

# OUTLOOK

Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce

SPRING 2024 / Issue 13



## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS!

Congratulations to the Big Canoe. There is nothing ordinary about this ship that makes its way home every fall to the Owen Sound Harbour.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FOR 2024

Local leaders discuss what 2024 may look like locally, provincially, and nationally.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORTATION

There is a need for affordable and reliable transportation in Grey County, and the Grey Transit Route has helped fill that need.

## JUST SAYING

President Perrin Beatty on the importance of International trade and why Canada needs to “walk the talk.”

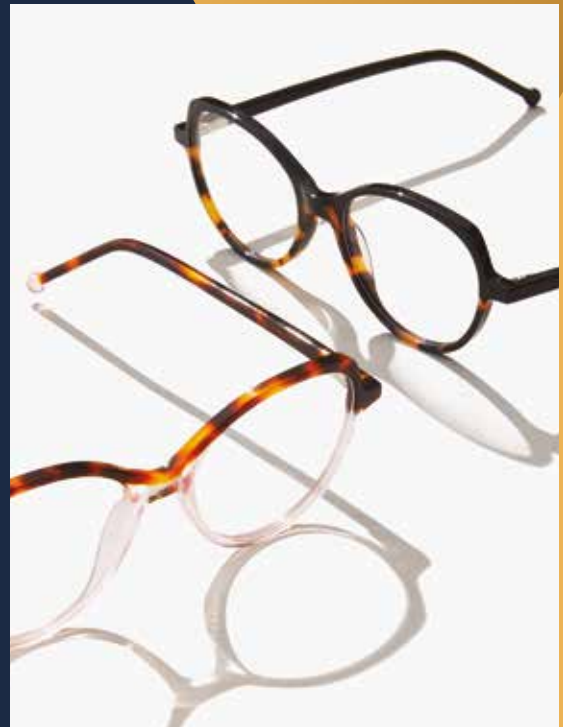
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Why the Grey Transit Route was so Successful. We had the pleasure of speaking with Stephanie Stewart Manager of Community Transportation at Grey County about the GTR and how important it is for our community and county.

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Cover photo  
MS Chi-Cheemaun in Owen Sound Harbour  
Photo credit: Candra Schank Photography



## THE LEADERS FORUM: NAVIGATING TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES

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Highlights of a wonderful chat with Canadian Chamber of Commerce President Perrin Beatty and the importance of international trade.

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## OUTLOOK

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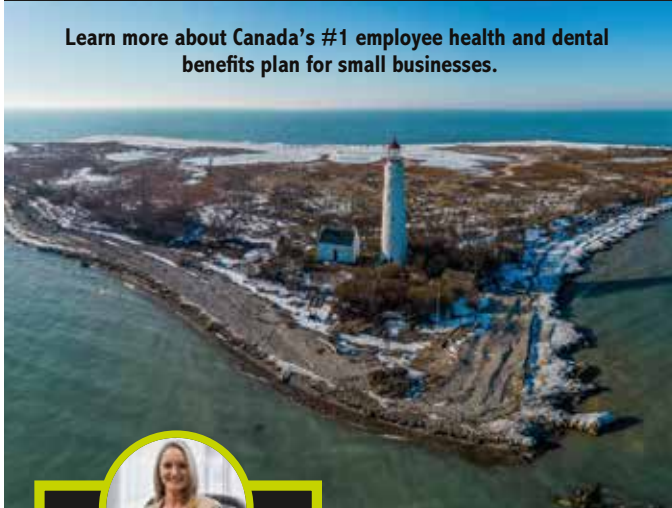
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# CELEBRATING 50 EXTRAORDINARY YEARS OF THE BIG CANOE

The MS Ch-Cheemaun is age fifty and that's something to celebrate. Ordinarily a ship isn't particularly 'exciting' and doesn't have its own special celebrations. It just performs the core job it was built for - in this case providing seasonal ferry service three times daily over the 45km distance between Tobermory and South Baymouth on Manitoulin Island (Mnidoo Mnising). But there's nothing ordinary about the "Cheech" as it is affectionally called by crew members. Extraordinary is a better descriptor.

## NOT JUST TRANSPORTATION

Under the stewardship of what is now the Owen Sound Transportation Company (OSTC), the Chi-Cheemaun has moved well beyond providing a vital transportation link in a myriad of creative ways. Over the years these initiatives have included cultural and environmental learning; facilitated stargazing; sunset and dinner cruises; showcasing local authors, songwriters and musicians; Indigenous story telling; drumming workshops; and even "Crafters on the Crossing". All this 50th season the ship will feature an onboard Sail Through Time Exhibit with artifacts, posters photographs and much more.

The metamorphosis of the Chi-Cheemaun has been so compelling that in-effect it has become a "go-to" destination in and of itself. Consider that twice-annual repositioning cruises are sold-out events with lengthy waiting lists. Last October those fortunate enough to have tickets enjoyed the 4.5-hour cruise from Tobermory to Owen Sound, complete with a five-star buffet lunch, and entertainment from local musicians.

## EARLY DAYS

The construction of the Chi-Cheemaun was commissioned in the early 1970s by the Ontario government to replace two smaller ships, Norgoma and Norisle. It began life as hull #205 in the sequence of 234 hulls built by Collingwood Shipbuilding over its rich 94 year history. The hull was side-launched on January 11, 1974. and made ready for service by September of that year by which time it was designated as the Chi-Cheemaun.

This Ojibwe name which translates into Big Canoe was selected from a contest proposal submitted by Donald Keeshig, an esteemed member of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. During each repositioning trip while passing the Neyaashiinigiing Lighthouse at Cape Croker, the ship's crew blows its horn to salute the memory of Mr. Keeshig.

## TRAVEL IN GOOD SPIRITS

In keeping with Chi-Cheemaun's Ojibwe spirit, in 2015 the ship's sides were adorned with the 'Travel In Good Spirits' benediction. Two years later the ship's bow was wrapped in bold, bright colours and images influenced by Woodland graphics and its funnel was decorated with Anishinaabe-inspired images of the turtle, moose and bear.

## LET'S TAKE THE FERRY!

The Chi-Cheemaun is so revered in Canadian marine heritage that on July 12, 2023 Canada Post issued a stamp featuring the ship as one of five active vessels honoured in its "Let's Take The Ferry!" series.



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## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS - continued

### TEN MILLION PASSENGERS AND COUNTING

Built at a cost of \$10 million in 1974, the Big Canoe is capable of transporting 638 passengers and about 120 of today's standard sized vehicles. The ferry has two passenger levels containing a dining room, gift shop and two seating lounges. Kerry Adams, OSTC's Director of Operations, estimates that since its inaugural voyage the ship has completed about 24,000 crossings, transporting in the range of 10 million passengers and almost 3 million vehicles. Replacing the sturdily-constructed vessel today would cost about \$130 million!

### PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

To obtain a hands-on perspective of life on the Chi-Cheemaun we spoke with Mr. Adams and two other senior officers who share long term associations with and affection for the Big Canoe. Collectively they have over 100 years on or around the Ferry.

Kerry Adams has had a relationship with the Chi-Cheemaun that is almost as old as the ship itself. His first job out of school as a deckhand on the ship in 1975 prepared him for a long stretch of 48.5 years "on the water". After that auspicious beginning and a variety of other shipping experiences across Canada Adams became a summer captain of the Chi-Cheemaun in 1998 and full Captain in 2000. In 2023 he accepted the position of Director of Operations for OSTC. "My goal was to get 50 years on the water," he observed, "but I'll have to settle for sailing out my remaining days at a desk. It was a huge transition but very rewarding, especially because I work with many great individuals, both on and off the water." Reflecting further, he added, "many of those great people are proud members of the Seafarers International Union of Canada. Where would we be without our strong 50 year collaboration with that outstanding organization?"

For Rob Schreiber the Chi-Cheemaun is very much a family affair. On January 11, 1974, then nine years old, Rob travelled with his father Leo from Tobermory to watch the launch of the mighty hull that became the Chi-Cheemaun. Little did he know that 29 years later he would be Captain of that same ship, a position he shared in the ship's two Captain system with Kerry Adams for 20 years and now divides with former

First Mate Yasser Elkhoudry. It's special for Rob that his Dad also captained the ship from 1978 to 1999. Both he and Kerry Adams remember that the advent of the Chi-Cheemaun was a huge economic catalyst for both Tobermory and Manitoulin Island, as it continues to be.

Jude MacDonald has been the Chi-Cheemaun's Chief Steward for 15 years. In this role he oversees all aspects of passengers' experience to ensure their comfort and enjoyment in clean, safe, accessible ship premises. Along with Assistant Chief Steward Max Hann, Jude is responsible for regular and special event food services, entertainment, learning events and the ship's unique 'boatique' and art gallery. He observes that this job is particularly demanding on the repositioning trips when a full ship of passengers partake of an ample buffet and local entertainment. He added "over my 25 year tenure on the Cheech, I've "never dreaded going to work and I hope to continue exercising and enjoying my duties as long as the ferry is in service."



*Kerry Adams, Rob Schreiber, Jude MacDonald*

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORTATION – WHY THE GREY TRANSIT ROUTE IS SO SUCCESSFUL

Owen Sound wouldn't be what it is today if it wasn't for public transportation. Owen Sound had the CPR/CNR rail service, as well as it was a bustling shipping port, which made Owen Sound the place to be. Who can forget our wonderful landmark the Chi Chee Maun who is celebrating 50 years of service this year. Most of this has gone now, but still in motion are our city buses, taxi services and most recently the Grey Transit Route bus service. The GTR as we fondly call it provides a safe, dependable, and affordable transportation option for residents to travel between different communities in our area.

The Chamber had the great pleasure of speaking with Stephanie Stewart, Manager of Community Transportation at Grey County about the GTR. Stephanie was asked why the GTR service was started? She said "The GTR was developed based on community feedback, which indicated that there was a need for affordable and reliable transportation in Grey County". Provincial grant funding was received in 2019, and staff got straight to work, meeting with local municipalities and community groups to develop a transit system for Grey County. As a result of the global pandemic, the goal and vision of the GTR changed as the realities of public transit shifted.

Stephanie was asked that now this project is in the final year, what did she learn from the project, what were the positive impacts and is she excited for something like this to continue in the future.

Stephanie was very passionate in her answer. She is very excited about this program and proud of its success. She said that there are so many individuals that are relying on the service and excitedly noted that it has been incredibly heartwarming to see people make meaningful connections because of public transit. Stephanie shared that one passenger was happy to say that she used the GTR to visit her husband weekly in Long Term Care, and that without this service she wouldn't be able to see him.

One of the greatest challenges of the GTR is Grey County's vast geography. As Grey's demographics begin to evolve the transit service will have to keep up. Residents living closer to the GTA have different life experiences and service expectations than those living in rural Grey County. Additionally, throughout this project weather has posed some unique situations as

weather patterns change significantly between municipalities and Counties, meaning that inclement weather can impact the GTR more than a local intercommunity transit system. Additionally, scheduling can be hard as the distance between destinations is far, making it challenging to meet all the different start and end times of employers.


It is with sadness that the provincial funding will be coming to an end in 2025. Stephanie was asked if there is a possibility that maybe once 2025 is over, could Grey County apply for funding from a different organization or somewhere to support the transportation that is needed for the GTR? She resounded with a "Yes, we are exploring options". In the future she hopes that there is additional funding received from the Federal or Provincial government, from the private sector, or through new grant opportunities.

Stephanie is looking forward to seeing things continue to grow and build upon the innovative transit solutions that have come to light over the past few years.

Stephanie wanted to send kudos to the dedicated staff that serve the GTR. These individuals have made the service what it is today and go above and beyond caring for the passengers.

The Chamber recognizes that the loss of this service would have a big impact on the community and would be happy to work with Grey County and the municipalities and its businesses to look at innovative initiatives to carry on with this much needed service in our community and beyond.





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### CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF WOODLEY CARE SERVICES: A JOURNEY OF COMPASSION AND GROWTH

As Woodley Care Services marks its 10th anniversary this year, it's not just a milestone for the company but a testament to the unwavering dedication of its founder, Jeremy Woodley, who has spent two decades as a Personal Support Worker (PSW) in the service of others.

Reflecting on the journey that led to the establishment of Woodley Care Services, Jeremy recalls the winter months of 2013/14 when the seeds of entrepreneurship began to sprout in his mind. A near move back to his hometown of Brantford fell through, and fate seemed to guide him towards a different path. Accepted into the Business Enterprise program, Jeremy embarked on a journey that was meant to be—a journey of compassion, service, and empowerment.

Jeremy's background in working with individuals with special needs, developmental delays, and seniors laid a strong foundation for Woodley Care Services. From group homes to home care to long-term care, Jeremy's wealth of experience equipped him with the skills and insights needed to make a difference in the lives of those he served.

What began as a solo endeavor has now blossomed into a thriving enterprise, with Woodley Care Services boasting a team of 50 dedicated staff members serving 70 families and clients. Specializing in supporting individuals with dementia, Alzheimer's, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, autism, Down syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and cerebral palsy, Woodley Care Services stands as a beacon of hope for those in need of compassionate and personalized care.

The mission of Woodley Care Services goes beyond mere caregiving; it's about enabling individuals to maintain their independence and dignity, allowing them to stay in the com-

fort and familiarity of their own homes for as long as possible. Recognizing the importance of respite for caregivers, Woodley Care Services also provides much-needed breaks, offering peace of mind and support to families in need.

But it's not just about meeting the basic needs; it's about enriching lives and creating memorable experiences. From bowling and swimming to attending hockey games and movies, Woodley Care Services ensures that its clients have opportunities for joy, fulfillment, and connection.

At the heart of Woodley Care Services is its exceptional team—a diverse group of professionals including PSWs, PSAs, nurses, EAs, and a behavioral specialist, all united by a shared commitment to excellence and compassion. Their collective expertise, combined with a personalized approach to care, sets Woodley Care Services apart as a trusted and reliable partner in caregiving.

As Jeremy looks ahead to the future, he remains steadfast in his dedication to serving others and making a positive impact in the community. For those seeking compassionate and personalized care, Woodley Care Services stands ready to provide support and assistance.

For more information about Woodley Care Services, please contact Jeremy Woodley at [owner@woodleycareservices.com](mailto:owner@woodleycareservices.com), 226-923-0624, or visit [www.care-services.ca](http://www.care-services.ca). You can also reach out via email at [info@woodleycareservices.com](mailto:info@woodleycareservices.com).

Here's to another decade of blessings and service from the Woodley Care Services team!

Blessings to you,  
Jeremy Woodley



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# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS - continued

## MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Asked about noteworthy aspects of their ship-board experience the trio of seasoned veterans joked about the continued popularity of Chi-Cheemaun’s “iconic” breakfast sandwiches, cabbage rolls and meat pies on the regular menu. More seriously they remembered how challenging Covid was for passengers and crew alike with masks, distancing and no meal service. They recalled that there have been numerous onboard weddings, one between crew members; one near birth; and on average one to two medical emergencies per season. One time a small plane crashed near the ship at Cape Cove with the crew speeding to the rescue. So skilled are the crews that the Big Canoe has not been involved in a serious incident since two major groundings in the 1980s. Bad weather is a constant concern. On occasion the ship has been forced to take refuge. As well, varying water levels sometimes necessitate creative solutions including re-arranging dock access. Several times the ship has even acted as a film set – once as a stand-in for the Staten Island Ferry.

## FIFTY MORE YEARS?

Looking ahead what’s in the Chi-Cheemaun’s future? While exact longevity can’t be predicted, a number of positive factors suggest there are many more happy birthdays to come. Certainly, the need for the service continues unabated. “The steel hull which is rated for 75 years of service is in perfect condition,” says Adams. “The ship underwent a machinery mid-life refit in 2006 and 2007 in Sarnia and we consistently meet Transport Canada’s rigorous certification standards. Every five years, the vessel follows a mandatory drydocking with major inspections and work that can only be performed while the vessel is out of water; and each winter the insides of the ship are revitalized or upgraded on a rotating basis.” Adams adds that “our standard

operating procedure is to run the Chi-Cheemaun on only two of the four engines, alternating engine use on a weekly rotation basis. This allows us to optimize fuel consumption and keep the operating hours on the equipment as low as possible to lengthen the service life of the machinery.”

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Perhaps the biggest looming deterrent to many more happy years of service as usual is ever tightening emission controls. Currently the Chi-Cheemaun consumes in the range six and a half tons of ultra-low diesel fuel per day which translates into over seven thousand litres daily. But world standards are moving quickly towards zero emissions. This is driving a major shift in the marine industry with reliance on diesel fuels being replaced by technologies like hydrogen fuel cells and hybrid solutions. Perhaps, Owen Sound based Hydrogen Optimized can partner with OSTC to retrofit the Chi-Cheemaun to lead the way in this essential transformation?

## PARTY TIME

The annual Chi Cheemaun Festival, with its wide array of participatory events, is being held from Friday, June 14, 2024 to Sunday June 16, 2024, in Tobermory. Always fun, it will take on extra meaning this year as the focal point in celebrating the Big Canoe’s 50th Anniversary. This focus will extend to the ship’s Light up the Night fireworks cruise on the Saturday night. And as an added bonus, local author and historian Richard Thomas will release his new, sure-to-be best selling book regaling the Chi-Cheemaun’s life and times over 50 years. Make plans to be there. You don’t want to miss this once in half a century occasion!





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Tim Muzzell B.A. B.Ed. M.B.A.  
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# THE LEADERS' FORUM: WHAT TO EXPECT FOR 2024?



The Owen Sound District Chamber of Commerce hosted a well-attended Leaders' Forum at Stone Tree Golf and Fitness on January 26, 2024. Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MP Alex Ruff and MPP Rick Byers shared information and commentary on *What to Expect for 2024* locally, provincially and nationally with lively audience interaction. Owen Sound Mayor Ian Boddy also participated in the Forum, which was facilitated by Jason Hemstock, the Chamber's Board Chair.

Asked about national prospects for 2024 Ruff noted that as the Official Opposition his Conservative caucus cannot set the federal policy agenda directly. But they will continue to hold the minority government accountable until an election is called later this year or in 2025. Whether in opposition or perhaps soon in government his top personal priority will continue to be representing his constituents. Urgent current local issues that Ruff is focused on include insufficient affordable housing, shortage of skilled trades people and ensuring continued economic growth opportunities for the agri-food sector.

As a member of Ontario's governing PC party, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Byers contributes directly to the Province's policy and program initiatives. In so doing he observed that "this is the most challenging time families, businesses and governments have encountered in many decades". The long list of challenges include those in health-care, housing, and the economy, among many others. 2024 will see accelerated investments by the Ford government in critical areas such as adding to infrastructure and augmenting the number of frontline doctors and nurses.

While responding to questions from Hemstock and the audience both Ruff and Byers emphasized the importance of collaboration among different orders of government, the private sector and not-for-profits. A highlight in this regard was the presence and participation of Andrew Stuart, President & CEO of Owen Sound-based Hydrogen Optimized Inc (HOI). which is at the international forefront in developing and commercializing large-scale, emission-free, green hydrogen production systems targeted to high-growth markets. Mr. Stuart said that his company's growing success is the direct result of significant collaboration with the federal and Ontario governments and with Georgian College which has been HOI's source of well-trained scientists and technicians, many of whom are newcomers to Canada.

Building on the linked themes of collaborative approaches to clean energy and local economic development, Jessica Linthorne, Chief Operating Officer of the Nuclear Innovation Institute, praised Bruce nuclear which for more than 35 years has been a reliable source of cobalt-60 which sterilizes 40% of the world's single-use medical devices. As much has been achieved so far, the window is still open in 2024 and beyond for significant future local isotope-related economic growth. Linthorne thanked Byers for introducing a Private Members' Bill in support of medical isotopes. It passed with unanimous support in October 2023.

In response to a query about the federal court's reversal of the use by the federal government of the Emergencies Act to stop the 2022 Ottawa truck occupation, Ruff said that he did not in any way condone the truckers' action. He stated that the Prime Minister should have taken a more collaborative approach rather than acting unilaterally.

Byers was asked about the continuing shortage of Long Term Care beds across Ontario, especially in Bruce and Grey Counties. He re-iterated that this is one of the many challenges that we are facing as a province. The government is committed to adding or upgrading about 60,000 beds across Ontario but "it will take time". Beyond improving the number and quality of LTC beds he said that there is the additional challenge of providing more nurses and PSWs to deliver care to their occupants, especially when LTCs are in competition with hospitals and home care agencies for these professionals.

*continued on page 19*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER



Diane Austin CEO

Transportation is a vital tool in getting from point A to point B. Whether it is rollerblading, skateboarding, biking, trains, planes, or automobiles, where would we be without it? As the world evolves, modes of transportation will continue to change exponentially. As just one example, even a decade ago who could have imagined the widespread and growing use of drones? However, for all of that, there is still and always will be a basic need to get from point A to B.

I think about the time in the 1800s and for most of the 1900s when local citizens would hear the loud whistle of the train pulling into the station or the blast of the ship's horn coming into the harbour. Businesspeople hustled and bustled while picking up their wares and products and continuing with their busy day.

The new reality is that transportation in its many forms is increasingly expensive. Whether you are driving your own vehicle or hiring a transportation service, the costs of wages,

fuel, licensing, and repairs are all up. It's a far different situation than 20 or 30 years ago, or even before Covid! This relentless escalation has impacted us all. It is, admittedly, rough times where tough decisions must be made but what do they look like? It could be cuts to services that have already been reduced too much or an increase in fares for services which should be attainable for all that are in need. Is there a solution, I do not know, but what I do know is that we will always require some sort of transportation service.

A positive highlight in Owen Sound's transportation history for me is to see the MS Chi-Cheemaun, or the "Big Canoe" as it comes to rest in our "Sound" for the winter. We all get to enjoy the mighty ship as it proudly shows off its majestic splendor in a beautiful setting - getting ready to once again embark in the spring to provide a fun and exciting journey back up to Tobermory to shuttle back and forth between that Bruce Peninsula town and Manitoulin Island.

The Chi-Cheemaun is celebrating a special 50th anniversary in operation this year. I am excited to see it featured on our cover and lead article. Happy Anniversary from the Chamber and me, a longtime Owen Sound resident. We wish you fifty-plus more flourishing years.



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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD



Jason Hemstock, Chair

When I began my tenure as Chair of the Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce, I had concerns over our transportation services and how they were affecting our business community. From my perspective as General Manager of a local Hotel, there were some serious shortages, especially after 6 PM when public transit ceased operations and few taxis were left to meet the demand.

Hotel employees and guests alike were often stranded without transportation during peak times and after hours. I brought this concern up during meetings with the Chamber board and found many with the same opinion. Without significant changes how can we expect our travel and tourism industry to flourish?

Since then, the Chamber office has been very busy talking with invested partners such as taxi companies, Owen Sound public transportation, and Grey County transportation services. We have been making efforts to improve connections and get

people working together towards solutions that will improve transportation services within our fine community. The chamber represented taxi companies at police board meetings to review the current by-laws to help improve the taxi companies' business life and acted as a voice of concern at County and City Council meetings regarding matters affecting transportation services.

We are not finished here yet... The Chamber of Commerce is currently working with city and county partners to provide transportation services designed to support businesses within our community. To do this effectively, we need your help! On the evening of March 27, 2024, the Chamber of Commerce hosted a meeting collecting information for businesses on their transportation needs. We will also be collecting this information informally and recommend that you contact the office to voice your concerns. With this information, we hope to be able to provide solutions that keep businesses operating smoothly into the future.

By working together, we can overcome any obstacle. We hope to hear from you in the near future.

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## LEADERS FORUM - continued

On a related topic, Ruff noted the federal government has just allocated \$40 million for an In-Home-Support pilot project as part of its Age Well at Home initiative. Regrettably none of that funding was directed to Bruce or Grey Counties.

Jill Umbach, Co-ordinator of the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force explained that the United Way and other not-for-profits are struggling with pressure downloaded from governments related to food and affordable housing insecurity. "There's more demand and less dollars", she said. Byers acknowledged this situation and said that in 2024 the Ontario government will be addressing this challenge with new or augmented program initiatives. Ruff added that the federal government's ban on foreign home-buying was a big city measure with no applicability or impact in solving the affordable housing crisis in Bruce Grey.

Sarah Cowley, CEO of the YMCA Owen Sound Grey Bruce said that YMCA child-care programs represent one-fifth of all licensed spots in Ontario, and while her not-for-profit organization is a big supporter of the intent of the \$10-a-day program, the way it is currently being funded is not sustainable. "That's very unfortunate because child-care is an important economic driver".

Ruff said that the federal government's role in the nationwide daycare program is badly structured and funded. "It's a poor attempt at dealing with a real problem". He suggested that income testing would help government funding be more effective for those most in need. He then thanked the YMCA, the United Way and other community organizations for their caring support of those in need; and added that both Byers and he participate regularly in fund raising initiatives to help fill the gap.

An audience member asked Byers his views on the recent decision of Grey County to cut \$438,000 from its 2024 community transportation budget. He replied that especially as a former Board member of Metrolinx he knows that public transit is essential for local economic development. He praised the Grey Transit Route's one-way \$5 adult fare between Owen Sound and Orangeville as a positive initiative. But he added that there are many competing funding needs and it's hard for the Ontario government and Grey County to find the balance in this and many other challenging areas.

It's the Chamber's happy conclusion that this 2024 Leaders Forum was particularly successful - perhaps our best ever!

There was lively, informed dialogue among Byers, Ruff, Hemstock and leaders from the private and not-for-profit sectors. All appeared to agree that there are many daunting challenges ahead in 2024 and that collaboration is a valuable tool in addressing these challenges head-on and in seeking to find the best possible policy balance.

**Alex Ruff** grew up on a farm just outside Tara in Bruce County. He is a retired Canadian Army Colonel with over 25 years of military service, much in active duty. A member of the Conservative Party of Canada, Alex was first elected as MP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound in 2019 and re-elected in 2021.

**Rick Byers** was elected to his first term as Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP in 2022. He is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance of the governing Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. Prior to his election, Rick had a 32 year career in infrastructure investment, public sector investment banking, government and accounting. He and his wife Margot have lived in Grey Highlands for over a decade.

**Ian Boddy** was born and raised in Owen Sound. He is a graduate of the University of Alberta and of Western University's Faculty of Law; and was called to the Bar in 1993. Ian was elected to Owen Sound City Council in 2010, and as Mayor in 2014, a position he has held ever since.

**Jason Hemstock** is the current Chair of the OSDCC, a position he took over from now Past Chair Marg Benedict. Jason is the General Manager of the Best Western Inn on the Bay in Owen Sound. Like Alex Ruff he is a Tara native and still calls that small community home. Jason has a Business Diploma from Georgian College.



# NEW MEMBER PROFILES BY TIFFANY JAMES



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# JUST SAYING

BY DAVE CARR



## A Chat With Perrin Beatty

I had a wonderful opportunity in early February to spend most of an hour with Perrin Beatty, long-time president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. The occasion was The Open Line on CFOS Radio, dealing specifically (mostly) with Mr. Beatty's pointed letter of December 29th criticizing the PM and Canada for not "walking the talk" when it comes to International Trade.

The essence of the message is that most of our business partners around the world suggest we're "unserious" about achieving what we need in both buying and selling globally. If I paraphrase it, Canada seems to tell the world "We'll get back to you on that..." and then we never do.

So what does that have to do with us in this area? According to Mr. Beatty, if you're reading this, you're the one that counts. Ninety-eight percent of all business in this country is found in the small and medium sectors, and I'd say that's pretty much us in Owen Sound and across Grey and Bruce Counties.

Now, I don't know this, 'cause I just don't get out much, but the Chamber president says if I did visit around, I'd be surprised at how many of you are involved in some way in Canada's international trade. The nation's smallest businesses with five or fewer employees line our main streets and suburban shopping areas. And for those of you classified as "medium-sized," Mr. Beatty's concerns about Canada's seemingly reactive and unfocussed trade strategies reach right into your shop floor,

your business office, and your books. If, for instance, you're in agriculture exporting and reading this, Mr. Beatty suggests you could be so much further ahead if trade at the federal level were taken much more seriously.

It saddens me that, as Mr. Beatty describes it, it's more a matter of drift rather than any deliberate change of roles in international trade.

So, I know that when election time rolls around, your Chamber hosts at least one all-candidates meeting, and within that structure, there are questions specifically as business oriented as they can be. When your neighbours (and you) are asking about Housing, Inflation, and Jobs, I hope a bit of this will filter into your considerations. That's because from the widgets you produce to your beef, or canola, or whatever - including the goods you import to either do your job or to market to your neighbours - this turns out to be one of those critical issues that could easily be overshadowed.

Last word to Perrin Beatty at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce from our Open Line chat: *"If you want to be taken seriously, you have to act seriously."*

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## 06. Workshops / Webinars





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