OsborneLawGroup



After working for the RCMP and graduating from Dalhousie Law, Steven Osborn began his career as a lawyer with a national law firm in Saskatoon. His former firm opened an office in St. Catharines, when he and his family moved to Niagara, where his practice shifted from class action litigation to real estate, eventually opening his own practice in September of 2016.

As Osborne is not originally from Niagara, he faced challenges like, having limited clientele and referral sources and even had to rely on a line of credit while learning the ins and outs of being a new entrepreneur. Including staffing, bookkeeping, banking, marketing and website development. Through a dedication to customer service, he's been able to set himself apart from other firms by combining a personal connection to clients through continuous networking.

In the first three years, Osborne saw an increase of 1508% when prorated and an increase by 4275% when not. Despite the pandemic, July 2020 was the firm's highest growth month on record for real estate transactions and the business has grown from a staff of one to now, five.

Osborne recognizes that regularly educating his staff to help them grow in their careers and provide excellent service while ensuring to make time for team building. The team relies on software and technology to improve their processes and has evolved to further meet client needs by executing wills and power of attorney by videoconference. Osborne has employed several strategies to diversify and grow his practice.



He is an active member in the community, being a part of organizations such as the Law Society of Ontario, the Lincoln County Law Association and the GNCC. In the past, he has sat on the board of directors for various associations and participates in fundraisers each year. He was also a recipient of the 40 Under 40 Business Achievement Award in 2018.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: 11 EMPLOYEES OR MORE

Sponsored by Alectra

🐦 @alectranews



FINALIST:

**Kraun Electric**

📍 @kraunelectric



Kraun Electric is a full-service electrical contractor, established in 1996. A construction division that handles electrical installations on projects of all sizes. Kraun also provides residential, commercial, and industrial service work for homeowners and businesses. At Kraun, the focus is on providing the best customer experience by hiring great people and having the expertise to get the job done right.

Kraun has seen significant growth in the past five years with a recent acquisition of a location in Hamilton. In the past three years, Kraun has increased its revenue by approximately 75% while the team has grown to over 70 employees, with three well-defined divisions - residential service, industrial/commercial/institutional service and construction.



Despite the pandemic, Kraun Electric remained strong through construction site shutdowns and restrictions on residential work to come out positively on the other side. Kraun relies on adaptability, innovation and determination to keep learning in today's business environment. The team is constantly developing to ensure a wide variety of skills and expertise remains a priority on both the construction and service side, as well as a high rate of customer satisfaction.



Kraun is an active member in the community, being a member of the GNCC, The Niagara Industrial Association, Niagara Construction Association in addition to being a Certified Living Wage Employer at Champion level. President & CEO, Aaron Jones was awarded the 40 Under 40 Business Achievement Award in 2020 and Kraun proudly supports the Canadian Mental Health Association, Hospice Niagara and the McMaster Children's hospital to name a few.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: 11 EMPLOYEES OR MORE

Sponsored by Alectra

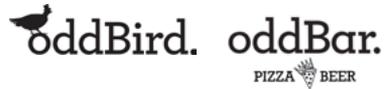
🐦 @alectranews



**oddBird./oddBar.**

@ @oddbird.niagara

@oddbar.niagara



Justin Duc grew up in Niagara-on-the-lake, beginning his career in hospitality in the kitchen at Peller Estates when he was 15. For the next 15 years, he worked for a number of kitchens within the region, obtained his Bachelor of Business Administration went on to obtain his BBA and later travelled across Canada working in Halifax, Banff and Algonquin. Duc gained his first head chef position at 26, at the Tide and Vine Oyster House where he met his business partner Scott White and went on to open their first restaurant, oddBird.

White initially attended Niagara College for the apprenticeship program and later worked in a number of top restaurants in Niagara before moving to Montreal to work at iconic Canadian establishments. In 2017, Duc and White opened the contemporary Canadian bistro, oddBird with technique and roots based in classic French cuisine. Within one year, oddbird had 15 full-time employees and the business was completely debt free.



Despite being approached by investors in their second year of operation, Duc and White opened their second location on their own in 2020, a punk rock pizza and beer bar called oddBar. During the construction phase, the partners were approached by Silversmith Brewing Co. to become food partners, which they accepted. They also eventually partnered up with Grain & Grit Brewery, which allowed them to create an exclusive product 'oddBeer'. These partnerships have been extremely beneficial, in allowing oddBird and oddBar to gain exposure from these businesses through their social media reach and in-house products, which in turn, have driven customers right into the seats of their locations.

Duc and White spend countless hours perfecting their menus to give the best guest experience possible. Although their initial target market was not the tourism industry, they have seen great successes through word of mouth and social media, so they ensure that their dishes are nothing short of instagrammable. Being a relatively small and young company allows the partners to be adaptable and focus on meeting the diverse challenges of today's business landscape.

In the short time that oddBird and oddBar have been open, they have received a number of notable achievements. Some of which include, being featured in, Bon Appetit, BlogTO, Tourism Niagara and The Globe and Mail to name a few. They have also won a number of awards including, TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence and CHCH Awards. The partners have created a series of unique products in collaboration with other local businesses and only plan to continue to grow.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: 11 EMPLOYEES OR MORE

Sponsored by Alectra

🐦 @alectranews



**Rentsync**

(formerly Landlord Web Solutions)

🐦 @teamrentsync



Rentsync formerly known as Landlord Web Solutions, provides marketing software and services for the multifamily industry in both Canada and the U.S. The company offers a leading purpose-built rental marketing platform, which includes a content management system and ad syndication, giving clients the ability to both showcase and advertise their rental portfolio all from one place. Rentsync also offers multifamily clients various marketing services including website design, digital services and lease-up marketing.

The business began building custom websites for landlords. As Rentsync's relationships with some of the industry's biggest companies grew, clients were given direct access to key staff members, including Rentsync's lead software developers. Website development now represents less than 10% of the overall revenue, as they have successfully pivoted to a true SAAS platform with strong monthly recurring revenue and low churn rates.

Today, over 400 mid to enterprise size apartment owners and property managers across Canada and the US, representing over 11,000 apartment buildings and over 1 million rental units use the Rentsync platform. In order to remain at the forefront, the staff continues to educate themselves with the latest technologies and applications.



While software is hyper-competitive, Rentsync was built with limited funding and a laser focus on building software that meets the niche market needs, a focus that helped the company to best understand their customers and respond quickly to market changes. The company now boasts approximately 65% market share of all apartment owners in Canada using their software and have created a diverse workplace to attract some of the best talent within and outside of the region.

In 2019, Canadian Business and Maclean's ranked Rentsync No. 94 on the annual Growth 500 list, the definitive ranking of Canada's Fastest-Growing Companies. Rentsync is also a Niagara Living Wage Employer at the Champion Level, committed to paying all full-time, part-time and contract staff a living wage.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: NOT-FOR-PROFIT

FINALIST:

**Niagara Children's Centre**

🐦 @niagarachildctr



Niagara Children's Centre (NCC) is a not-for-profit, charitable rehabilitation centre serving children and youth with physical, developmental and/or communication delays or disabilities. The core services include, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology and social work. The services are delivered at the centre, at satellite locations, in childcare centres and schools.



With 110 employees NCC has a strong reputation of providing high quality, family-centred services to children and their families with a strong foundation of service excellence, professionalism and leadership. The Centre's guiding values are as follows, children and families come first, excellence and innovation are cornerstones of achievement, teamwork and partnerships are vital and underlying respect.

While NCC is challenged by constrained funding, a growing demand for services and increasing complexity of the needs of children and families, they have not received a base funding from the government in the past ten years. Despite this, NCC has pivoted by enhancing and redesigning their services. Some recent achievements include, serving 5,854 children (10% increase from prior year), 2,716 new referrals for service, transitioned the school board rehabilitation program, implemented an on-line support group for parents, and continued growth for fundraising campaigns to name a few.



The greatest impact for NCC is on the 5,700 children and families who receive services and support. They offer several unique programs in partnership, such as, local, social and recreational programs that support and foster active participation for their clients. Some include, bhallenger baseball, drama Ccub, bike clinics, aquatics programs and more. NCC works closely with other businesses in the community, to provide the best opportunities for their clients.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: NOT-FOR-PROFIT

FINALIST:

**Niagara SPCA & Humane Society**

🐦 @Niagara\_SPCA



The Niagara SPCA & Humane Society exists to help stray or abandoned animals find their forever homes, by taking them in and caring for them during their stay. They also run a low cost spay and neuter clinic for communities in need and have a mobile animal hospital that travels the province to help prevent over-population of pets in other communities through low-cost fixing.



They have recently amalgamated the Welland SPCA with the Niagara SPCA to better serve communities in the Niagara region. During the pandemic, the SPCA has pivoted to virtual adoptions for all animals, so they are not left sitting in cages. They've also reached out to community partners, The Hope Centre and Port Cares and delivered 700lbs of pet food for them to hand out to community members.

The SPCA has completed over 40,000 surgeries since 2014 and has seen a reduction in animal intake of 23%. In today's landscape, the SPCA continues to develop new programming for humane education and responsible pet ownership. They are very community driven and believe in strong partnerships locally and throughout Canada.



The SPCA runs the Safe Haven in partnership with the Hope Centre for anyone experiencing homelessness, where they will board their animals and provide medical care at no cost. In addition to many other things, they have also developed a 'Community Engagement Team' where officers deliver free food for pet owners who can't get out into the community.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: NOT-FOR-PROFIT

FINALIST:

**Port Cares**

🐦 @PortCares



For more than 34 years, Port Cares as a not-for-profit charity has and continues to provide comprehensive, wrap-around social services to improve quality of life and opportunity for people of all ages. From providing basic life needs support like health and nutritious food through the foodbank, meal program and lunches for school age children, to housing and homelessness prevention support, literacy and skills training, youth justice intervention to parenting and child development, Port Cares provides children and adults in need with the support and services necessary for them to achieve their potential.

As a service provider for Employment Ontario, Port Cares' PCWorks branch, provides employment counselling for those in search of a job as well as assistance to employers including funding for job placements, recruitment and grants for employee training. Port Cares also provides free of charge literacy training for adults who need one on one assistance with reading, writing and arithmetic or digital skills training and computer literacy. In addition, they provide transitional housing and a homelessness prevention program as well as homelessness outreach service amongst a number of other services.



Since 2014, the agency has worked diligently on stewardship, accountability and putting in place new measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of the agency. Port Cares has evolved significantly since 2014, coming out of an era of decline and financial instability. The agency's programs and revenues have grown by 46% over the past five years.

Despite the pandemic, Port Cares has remained open to serve, pivoting their in-person services to online and telephone provision. The agency continues to stay in pace with assisting those in need. Registered users of the food bank have increased by 25 per cent since 2015 - driven by the increase in the number of young families with children who turn to the foodbank to offset their financial struggles largely due to the cost of housing and rent.

# EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS: NOT-FOR-PROFIT

FINALIST:

**St. John Ambulance**

🐦 @SJA\_in\_Niagara



**St. John Ambulance**

St John Ambulance (SJA) is a registered charitable organization, where net proceeds from first aid training and the sale of first aid kits and equipment go directly to fund volunteer community service programs offered across the Niagara region. In 2019, SJA first aid and CPR Instructors trained over 5,000 students in WSIB required first aid and CPR techniques. By delivering this award-winning training, St. John Ambulance is helping to ensure Niagara businesses, workers and consumers are protected in the event of any accident or emergency that may occur at work, home or play.



SJA offers a wide selection of first aid kits, health & safety supplies and personal protective equipment and has expanded its training offerings to include topics like mental health & wellness in the workplace, pet first aid, babysitting basics, new parent safety and home alone while being an outstanding resource for safety tips for the home and workplace. SJA's net proceeds from commercial revenue go to fund the three community service programs offered in the region.

As an organization that has existed, expanded and grown for over 140 years, SJA has consistently strengthened and adapted its business systems, processes and practices to reflect an ever-evolving market. Over the last five years SJA Niagara Region's commercial revenue has seen a growth of over 30%. With a strong belief in giving a hand up, SJA has supported many fellow charities and causes throughout Niagara via volunteer support, fundraising or complementary certification as continuous growth is the SJA hallmark.



Last year SJA Niagara Region, Medical First Responders attended 218 community events, and treated 518 people in need of first aid. Many of these events included fundraisers held by other charitable organizations in Niagara. Without the commercial success of St. John Ambulance, Niagara would not benefit from the unique, in demand community service programs SJA provides.

# NOMINATE A BUSINESS FOR THE 2022 NBAAS

Nominations are received from the community; anyone can nominate a business. Nominations open yearly in July. Sign up for our mailing list to receive updates, or visit [gncc.ca](http://gncc.ca) for information.

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# COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Sponsored by RBC

🐦 @RBC



Royal Bank

RECIPIENT:

**Niagara Industrial Association**

🐦 @NIAManufacturer

In gratitude for the tremendous service that they and their members have done for Niagara, and for stepping up when the community truly needed them, the Niagara Industrial Association has earned the 2021 Community Leadership Award. They truly rallied a community and made a tremendous difference in our community. It is no exaggeration to say that lives have been saved by their actions.



# TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION AWARD

Sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

@barterpayniagara



Factory Surplus Direct Inc.

@FsdRobotics



Factory Surplus Direct Inc. and its operating division FSD Robotics has been supporting industrial automation, CNC's and robotics for a wide range of manufacturing sectors around the world. In addition to traditional industrial robots, Factory Surplus Direct has recently started distributing and integrating solutions using Hanwha collaborative robots. Cobots can be quickly and easily integrated, with easier user interfaces and can work safely alongside regular workers without the need of guarding.



This new type of cobot is opening up many new areas of automation for small to mid-size manufacturers. The first collaborative robot was developed 10 years ago but didn't hit the mainstream until recently, as the software and hardware solutions in combination to the plug and play end of arm tooling.

Using these cobots and developing custom solutions and software interfaces is allowing Factory Surplus Direct to expand the already rapid commercialization of this type of robot. Collaborative robot technology is having a huge impact on the manufacturing world because it is bridging the gap between man and machine with simple programming allowing less skilled workers to easily setup and run safely.



# TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION AWARD

Sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

@barterpayniagara



Hamill Agricultural Processing Solutions

@hamillaps



Hamill Agricultural Processing Solutions launched in 2018 as a subsidiary company to Hamill Machine Company Inc. The company was launched to support the microgreens market, which was new and growing. The company has additionally been able to adapt and scale this technology to support herbs, baby greens, and standard leafy greens harvesting. With continued growth, they provide end to end solutions for the agricultural and agri-food sector.



Over the years, Hamill APS has expanded their prototype line to include five new models, engineered a UV sanitizer system and have continued to create new equipment such as a tray flipper and stacker to help automate the harvesting process. With a commitment to developing innovative and cutting-edge solutions for this sector, they have been able to scale their systems to fit any sized production space.

Being initially conceptualized in 2017, the systems have reached the commercialization in 2019/2020. The staff consists of six mechanical engineers who created these systems using 3D engineering. From there all components are manufactured by skilled trades people using advanced fabrication techniques at Hamill Machine Company Inc.

This type of machinery has revolutionized the microgreens, aquaponics and hydroponics industry, transitioning from a hand harvested industry worldwide to fully automatic harvesting systems. Machinery is sold worldwide in Dubai, Singapore, Australia, England, US, and Canada to name a few countries. With over 30 machines sold, the companies have reported that they have been able to reduce stress injuries in their work force and have not laid off anyone due to the automation. Hamill APS is the first to market worldwide and continue to dominate the market by providing new solutions to harvest these delicate greens.

# TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION AWARD

Sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

@barterpayniagara



Zoom Innovations Inc.

@ZoomNiagara



Zoom Innovations Inc. started operating in 2012 as Zoom Zoom, a dispatch-based service for students who were facing a challenge with regards to finding affordable transportation. In August of 2019, Zoom Innovations Inc. evolved into a prominent transportation network company providing reliable service for Niagara residents on a day-to-day basis, dominating Niagara's market in transportation services for the last decade. With over 500,000 rides completed and working with 500+ drivers, Walid Al Hilaly has taken his strong business model and turned it into Niagara's safest and most affordable ride-share service.



When Al-Hilaly started the company, he was a student at Brock University studying computer science and working part-time as a pizza delivery driver. On weekends numerous students from the university would ask for short rides around the town, as other taxi services were expensive, he began driving students on weekends. Al Hilaly saw an opportunity and decided to leave his studies and pursue his business full time. He hired friends and family and was able to scale the business from students to all the locals in the region.



Zoom has often been able to stay one step ahead of its competitors, for instance, allowing prescheduled ride bookings from its very beginning, with competitors only introducing the feature in 2020. It also opened a call centre to allow less tech-savvy customers to make bookings without need of an app, and for drivers to get directions. Al-Hilaly has successfully grown his business, adding new features such as extra security measures for women and a different compensation system for female drivers. Zoom has even introduced a new on-demand service in March 2020, called Zoom Now Niagara, combating COVID-19 in the region by delivering daily essentials such as groceries, medicine and food to homes across Niagara.

# EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING

Sponsored by Niagara Region  
Economic Development

🐦 @NiagaraEconomic

**NIAGARA**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FINALIST:

**Abatement Technologies**

📷 @abatetech

**ABATEMENT**  
TECHNOLOGIES<sup>®</sup>  
LEADERS IN CLEAN AIR

Abatement Technologies, originally Harber Manufacturing Limited, is a manufacturer and distributor of advanced HEPA filtration, containment, monitoring solutions, and safety products operated by the Harber family for the last 75 years, located in Fort Erie. The company services critical environments including healthcare isolation, healthcare construction and renovation, asbestos abatement, fire and water restoration, air duct cleaning and whole home air purification solutions.

In 2014, Abatement purchased its sister company (US and international sales distribution partner), which was an acquisition that was larger than the existing company. Since then, Abatement has expanded distribution across Canada and now have nine satellite sales and distribution offices from BC to Newfoundland. The team passion is to be “air guardians”, together, creating safer environments by developing products that clean the air of hazards and pathogens, protecting individuals and their immune systems.

In 2020, production levels ramped up like never before, almost entirely focused on COVID-19 related efforts. Products were not only used in healthcare facilities, but have also made it into dentist offices, long term care homes and nursing homes. Abatement donated \$20K of equipment and product locally to Millennium Trail Manor, Oakwood Park Lodge, and Gilmore Lodge when these facilities were hit by COVID-19.



While the staff has seen an increase of 50%, the Harber family also owns Ravine Estate, where they were able to hire on much of the kitchen staff during shutdowns due to COVID-19 to help with production at Abatement, which was a win-win for everybody. Over the next year and a half, the company plans to take on a number of initiatives to expand expertise and production capabilities. They continue to revolutionize the brand through updating technology and expanding geographically and plan to see more great successes in the coming years.

# EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING

Sponsored by Niagara Region  
Economic Development

🐦 @NiagaraEconomic

**NIAGARA**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FINALIST:

**Factory Surplus Direct Inc.**

🐦 @FsdRobotics



Factory Surplus Direct (FSD) supports industrial automation globally in all fields of manufacturing; for the past 12 years FSD has grown its services from supplying robot, computer numerical control (CNC), and automation parts to a full range of services including industrial repairs, refurbishment programs, engineering, system integration, distribution, and field service and support. FSD's expert team of engineers and technicians help provide innovative automation solutions while also helping prevent critical downtime.

FSD has a division that manufactures custom Robotic cable harnesses. These harnesses have been reverse engineered over the past 4 years and are currently being exported and shipped to countries around the world. Their customers range from small manufacturers to large original equipment manufacturers (OEM's) and fortune 500 customers.

FSD has a continuous improvement program that has seen huge advances in its manufacturing productivity. Utilizing process engineers to design a flow for its cable lab, they were able to save on both labour and rework. Additional sophisticated testing equipment, a recent expansion in shop size, and automated crimping machines have continued to increase productivity in 2020. Their products are distributed online and through key resellers in USA, and Europe.



FSD implemented the questioning method aka. the 5W approach (what, who, when, where, and why) 5W approach in the process planning stage to help streamline its shop layout. Since testing is critical in all of their products,

FSD implemented a system that utilized different technicians for each stage of testing. Additionally, the company invested heavily in research and development to help produce custom testing stations that are fully automated and can store comprehensive cable test results.

# EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING

Sponsored by Niagara Region  
Economic Development

🐦 @NiagaraEconomic

**NIAGARA**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FINALIST:

**Lofttan**

🐦 @Lofttan



Lofttan is an Indigenous owned company based in the heart of the Niagara region and on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee and Anishnabe people. Owner and designer April Mitchell-Boudreau is a Turtleclan Mohawk with roots at Six Nations, with a passion for awakening and engaging the creator that lives inside all of us. Lofttan convertible jewelry is designed and made in Niagara, using textures and traditional materials like shell, sustainably sourced wood, and semi-precious stones.



Loftan's jewelry is distributed across Ontario to 60 various independent retailers and recently to a distributor in BC. While everything is produced in Lofttan's Niagara studio, the business is moving towards a long-held goal of employing other Indigenous makers of every age and stage to create pieces. Since the pandemic has affected Lofttan's original plan for a community room at Six Nations, they have trained a pieceworker to show people how to work remotely.

Due to the pandemic, Lofttan has pivoted toward their retail customer, growing their audience through sales and media. As they are making high quality handmade items in a crowded and competitive space, they ensure to apply innovative techniques to set them apart. Lofttan uses a system that helps people to get in touch with their inner creator and markets a sustainable collection by its very own nature.

# EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

Sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

@barterpayniagara



FINALIST:

**Chz Plz**

@chzplzniagara



Chz Plz is small catering company that focuses on shareable catering owned and operated by Marissa Hartley. This includes charcuterie boards, tables, appetizers and most recently, ChzBoxes. Hartley has not only established herself as a caterer for private events but also partners with multiple local wineries to provide Chz boxes for their tastings. The business has also received the Trinity Capital New Business Grant.

Additionally, Chz Plz partners with Lock Street Brewing Company to provide an eat-in dining service. Hartley initially started as a one-woman show and has now upgraded to a team of three very talented chefs. Today's business landscape had forced her to recognize the concept of "sink or swim" in the restaurant industry, not knowing what to expect at the start of the pandemic.



It has ultimately changed the way businesses operate for the foreseeable future; thus, Marissa finds herself constantly brainstorming about what's next. She has been successful in adapting in order to remain relevant, by creating a niche brand that St. Catharines did not have before. Having this resilient attitude, has helped Chz Plz overcome challenges during this unprecedented time.

# EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

Sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

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FINALIST:

**Queen Bean Café**

@Queenbeanniaga1



Queen Bean Café is a café bistro in downtown Niagara Falls that is designed to welcome both locals and tourists alike to enjoy, not just a cup of coffee, but a shared experience. The intention of the café is to strike a cohesive balance between showcasing Niagara as a tourist destination while also remaining true to its community roots. Vanditelli's vision for the café is to provide a space where everyone can feel welcome and comfortable, while serving high quality food with healthy alternatives.

Vanditelli actively practices the meaning of the phrase "community over competition". Her brand represents inclusiveness and ingenuity, which is reflected in her partnerships with reputable organizations such as Pride Niagara, Niagara College and several of the Airbnb owners in the area. Despite her background being in finance, her adeptness for customer service and knowledge of money management has helped Vanditelli succeed in the restaurant industry.



The café has built their reputation on core excellence and maintaining a competitive advantage. As of August 2020, the café has a 4.5 rating on Trip Advisor. With review captions such as "Fresh, made to order", "Friendly, homey café", and "A Respite from Commercialism", the Queen Bean Café has a great reputation as a spot that is convenient for locals and a destination for tourists looking for a good meal and a comfortable setting off the beaten path.

The café's bistro menu has been created largely for the breakfast and lunch crowd but is easily transitional into a more upscale evening menu. Vanditelli's plan over the next 6-12 months is to incorporate multiple approaches to engage families by planning events such as in-house cookie decorating workshops, pre-packed summer picnic baskets and healthy to-go dinners for parents who don't have the time to cook.

# EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

Sponsored by BarterPay Niagara

@barterpayniagara



FINALIST:

**Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery**

Paul Harber

@RavineVineyard

**RAVINEVINEYARD**  
ESTATE WINERY

Ravine is a 34 acre organically farmed Vineyard, having been in the Lowrey/Harber family for over 150 years. The property offers a winery, restaurant, event/conference facility for locals and visitors abroad. Ravine has succeeded in putting together an offering to showcase all that Niagara has to offer in the agritourism industry.

In October 2019, the new 4000 sq. ft facility was completed and opened up a year-round Vineyard setting for large social and corporate groups to enjoy. The Harber family has a strong commitment to keep investing into the business and community to broaden the offerings on site and strengthen the guest experience. There is deep pride in the history of the land and area which Ravine enthusiastically shares with all of its visitors.

As for the future, Ravine plans to expand on its product lines, including its hard cider and wine offerings. Additionally, as for culinary offerings, Ravine will be launching a catering department in 2021 to allow everyone the Ravine experience anywhere in Southern Ontario.



# ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

FINALIST:

## Little Green Shop

Tara Rosling

@little.greenshop



Little Green Shop is an old school eco-friendly company, offering carefully curated products for home and body to the Niagara region, founded by Tara Rosling. The company is truly committed to the notion of local, ideally sourcing products from within Ontario and delivering them to the doorsteps of local residents. They also have an emphasis on promoting small businesses, fostering a sense of community and participating in green delivery.



Little Green Shop's foundation is built upon the four 'R's, reuse, reduce, recycle and rethink, while partaking in energy and water conservation initiatives and participating in climate change and greenhouse gas reduction. Rosling frequently rethinks norms, finding new ways to make responsible choices and using marketing as her primary communication tool. The shop is known for zero waste products and a reduced carbon footprint through reusable, naked or biodegradable packaging.



Rosling shows a strong commitment to sourcing product in harmony with the environment, applying her knowledge, voice and resources in all aspects of maintaining a green alignment. She works hard to engage the community by providing deeply personalized customer service and keeping an open dialogue, whether it be on the street, social media, or at pop up shops like the farmer's market. She recently applied to the Suzuki Foundation for the Butterflyway Ranger program and plans to engage in further initiatives to create a positive environmental impact.

# ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

FINALIST:

**Twists**

🐦 @eco\_twists



Twists is a marketing partnership between the product developer, Scott MacRae and Spritz Creative, a marketing and design firm based in Niagara. The Twist product is made from two kinds of recycled paper - brown Kraft and soft white, the paper comes from end cuts of paper rolls that would previously be discarded as waste. This paper material is very versatile and can easily replace the role of polystyrene foam pellets and packing material.

Twists offer better support, are non-static and can compress and expand. The product is currently being used by various companies to ship, including, wineries, packed glass jar products, crafts, fragile and heavy objects. By switching to Twists over Styrofoam, breakage rates during shipping have been reduced to almost zero.



The product embodies the four R's, as they can be reused over and over, are stronger than plastic, made from recycle paper and eliminate the concept of single-use plastics. Twists unlike plastics, do not pollute the landfills and water systems, as they are bio-degradable and have a smaller energy footprint than plastic waste.



Part of the Twists marketing plan is to carry the message of "saving our planet now" as its core brand value. The company succeeds in that it takes major steps toward becoming more environmentally conscious, by replacing otherwise harmful plastics. Twists is also involved in a local partnership with Collegiate Highschool to build Twists machines, working with local fabricators and students and teachers.

# ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

FINALIST:

**UpCycle Canada**

🐦 @UpCycleCanada



David Campbell started UpCycle five years ago, as a supplementary form of income, while using recycled materials saved money on supplies, he wanted to be environmentally focused thus only using found, discarded and unwanted materials. From broken furniture, hockey sticks, used wine corks and pallet boards means Campbells has zero cost for UpCycle and allows the company to maintain an eco-focus while ensuring everything is custom-made.



As the goal of the store is to rethink waste, metal is recycled from salvaged and donated pieces that are recycled through the local metal collection depots. UpCycle Canada is always at the forefront of new and innovative approaches, ensuring that customers leave the store feeling inspired with their new items and bringing them to life.

UpCycle also uses recycled paint in the creation of products and have partnered with Boomerang Paint to promote and address waste destined for the landfill and costs associated with new paint production, as well as avoiding using any new wood in creations. Their position as an eco-friendly alternative to traditional shopping gives UpCycle a platform to promote Canadian climate and environmental causes, with Earth Day as the flagship day.



The company does their best to show customers that they are not only an eco-alternative educator but also excellent stewards of the resources around them, recognizing we only have one earth. UpCycle has partnered with the Niagara Furniture Bank to pick up items that the bank can't use, to reduce their waste cost and avoid creating landfill waste.

# EXCELLENCE IN AGRIBUSINESS, FARMING & RURAL ACHIEVEMENT

FINALIST:

**My Local Connection**  
(Formerly Small Scale Farms)  
@ @joinmlc



My Local Niagara is a company that was started in rebellion to the current food system with poverty as the driving force, founded by Renee Delaney. It began leading Delaney down a path she refused to go, which in turn provided the opportunity for her to learn how to grow her own food. Although, she first turned to her community to find those who were already self-sufficient enough to help show her the way, these people have helped make My Local Niagara what it is today.



The business has given away 15,000 prepared meals and over 25,000 bags of vegetables, all from the profits of produce and various goods. They support local farmers by buying local produce and partnering with local distributors to also sell and deliver, a wide variety of product for multiple vendors across the region. While success is normally based on the volume of mouths fed, Small Scale farms has seen a large impact through their social media channels, connecting small businesses and making local delivery available and accessible.

The Food Fed Forward program is delivering approximately 1000 free bags of produce each month to various Niagara residents, paid for by the profits of their community supported agriculture (CSA) vegetable box subscription customers. Give to Grow is a regional wide, team challenge, created by My Local Niagara, as they work to increase the affordability and accessibility of local food. These meals become “fed forward” to various organizations including all Niagara community groups, schools, churches and non-profits.

Due to multiple partnerships, groundwork is already being laid to deliver to larger communities like Hamilton, Oakville and Toronto. Using an organized system, carbon footprint is decreased, by providing multiple vendors the same network delivery system, which also helps to create more local jobs and continues to solidify the Niagara region as the #1 place to grow local in all of Canada.

# EXCELLENCE IN AGRIBUSINESS, FARMING & RURAL ACHIEVEMENT

FINALIST:

**OstrichLand**

🐦 @LandOstrich



Ostrich Land is a family founded, owned and operated ostrich farm based in West Lincoln, Ontario. The farm specializes in reproduction and supply of naturally raised, antibiotic free and free ranged ostrich products, including ostrich meat, ostrich oil and ostrich eggs. They also organize and provide educational tours on their farm for all adults and kids and host various festivals and celebrations for families at their farm as community engagement programs.



In five years, Ostrich Land has been able to establish a wide and loyal customer base, with their product making it to multiple meat markets including Wychwood and Brickworks Meat Market in Toronto. Their products are also distributed through Sheridan Suppliers to local restaurants (including Red House Waterloo). The meat is used by Blue Sausage Meat Company and by companies for animal food production.

The farm is looking towards building a naturally fertilized greenhouse to reduce their ecological footprint by recycling organic matter into organically grown greens and vegetables. Ostrich waste fertilizer produces no methane and as a result is much friendlier to the environment. Future expansion will incorporate aquaponics to their greenhouse and an online store for direct distribution of ostrich products and organic greensand vegetables to client.



# EXCELLENCE IN AGRIBUSINESS, FARMING & RURAL ACHIEVEMENT

FINALIST:

## Province Brands

🐦 @ProvinceBrands



Province Brands of Canada is an early-stage, Toronto-based, premium food and beverage grade natural sweeteners company founded and incorporated October 2016. Established with the initial goal of producing beer from cannabis, Province Brands' advanced research and development, culminated in proprietary technology, enabled the extraction of food-grade sugars from non-starch plant waste biomass, including hemp.



This transformative technology allows food and beverage makers to upcycle locally sourced, non-traditional plant materials to create new flavor profiles while also reducing waste, sidestepping supply-chain challenges and supporting sustainability. Province Brands' mission is to transform the way people think about creating food and beverages from plants that aren't traditionally used in the manufacturing process and contribute to the North American global food chain post-pandemic.



The company has met several objectives in 2020, including contracting with an investment bank, finishing up final product refinements to launch in 2021, significant strategic planning for marketing and formulating an effective research and development strategy. All in all, Province Brands' technological advances will turn waste into food and decrease the overall carbon footprint of the beverage industry by reducing their carbon emissions and waste disposal costs.

While the pandemic has created setbacks for international trade from global supply chains, Province Brands has recognized this as an opportunity to positively impact supply chains related to fermented beverages, while other multinational companies are finally starting to entertain the idea of sourcing these goods, more locally.

# INNOVATIVE LEADERS AWARD

Sponsored by  
**Walker Industries**  
f @walkerindholdings



RECIPIENT:  
**Dr. Yousef Haj-Ahmad,**  
**Norgen Biotek Corp.**  
t @NorgenBiotek



The struggle against COVID-19 is being won through science in testing, in treatment, and in vaccination. Niagara is proud to have a leader in that scientific fight right here, who has rapidly innovated and produced solutions to the COVID-19 problem which are in high demand all around the world.



# BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Meridian  
🐦 @MeridianCU



FINALIST:

**Brand BLVD**  
🐦 @brandblvd07



Brand BLVD is comprised of a team of enthusiastic and professional individuals who strive to exceed client expectations in customer service, through creating awareness for organizations and utilizing products and services to help build brands. The team services clients all across Canada and is experienced in dealing with a multitude of companies from Fortune 500 to SME's and special events, with a diverse understanding of varying needs.

Brand BLVD services a range of industries, including, technology, finance, construction, education, environment, non-profit, hospitality, healthcare and manufacturing. Over 13 years, the company has increased from four employees to 29, doubling the size of their headquarters and seeing a total expansion in warehouse, online store solutions and additional creative & print services.

Some notable successes by Brand BLVD include customer choice awards, multiple distributor of the year awards and being recognized as being one of the fastest growing companies in North America within their industry two times. They are most proud of being ranked #1 Best Place to Work, being selected out of 300 companies across North America.



Brand BLVD is keen on giving back to the community, being involved with several local charities, such as Community Care. The team recently ran a t-shirt campaign at the height of the pandemic to help those impacted which raised \$10,000 that went back into the Niagara community. The core values of Brand BLVD are built on a foundation of passion, commitment, integrity, community and innovation. They are also environmentally conscious with a strong focus on being an e-office environment.

The future of Brand BLVD is looking bright, while they are in the process of tripling the size of their headquarters, the expansion and state-of-the-art updates will ensure clients and team members are pleased to be a part of the impressive working space that is, Brand BLVD.

# BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Meridian

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FINALIST:

**Hatch**

🐦 @HATCHglobal

**HATCH**

With over six decades of business and technical experience in the mining, energy and infrastructure sectors, Hatch knows the business landscape and recognizes that challenges are rapidly changing. The team responds quickly with solutions that are smarter, more efficient and innovative. They draw upon 9,000 staff with experience in over 150 countries to challenge the status quo and create positive change for clients, employees and communities.



Hatch has been active in the Niagara region for almost 100 years, beginning in 1924 as Acres. In 2004, Acres was acquired by Hatch, which had grown from a Toronto-based firm to a global multidisciplinary engineering and management powerhouse. To this day, Hatch's hydropower centre of excellence operates from the Niagara office and is home to some of the world's most renowned experts in hydropower. In more recent years, the office has expanded its capabilities into other areas of power as the world's appetite for carbon-free sources has grown.

As an employee-owned company, Hatch employees take great care in managing the business and living by the Hatch manifesto, which places emphasis on ensuring cost effective, efficient delivery and living their commitment with integrity. This level of care and commitment has made Hatch one of Canada's Best Managed Companies for 13 years. Hatch has received a number of other awards including Canada's Top 100 Employers and is notably committed to Aboriginal engagement.

In addition to expertise in waterpower services, the company's three sectors of energy, mining and infrastructure are complimented by advisory, climate change, digital, environmental and urban solutions practices. Hatch has already invested into a market growth strategy, with an aim to double their Niagara office staff. Hatch's plan for the future is to continue to be an impactful corporate citizen, while giving back to the community that has already given so much to Hatch and its staff.

# BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Meridian  
@MeridianCU



FINALIST:

**Verhoef Electric**  
@verhoefelectric



**VERHOEF ELECTRIC INC.**

Verhoef Electric is a family run electrical contracting business that has served the Niagara and surrounding areas since 1984. The company specializes in residential, commercial, and horticultural and greenhouse controls. In the last three years, the team has increased from 10 staff to 40 staff members.



Each year, the goal to increase revenue is continuously exceeded while Verhoef Electric manages to enter new markets in both the horticulture and commercial sectors. The Verhoef's are active in the community, being a part of notable fundraisers such as, Habitat for Humanity Build, Great Grape Stomp, Niagara Grapes of Wrath Mud Run, YWCA Coldest Night of the Year, Big brothers Big Sisters, coaching and sponsoring Little League teams and more.

Verhoef Electric is a leader in safety and quality, exceptional customer service, a notable and impressive achievement recognized as excellence in business practices. The Verhoef's promise for the future is to continue to exceed current safety standards, in order to stay ahead of new protocols and COVID-19 restrictions. They also have expansion plans for increased projects in the Niagara Region with hopes to branch out and encompass projects across Canada and into the US.



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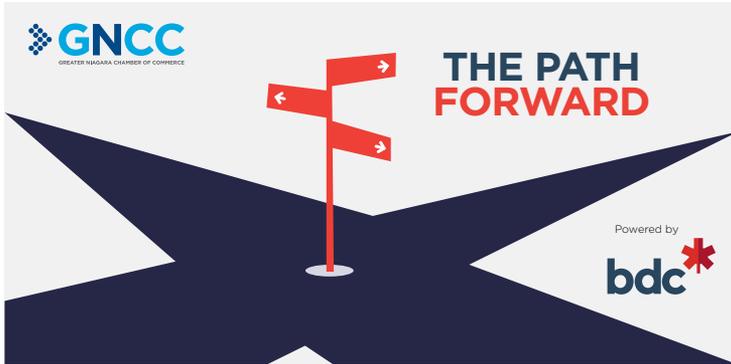


# LUNCH & LEARN



**March 30 | 12:00-1:00pm**

With so many changes to both work and home, how can you find time for yourself to calm down, find peace, and honour your mind & body?



**April 8 | 12:00-1:00pm**

Join us for a conversation with Michael Denham, President and CEO of BDC— Canada's bank for entrepreneurs—as we look back at how the past 12 months have changed the way we do business



# 2021 STATE OF THE REGION

Powered by **PenFinancial Credit Union**

**April 20 | 10:30am-12:00pm**

Join us for a special online event as Regional Chair Jim Bradley delivers a keynote address to the Niagara business community.



## Which of these qualities could help your business the most:

\*Global Perspective \*Motivation to Succeed \*Fresh Ideas

**Niagara College prepares internationally trained professionals for the Canadian workplace. Benefits to your company include:**

- ✓ Opportunity to introduce diversity
- ✓ Integrate Canadian newcomers into the workforce.
- ✓ Inter-cultural competency development amongst co-workers.

Work placements are **fully funded** through Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada at no cost to the employer.  
WSIB is provided through Niagara College.

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Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

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et Citoyenneté Canada



**Niagara  
College  
Canada**

APPLIED DREAMS.

**To learn more please contact:** 905-641-2252 Ext 4188  
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