

2023



GNCC

GREATER NIAGARA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ANNUAL
REPORT

WHY THE GNCC?

The Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce (GNCC) is a non-profit, non-partisan, membership-driven organization comprised of 1,500 business enterprises, civic organizations, educational institutions and individuals. We are dedicated to helping businesses and organizations succeed in order to ensure the long-term economic and social prosperity of the Niagara region.

The GNCC is the voice of business. We impact public policy at all levels of government so that you can succeed and prosper in local and global economies. We are also members of the Ontario and Canadian Chambers of Commerce, which makes our voice even stronger. Our councils represent specific demographics and guide our programming to ensure Niagara achieves its economic and social best.

Too often, businesses and entrepreneurs feel isolated and struggle to achieve their personal and business goals. We are here to help make your business better by providing you with networking, savings, marketing opportunities and a large audience to make it easy for you to power your business growth.

ACCREDITATION



Excellence is Accreditation. It is the formal acknowledgement that the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce has been successfully evaluated against rigorous national standards of policy, service, and performance by the Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada (CACC).

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VISION

Niagara to be at our economic and social best

MISSION

With broad engagement, we advance the interests of our membership through advocacy and services, building prosperity for the people of Niagara

VALUES



Forward-thinking



Non-partisan and principled



Inclusive, collaborative and respectful



Accountable and responsible

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Maximize Member Services



Optimize Business Advocacy



Strengthen Organizational Capacity



Advance Niagara's Prosperity



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

NOEL BUCKLEY

Fellow GNCC members, as I reflect on my two years as Chair, and on behalf of the entire Board of Directors, I am incredibly proud of the progress that we have made and the opportunities ahead in the years to come. The direction introduced in GNCC's 2022-2024 strategic plan has served us tremendously well in navigating the challenges of the past few years.

In 2023 alone, rising interest rates hampered access to capital, and labour shortages impacted both the current workforce and the ability to expand and grow. Niagara, and across the country, saw continued problems in our supply chains, with the prices of raw materials spiking and forcing cost increases on many of us.

Yet, once again, our business community has risen to meet those challenges. Our local economy saw growth, with local real GDP increasing

by over 18 billion dollars between 2022 and 2023. We saw our exports grow to over 8.2 billion dollars in 2023, and tourism spending returned to pre-pandemic levels, with visitors to our region bringing in 2.1 billion dollars.

From 2022 to 2023, our region gained a net total of over a thousand new businesses, and we welcome every single one of them, from solopreneurs to multinational firms, as drivers of growth and prosperity for our community.

The initiatives introduced in GNCC's strategic plan have served us well in navigating changes and challenges. Our continued focus on execution has helped us deliver strong results. In addition, GNCC achieved Accreditation through the Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada (CACC). To achieve accreditation, Chambers must pass a detailed

review by CACC and demonstrate excellence in leadership, governance and operations. GNCC accreditation is due to its strong foundation in best practices, and its continuous dedication to high quality programming and reliable service.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank GNCC members for their continued trust and support in GNCC, and especially for their resilience and passion for Niagara. Thank you to the GNCC team for their unwavering leadership anchored in a shared commitment to embracing a collaborative and growth mindset.

I look forward to what we will achieve together in 2024 and beyond.

Noel Buckley



CEO'S UPDATE

MISHKA BALSOM

Dear Members and Stakeholders,

Over the past year, the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce (GNCC) has made remarkable strides in maximizing member services, optimizing business advocacy, and strengthening our organizational capacity, all while maintaining a sharp focus on the evolving market dynamics and the specific needs of our members. This progress has been underpinned by our unwavering commitment to excellence in leadership, governance, and operations, culminating in our distinguished recognition as one of the few chambers in Canada to achieve accreditation through the Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada. This honour not only highlights our dedication to our values and our mission, but also reinforces our role in the business community.

The GNCC's member-focused approach and deep connection with our partners has driven collaborative efforts in many areas, from regional advocacy initiatives during Niagara Days at Queen's Park to in-person engagements with various federal and provincial ministries, including Transportation, Agriculture, Economic Development, and more.

These efforts have yielded substantial advocacy successes, enhanced communication initiatives, and had a significant impact on sectors vital to our region's economy. It is inspiring to see a community focused on achieving improved outcomes and business climates for all.

This year also ushered in innovative strides with the launch of our new

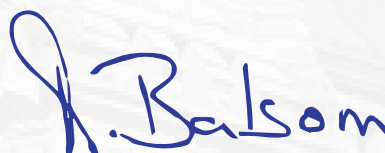
communication platforms and the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) portal, which reaffirms our commitment to ethical practices and sustainability. These initiatives, developed in partnership with community leaders, highlight the innovative spirit within our business community and align with our strategic objectives.

We are immensely grateful for the guidance provided by our advisory councils and the newly formed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, whose insights have been crucial in fostering a diverse and inclusive business environment. Their recommendations have helped us remove barriers and enhance engagement across diverse groups, thereby strengthening our community ties.

As we look forward to another year filled with potential and opportunities, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to my colleagues, to our members, and to each of you for your unwavering support and engagement. Our shared efforts are propelling us towards a future where our community and businesses not only succeed but excel.

As you peruse the Annual Report, I hope you find inspiration in our collective achievements and feel proud of the foundation we are building together for a prosperous future.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Balsom". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Mishka Balsom

LEADERSHIP & STAFF

DIRECTORS



Noel Buckley
Niagara Falls
Convention Centre
Chair



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



Lisa Benger
MBA CHRL
Senior Vice President
Human Resources &
Health and Safety,
Walker Industries
Director at Large



Kevin Hooiveld
President,
Hayfield Consulting
Director at Large



Rob DePetris
Tax Principal,
Wormald Masse
Keen Lopinski LLP
Honorary Treasurer



Emily Kovacs
Executive Director/
CEO, Niagara Folk
Arts Multicultural
Centre



**Roseanne
Morissette**
BA MBA(MktgMgt)
Regional Marketing
Strategist,
Performance Auto
Group



Dr. Marc Nantel
Vice-President -
Research & External
Relations,
Niagara College



Rick Nero
Partner, Baker Tilly
Niagara LLP

STAFF



Mishka Balsom
CEO
mishka@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 227
@MishkaBalsom



Hugo Chesshire
Director of Policy &
Government Relations
hugo@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 224
@GNCCadvocacy



Corrina Massicotte
Director of Operations &
Communications
corrina@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 225
@GNCCpromoter



Savanna Stirrett
Membership
Engagement Manager
savanna@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 226



Jordan Ammendolia
Membership
Engagement Manager
jordan@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 231



Vita Gauley
General Counsel,
Niagara Regional
Police Service
Honorary Solicitor



Janice Arnoldi
Social Media
Storyteller,
Strategist, Trainer
& Partner, Janice
& Robin Digital
Communications



Todd Dougall
Owner, FreshCo



Jeremy Dunn
Commercial Vice
President, Hamilton
Oshawa Port
Authority



Alexis Kleiman
Manager, ihub
Community Relations
& Student Experience
at District School
Board of Niagara



Bruce Peever
Partner, KPMG
Canada Public Sector
Practice



Luis Romero
Senior Partner,
Advisory Services,
BDC



Colleen A. Smith
CEO, FirstOntario
Performing Arts
Centre



Taylor Wilson
Broker of Record,
Colliers International
Niagara Ltd.



Dr. Barry Wright
Dean, Goodman
School of Business,
Brock University



Amy Lloyd
Membership
Engagement Manager
amy@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 231



Makayla Steeves
Events & Marketing
Coordinator
makayla@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 228



Brad Demers
Graphic & Web
Designer and IT/Cyber
Security Specialist
brad@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 223



Anne Kalagian
Admin & Finance
Coordinator
anne@gncc.ca
905-684-2362 ext. 229

BUSINESS COUNCILS

The Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, in an effort to continuously improve its effectiveness, has specialized councils. The overall goal is to stay leading-edge in membership services and policy-focused work.

We will harness the experience, credibility, as well as the intellectual and leadership capacities of our council members to mobilize community stakeholders to support businesses and Niagara's prosperity.

WOMEN IN NIAGARA (WIN) COUNCIL



MISSION: To foster the growth and success of women in business in Niagara.

VISION: Empower women in Niagara to be at our economic and social best.


PURPOSE: To provide strategic and tactical direction to support the Council's mission and strategic priorities. Responsibilities include identifying issues relevant to women in business in Niagara and providing strategic guidance to address these challenges and opportunities.


VALUES: Courageous, Collaborative, Respectful, Transparent, Inclusive


Chair: N'ora Kalb

Staff Liaison: Corrina Massicotte, corrina@gncc.ca

Social Media:  @GNCC_WIN

 Women in Niagara

 WomenInNiagara

 womeninniagara

NEXTNIAGARA COUNCIL



MISSION: Empowering Young Professionals

VISION: To see Niagara grow as a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous community where the NEXT generation of leaders feel connected, represented, and engaged.

PURPOSE: To connect through networking opportunities, advocate for young professionals in the region, and engage in personal and professional development opportunities

VALUES: Inclusive, Equitable, Forward-Thinking, Committed

Chair: Alexis Kleiman

Staff Liaison: Corrina Massicotte, corrina@gncc.ca

Social Media:  @NEXTNiagara

 NEXTNiagara

 NEXTNiagara

 @NEXTNiagara

NON-PROFIT NIAGARA COUNCIL



The mission of the Non-Profit Council is to be a champion for Niagara's non-profit sector. This will be accomplished by:

- Strengthening the capacity of the non-profit sector in Niagara
- Raising the profile and impact of the non-profit sector in Niagara
- Cultivating stronger partnerships between the non-profit sector and other GNCC members and the Niagara business community
- Informing and influencing GNCC policy relating to government directions that impact community well-being from both an economic and social perspective

Chair: Adam Durrant

Staff Liaison: Hugo Chesshire, hugo@gncc.ca

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COUNCIL



The Government Affairs Council supports the GNCC's mission of influencing government and public institutions on behalf of business by monitoring, anticipating, and advising on governmental and political matters at all levels wherever and whenever they affect Niagara business.

Chair: Michael Ras

Staff Liaison: Hugo Chesshire, hugo@gncc.ca

Social Media:  @GNCCadvocacy

Maximizing Member Services

GNCC DAILY UPDATE



A daily email and website roundup for Niagara businesses with curated news, government updates, market information, and focused reading recommendations.

Over 4,000 subscribers
242 editions in 2023
523,520 total opens
233,222 links clicked

ESG INITIATIVE



A combination of a website, webinars, and events in collaboration with PenFinancial Credit Union to help businesses in Niagara with access to ESG framework material to ensure that they are at their social and economical best.

Landing Page Retention Rate: 67%
Retention Rate: 96% (1st week) 72% (overall)
Session Duration: 7:47 minutes
Amount of Traffic: 20% (first week) 5% (overall)

YOUR NIAGARA CAMPAIGN



A monthly feature showcasing 6 local businesses in each municipality of Niagara. This is a collaboration between the GNCC and Niagara Economic Development.

70+ businesses featured from all
12 municipalities to:
GNCC networks – eblasts, social media, website
Niagara Dailies Newspapers
Giant FM Radio
MyNiagaraOnline

GNCC ESPRESSO LIVE



Our routine webinars deliver timely and pertinent insights, featuring industry experts at the forefront of their fields.

SIGNATURE EVENTS



Our annual signature events are a testament to the vibrant community of Niagara, spotlighting its diverse talent and collaborative spirit. Through strategic partnerships and enhanced engagement initiatives, we've cultivated dynamic productions that unite and amplify our community's impact.

MONTHLY PROGRAMMING



Monthly Business After 5s provide the business community with constant networking opportunities to stay connected and Lunch & Learns provide a free opportunity to valuable education sessions.

QUARTERLY PROGRAMMING



GNCC members depend on our regular programming to foster connections and stay engaged. Year-round, we curate a diverse lineup of events including WINspirational, NEXTNiagara Socials, and the Niagara Business Leadership Series.

Optimize Business Advocacy

Our advocacy works for the benefit of individual members, for Niagara businesses, and to make our region its economic and social best.

BRINGING POSITIVE CHANGE TO NIAGARA

- Collaborative success in reducing the basic wine tax, pausing the federal excise “escalator” tax, and opening retail sales for beverage alcohol.
- Lobbied for and supported the development of a provincial marine strategy in partnership with the Hamilton and Ontario Chambers of Commerce and industry leaders to maximize the economic power of the Welland canal and docklands, following recommendations emerging from the 2022 Niagara Economic Summit.
- Requested and received extensions to temporary foreign worker programs instituted during the pandemic, and the Trusted Employer Model that rewards consistent good-faith employers in partnership with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.
- With 250 members of the Canadian Chamber Network, extended CEBA loans repayment deadline by 12 months, with a further 3-month extension to qualifying for the forgivable component and a new three-year sub-prime loan (5%) option.



PROMOTING TRADE, TRAVEL & TOURISM

- Brought together community stakeholders and provincial government leaders for Niagara's first Sports Tourism Summit.
- Supported the development, release, and promotion of the Uncork Ontario report aimed at unlocking the potential of Niagara's wine industry as an economic hub following recommendations emerging from the 2022 Niagara Economic Summit.
- Lobbied for the wine industry at Queen's Park with an intense focus during Niagara Days 2023 in partnership with key industry stakeholders.
- Supported our marine members and partners during the Seaway labour dispute.
- Requested a Canada Trade Infrastructure Plan as part of Budget 2024 which should include support for developing the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Welland Canal for loading, unloading, and processing.
- Proposed development of the Niagara District Airport to international capability to support direct tourist travel from international hubs in Canada and the United States.



SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH & SUCCESS

- Supported extensions of pandemic-era patio programs for local restaurants.
- Lobbied for business-friendly legislation in consultations for the Working for Workers Act III.
- Lobbied for a Municipal Growth Framework funding model that supports municipal infrastructure with upper-tier support tied to growth.

HELPING TO HOUSE OUR COMMUNITY

- Supported developers working with municipal governments to build more and more affordable housing in our communities.
- Passed a policy resolution at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce calling for greater federal investment in housing-supportive infrastructure and lobbied upper tiers of government during budget consultations.
- Worked with Niagara College and Niagara Region on a study of the impact of the housing crisis on Niagara's businesses.
- Recommended Investment in infrastructure to support housing development, including supporting municipal service provision, critical transmission lines, and public transit, in provincial budget consultations.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PROSPERITY

- Advocated an outcome-focused approach to governance reform proposed under Ontario Bill 39 that demands a focus on lower taxes, better services, or both.
- Recommended investment in childcare capacity and professionalization in budget consultations.
- Recommended a comprehensive examination of the healthcare and education systems to identify inefficiencies and potential means to reduce the cost of these services without impacting service delivery.

ELECTED LEADERS & REPRESENTATIVES HOSTED



Federal Minister of Tourism &
Associate Minister of Finance
RANDY BOISSONNAULT



Canadian
Minister of Labour
SEAMUS O'REGAN

SIGNATURE EVENTS

STATE OF THE CITY ST. CATHARINES



Mayor Mat Siscoe delivered his inaugural State of the City address as Mayor of St. Catharines hosted at Club Roma.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



The GNCC's International Women's Day Celebration, hosted at the Crown Plaza, was themed Embraced Equity.

The empowering event featured a keynote address from Dr. Kate Bezanson and a panel discussion with Trecia McLennon, Dr. Samah Sabra, Colleen Smith and Crystal D'Cunha. Michele-Elise Burnett received the 2023 IWD Award

STATE OF THE REGION



The State of the Region address with Chair Jim Bradley hosted at Niagara Falls Convention Centre, with the Chair's keynote followed by a fireside chat interview.

CHAMBER CONNECTS



The 2nd annual Chamber Connects, hosted at Ridley College, is a celebratory event to show appreciation to members. Chamber Connects gave members a chance to showcase their products/services, network, feel appreciated and just have a good time!

NIAGARA BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



42 finalists were nominated for the 19th annual Niagara Business Achievement Awards at Holiday Inn & Suites St. Catharines Conference Centre. Bestowed Awards for people and businesses who have shown outstanding community leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship, were presented to: Vince DiCosimo, John Peller, Dr. Robyn Bourgeois, and Hatch.

FALL CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT



The 48th annual Fall Classic Golf Tournament, held at St. Catharines Golf & Country Club consisted of an 18 hole full day of scramble golf, followed by a 19th hole reception, dinner and raffle draw. A day to give everyone a chance to network on the golf course.

NEXJNIAGARA ENGAGE



The NEXTNiagara Council convened the 3rd annual ENGAGE conference for young professionals hosted at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery. This year's conference was focused on innovating solutions for today's challenges in employment.

SMALL BUSINESS MONTH



Small Business Month hosted at Rodman Hall, featured insightful presentations about; mastering networking, understanding burnout/mental wellness, and leadership potential. The full day symposium consisted of learning and constructive conversations geared to benefit small businesses in Niagara.

NIAGARA ECONOMIC SUMMIT



The Niagara Economic Summit hosted at White Oaks Conference Resort & Spa, featured keynotes Tim Jennings, Shaw Festival and Sarah Goldfeder, General Motors. The summit included panel discussions on environmental/climate change, population potential, and artificial intelligence.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARDS



The Women in Niagara Council (WIN)'s 22nd annual Women in Business Awards recognized 85 finalists, bestowed the Ruth Unrau Legacy Achievement Award to Deborah Rosati, and the Lifetime Achievement Award to Valerie Pringle.

SPORT TOURISM SUMMIT



The Sport Tourism Summit, partnered by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, was hosted at Niagara Parks Power Station. The Summit featured a keynote by The Honourable Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Followed by a panel discussion with leaders in sport tourism.

COMMUNICATIONS

IMPRESSIONS — WHAT OUR VISITORS SEE

670,745

Impressions across all social channels

6,400

Website visitors average/month

166,000

Website impressions average/month

KEY CHANNELS

 **2.17m**
Impressions

 **2.22m**
Impressions

 **119.3k**
Impressions

ENGAGEMENTS — WHAT OUR VISITORS DID

39,466

Likes, comments, shares across all social channels

10,304

Links clicked from social media posts

17,451

Number of video views on all social channels

2,700

Website clicks average/month

MEMBER EMAIL — WHAT OUR VISITORS READ

2,500

GNCC Insider subscribers

4,000

Daily Update subscribers

1,000

NEXTNiagara subscribers

1,000

Women in Niagara subscribers

2023

YEAR IN PHOTOS





www.gncc.ca

80 King Street, Unit #3
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7G1
905.684.2361

