



## 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**Loren Taves**  
DIRECTOR



**Josh Reynolds**  
DIRECTOR



**Ravi Sidhu**  
DIRECTOR



**Brittany Tucker**  
DIRECTOR



**Sam Varing**  
DIRECTOR

## 2024 CHAMBER TEAM MEMBERS

#207-32900 South Fraser Way • 604-859-9651



**Alex Mitchell**  
CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
ceo@  
abbotsfordchamber.com



**Gursharan Aujla**  
EVENTS & SPONSORSHIP  
COORDINATOR  
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abbotsfordchamber.com



**Nathalie Darwin**  
ADMINISTRATION &  
COMMUNICATIONS  
MANAGER



**Samantha Palmer**  
BUSINESS  
ENGAGEMENT  
SPECIALIST



**James Kehler**  
COMPANY OF YOUNG  
PROFESSIONALS AND  
ENTREPRENEURS (CYPE)  
COMMUNITY LEAD

## ABBOTSFORD CHAMBER UPDATE

### March 2024 Issue

#### 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.

At the heart of our regional planning lie significant challenges—pertaining

to land use—that reverberate across transportation, housing, agriculture, and businesses alike. One glaring concern is the inadequate supply of industrial land, a critical component in our long-term regional planning. As the hub of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford has so much potential – vibrant downtown core, international airport, regional hospital, world class university, innovative businesses, and a younger generation of entrepreneurs that are truly inspiring. As Fraser Valley communities embark on retooling their OCP, let's work together on a unified vision that ties it all together so we don't end up with a patch-work of short-term solutions.

To tackle these and other economic issues head-on, the Abbotsford Chamber is proud to announce our partnership with neighboring Chambers to host a regionally-focused Economic Summit on the future of the Fraser Valley on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

This summit will serve as a pivotal platform for stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions, addressing the broader challenges and opportunities that shape the Fraser

Valley's economic landscape. Panel discussions featuring industry experts and government representatives will offer a comprehensive, big-picture exploration of our region. This collaborative initiative underscores our commitment to proactive, forward-thinking planning that will guide the Fraser Valley toward a future marked by economic resilience and prosperity. By fostering dialogue, sharing insights, and advocating for change, 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**

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Alex Svarez Design
- Easy Realtors Team
- Evans Painting
- Manning Park Resort
- Maximum Storage Solutions
- Meena Pawar
- Midland Appliance
- Precise CFO Solutions
- RBC Dominion Securities



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MARCH 27 | 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM  
SANDMAN HOTEL & SUITES

FEATURING MLA MIKE DEJONG  
-REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP-

VISIT [WWW.ABBOTSFORDCHAMBER.COM/EVENTS](http://WWW.ABBOTSFORDCHAMBER.COM/EVENTS) FOR MORE INFORMATION



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

# AGM and Keynote Presentation by Michael de Jong

March 27th  
11:30-1:30  
Sandman Hotel,  
Simon Avenue

Members must be in good standing (dues paid in full by March 20th), and in attendance at the AGM in order to participate in the Annual General Meeting and cast a vote in the Board of Directors election.

## Meet the 2024 Chamber Board Nominees

### Steve Czeck



Owner & CEO, Empyryon Technologies Inc.



Steve is a seasoned business leader with 18 years of experience as the owner & operator at Empyryon Technologies Inc. With 35 years IT experience, Steve found himself as an accidental entrepreneur in 2005 when taking over a 2-man IT company. Empyryon Technologies has since grown to 28 employees and provides services to significant commercial entities throughout the Lower Mainland and beyond.

Having served on the board of his church for 10+ years and as Director for Mutual Fire Insurance of BC for 4 years, Steve is looking forward to bringing his excitement and extensive experience to the board of the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce.

### Dr. Khyati Shetty



Director, School of Business, University Of the Fraser Valley



With over 15 years of experience bridging academia and industry, Dr. Khyati Shetty is currently the Director of UFV's School of Business and former Dean at Curtin University, Perth & Dubai.

As a Leadership Consultant, she has conducted 200+ workshops globally and worked with government bodies in Nigeria, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Maldives, India and Dubai.

Having served on several boards globally and locally, she was recognized for gender equity efforts by G-100 Global Women Leaders(Advisory Body to UN Women), and was appointed as Country Chair for Canada in the Higher Education sector in 2023.

### Kamna Suri



Regional Sales Manager, Sandman Hotel Group



With an education in Hotel Management, Kamna worked at various levels in Hospitality in India, New Delhi for esteemed hotel chains such as the Shangri-La, Sheraton, and Hilton group of hotels.

Originally from New Delhi, India, she immigrated to Canada in 2006 and settled in Abbotsford.

Kamna started working with the Sandman Hotel Group in 2010. Currently working as a Regional Sales Manager, Kamna brings her 20 years of Sales experience to the organization.

In her spare time, Kamna loves spending time with her 3-year-old daughter and her fur baby.

### Lee Kitson



General Manager - Aerospace, Marshall Aerospace Canada Inc.



Lee Kitson began his career with the Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group (Marshall ADG) in the UK in 1990 as a Design Office Technician apprentice. After completing his apprenticeship, Lee completed his Engineering Degree and realized Chartered Engineer (CEng) status with the Royal Aeronautical Society in London England. In 2007, Lee transferred to Marshall Canada, within the Aerospace Business, which provides Engineering and Tech Services to the Canadian and international markets.

While employed by Marshall Canada, Lee has delivered a variety of roles and currently serves as General Manager for the Aerospace Business in Canada, based at the Abbotsford International Airport.

# Fraser Valley Economic Summit

May 22nd

# Annual Agriculture Bus Tour

June 14th

For more information and registration go to:  
[abbotsfordchamber.com/events](http://abbotsfordchamber.com/events)