



ABBOTSFORD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
COMPANY OF
VOCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS
AND ENTREPRENEURS



ABBOTSFORD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



ANNUAL REPORT

ABBOTSFORD CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

2023



President's Message

Reflecting on a Year of Resilience and Growth



As I bid farewell to my role as President of the Abbotsford Chamber, I am filled with gratitude and pride as I reflect on the remarkable journey we have undertaken together over the past number of years. Working alongside three amazing Chamber CEO's and a host of talented board directors, it has been an honour to serve as your President, and I am confident that our leadership team will continue to press into the challenges facing local businesses and offer great value and support as we work together to build a resilient community.

This past year has been a year of transition as we conducted a leadership search and recalibrated our strategic vision. We are pleased with the success our new CEO, Alex Mitchell and her team are having with our strategic priorities and enhancing our reputation as the go-to for businesses and potential investors in our region. Ultimately, we want our members to have more meaningful touchpoints with our Chamber team and have access to high-impact events that add value and create opportunities for greater connection across the community.

Over the past year, our collective efforts have not only supported small businesses and advocated for essential economic change but have also laid the groundwork for a visionary and prosperous future.

The Fraser Valley, with its unique blend of urban and rural landscapes, has long been a beacon of economic opportunity. However, as people, businesses and industry move east from Vancouver, it becomes increasingly evident that strategic, long-term planning is imperative to sustain and enhance our region's economic vitality.

As the Abbotsford Chamber continues to press into these and other economic issues with our coalition partners, I look forward to engaging in meaningful discussions with our communities, addressing the broader challenges and opportunities that shape the Fraser



President's Message

Valley's economic landscape. Collaboration is the key to proactive, forward-thinking planning, fostering dialogue, sharing insights, and advocating for change, as we aim to create a robust economic vision for our region's success.

As I step down from my role, I am filled with optimism for the future of the Abbotsford business community. I am confident that the foundation we have laid together will serve as a springboard for even greater achievements in the years to come.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the dedicated members of the Abbotsford Chamber's Board of Directors. Your commitment, expertise, and support have played a huge role in our success. Together, we navigated challenges, made strategic decisions, and implemented initiatives that have had a lasting impact on our community. To our incredible Chamber team, thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. Your hard work and passion have been the driving force behind our accomplishments, and I am confident that the Abbotsford Chamber will continue to thrive under your capable leadership!

It has been an incredible journey, and I am honored to have served as your President. I look forward to continuing to support the Abbotsford Chamber and witnessing the continued growth and success of our remarkable business community.

Thank you for the privilege of serving you.

Sincerely,

Craig Toews

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce is situated in the traditional territory of the Stó:lō peoples.

The Stó:lō have an intrinsic relationship with what they refer to as S'olh Temexw (Our Sacred Land); therefore, we express our gratitude and respect for the honour of living and working in this territory.





About the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce



The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce has served the business community of Abbotsford with an attitude of vibrant engagement and proactive non-partisan advocacy for over 110 years.

Established in 1913, the Abbotsford Chamber is nationally accredited for excellence, with nearly 700 business members from across the City.

The Chamber works on behalf of our diverse business members, fosters the next generation of entrepreneurs and young professionals, advocates for investments and policies to help businesses succeed, and builds community and connections.

2023 Pillar Partners



Our Vision

To be known as the most vibrant and relevant business association in B.C.

Our Mission

To build and sustain a thriving business community.

Our Core Values

Genuine relationships, vibrant culture and growth orientation

Our Strategic Priorities

1

Advocate

Move the needle on policy and ensure that the challenges facing businesses are heard at every level of government in Canada.

The Chamber is delivering a bold economic vision for the future of the Fraser Valley.

2

Benefit

Provide access to business resources, workshops, entrepreneurship programs, the Chambers Plan and Member Perks, to engaging the network on advocacy, networking, and business to business connections and marketing opportunities.

3

Connect

Deliver high-impact events that add value and create opportunities for greater connection across the community.

The Chamber is inclusive, and valuable for shaping Abbotsford's future and convening people and organizations to make a difference.





BOARD + STAFF

 CRAIG TOEWS PRESIDENT	 KEVIN MIERAU VICE PRESIDENT	 KATIE YU TREASURER	 PAUL PENNER SECRETARY	 SAM VARING DIRECTOR	 CHRIS GAUTHIER DIRECTOR
--	--	---	---	--	--


 BRITTANY TUCKER DIRECTOR	 JOSH REYNOLDS DIRECTOR	 RAVI SIDHU DIRECTOR	 MIKE ASHCROFT DIRECTOR	 LOREN TAVES DIRECTOR
---	---	--	--	---

	<h2>ALEX MITCHELL</h2> <p>CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER</p> <p>Alex brings more than a decade of combined economic development, communications, and advocacy experience in both the public and private sector. She has a deep commitment to service of the community and understands the power of our organization to advocate for business.</p>
--	--

	<h2>GURSHARAN AUJLA</h2> <p>EVENTS & SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR</p> <p>As Events and Sponsorship Coordinator, Gursharan orchestrates monthly events aimed at fostering connection and continual learning within the Abbotsford business community.</p>
---	---

<h2>NATHALIE DARWIN</h2> <p>ADMINISTRATION & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER</p> <p>Joining the team in January 2024, Nathalie brings 12 years of corporate and community experience to the Chamber, supporting day-to-day operations and leading communications activities.</p>	
---	---

	<h2>SAMANTHA PALMER</h2> <p>BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST</p> <p>Passionate about making meaningful connections, Samantha is our member's go-to to learn more about the Chamber's advocacy activities, benefits, and the many connection opportunities available to our network.</p>
---	---

<h2>JAMES KEHLER</h2> <p>CYPE COMMUNITY LEAD</p> <p>The newest member of the team, James champions the ACOC Company of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs Program and provides the Council with administrative and community support.</p>	
--	---



Showing up for our Members



Creating Spaces for Impact

The Chamber is committed to making a tangible impact in various industries by fostering collaborative spaces. Committees and programs, such as the Not-for-Profit Committee, Agriculture Committee, and the Company of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (CYPE) program, play crucial roles in driving industry-specific initiatives, addressing challenges, and fostering growth and development.

Putting our Members First

Whether the Chamber is sourcing vendors for its own operations or making recommendations to others, Chamber members will always be prioritized. Every effort is made to amplify member's businesses in the community.

A Conduit for Access to Funding

The Abbotsford Chamber plays a pivotal role in connecting its members with funding opportunities. Through its communication channels such as newsletters, website updates, and social media, the Chamber ensures that members are promptly informed about the availability of funding opportunities relevant to their businesses or industries.

Through advocacy efforts, the Chamber works to ensure that funding programs are accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of local businesses and industries.

In times of need, such as the devastating flood of 2021, the Chamber mobilized with community partners to administer emergency funding to farmers impacted by the floods.

Providing Benefits that meet the needs of our members

The Chamber is joined by our Chambers Plan partners, IGL Benefit Consultants, to ensure that members have access to comprehensive extended benefits. For businesses, being able to provide this coverage to their staff allows them to support their workforce while also boosting their competitive advantage to attract talent.



2023 at a glance

February 2023

Member Round Tables



Conducted a series of engagement events to shape membership offerings.

October 2023

Leaders Lunch with Minister Kahlon

On the heels of the Provincial Housing Targets, ACOC hosted the Housing Minister.



April 2023

Scaling up Business

In collaboration with UFV, local business owners spoke on their 'Scaling Up' journeys on an entrepreneurial panel and networking event.

Fall/Winter 2023

UFV Sales Promotion

Students from the UFV BUS332 course took part in a campaign to drive new membership while gaining practical experience in sales.

April 2023

ACOC welcomes new CEO

Alex Mitchell is brought on as CEO after a cross-country recruitment process.

November 2023

27th Annual BEAs



The Chamber recognized 12 inspiring businesses and highlighted excellence in our community.

May 2023

Start of CYPE Sip Series



The CYPE Program launches new networking event series featuring local venues

December 2023

Leaders Lunch - Mayor Seimens

Mayor Ross Siemens provided remarks on the previous year and City Council's plans for the future.





Advocacy Highlights



Joint Submission to the Fraser Valley Highway 1 Corridor Improvement Project by the Fraser Valley Chambers

In response to the release of plans for new Highway 1 upgrades by the Province, four Chambers of Commerce representing the Fraser Valley, including Abbotsford, Langley Township/City, Mission, and Chilliwack, united to push for an expedited completion of this Highway 1 expansion project to bring better transportation capacity to the region.

CEBA Loan Extension

The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce spearheaded a policy advocating for the federal government to implement a 2-year extension for the repayment deadline for CEBA (Canadian Emergency Business Account) loans for struggling businesses. It passed through the BC Chamber and all Canadian Premiers joined in the fight.

Select Standing Committee on Finance in the 2024 Federal Budget Consultations

The Chamber provided expert testimony to the Standing Committee on Finance for the 2024 Budget Consultations with the Ministry of Finance, focussed on the impacts of crime on small businesses and the need for more time on CEBA loans. Ultimately, the Canadian government granted a nominal extension to January 18th, 2024.

BC Chamber Policy Wins

In the spring of 2023, two policy motions on behalf of our business community members were brought forward by the Abbotsford Chamber passed by the BC Chamber membership. One of these policies, recommended the support the of agritech sector in BC with investments into research & development of agritech incubators and accelerators and the other was on the CEBA loan extension.





Connection Highlights



FEB

Member Round Table Sessions



SEP

Annual Golf Tournament



MAR

Annual General Meeting



SEP

BC Labour Market Round Table



APR

Scaling Up Business - Entrepreneurship Event



OCT

Leaders Lunch with MLA Ravi Jahlon



MAY

Leader's Lunch with Kevin Falcon



NOV

27th Annual Business Excellence



JUN

Agriculture Bus Tour



DEC

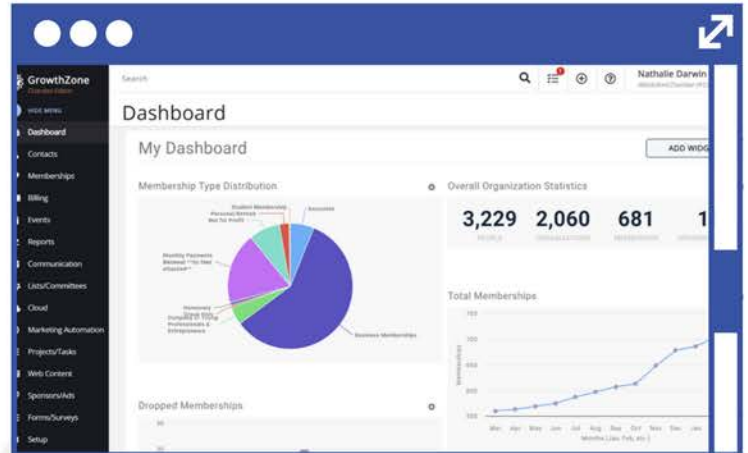
Leader's Lunch with Mayor Ross Siemens



Operational & Organizational Highlights

CRM Optimization with GrowthZone

In 2023 the Abbotsford Chamber began an intensive initiative to overhaul its membership system. The Chamber made a significant investment to migrate to new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System, GrowthZone. This new platform allowed for improved record maintenance, the centralization of member data, integration with communication platforms, and enhanced the Chamber’s reporting capabilities.



Launch of New Website

Through the migration to GrowthZone, the Chamber took the opportunity to update the website. This change contributed to enhancement of its online presence, accessibility to information, and user experience.

This update also allowed the Chamber to strengthen online security measures, set up search engine optimization and streamline payment options.



New Member Experience with InfoHub

The launch of InfoHub revolutionized the member’s online experience by providing a multifaceted platform that facilitates seamless access to billing information, event registration, effortless business profile management, and the ability to provide and access member to member perks.





ABBOTSFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Company of Young Professionals
and Entrepreneurs Program

Company of Young Professionals & Entrepreneurs (CYPE) Program connects young professionals & entrepreneurs with the opportunity to build, impact, and grow together with a diverse selection of opportunities in areas of professional development, mentorship, and networking.

2023 CYPE COUNCIL



SAM
VARING
CHAIR



LAUREN
OLYINICK
VICE CHAIR



WHITNEY
FORDHAM
COUNCIL MEMBER



JAMES
KEHLER
COUNCIL MEMBER



HARDEEP
BRAICH
COUNCIL MEMBER



GURNOOR
SIDHU
COUNCIL MEMBER



JASMIT
SINGH PHULKA
COUNCIL MEMBER



KHURRAM
JAVED
COUNCIL MEMBER



RAVI
SIDHU
COUNCIL MEMBER



KOMAL
GILL
COUNCIL MEMBER

"Together we build, attract and grow the next generation of business leaders within Abbotsford and the Fraser Valley!"

2023 CYPE Sub-Committee Key Focus Areas



Events

CYPE Sip Series and Signature networking events were extremely well attended in 2023. The team secured new sponsors for its Signature events, elevating guest experience and boosting engagement with business stakeholders.

Membership and Engagement

With dedicated recruitment and post-event follow up, the CYPE program gained a 438% increase in members from 21 to 92. The CYPE Sub-Committee continues to grow the program and create meaningful connection with potential new members.



Communications

The CYPE team developed and executed a plan to strengthen communication leveraging the new ACOC website, social media channels, and publication of a newsletter.

CYPE Event Highlights



November Sip Series
Afterthoughts



May Sip Series
Hugs in a Mug



ACOC Annual
Golf Tournament



CYPE Summer
Social



November Holiday Mingler
Trading Post



ABBOTSFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

207 - 32900 SOUTH FRASER WAY,
ABBOTSFORD, BC V2S 5A1

<https://www.abbotsfordchamber.com/>

