

## Community partners, businesses, mobilize to foster growth

By Mark PavilonsEditor

Local forces are gathering to pave the road ahead with prosperity in King Township and beyond. The King Chamber of Commerce and Kingbridge Centre have formed a one-of-a-kind alliance, shoring up not only the local economy, but fostering unlimited potential. The union will strengthen the local business community with targeted programs, resources and events. The partnership will respond to business needs ranging from recovery after the pandemic, driving innovation adoption, integrating environmental benefits into business models, gathering thought leaders for sharing best practices and supporting the development of new businesses. As the Kingbridge Centre re-opens to the community in April, the organizations are planning joint events to bring businesses owners and leaders back together, discussing their needs, priorities and opportunities. Kingbridge has been hosting York region's needy throughout the pandemic, operating as an isolation shelter. Staff at Kingbridge are excited that the centre's facilities, including meeting rooms and the restaurant will once again welcome visitors. The collaboration will include the Chamber having a physical presence at the Kingbridge Centre for a trial period. This will enable Chamber members to have a regular meeting place, and directly connect King's business community with the ventures that are participating in the new innovation programs. The partnership will also focus on understanding the needs of the business community and for the development of high value programs for the member companies. Areas under discussion include a grant writing support program, talent attraction and retention initiatives, training and development and joint pursuit of funding opportunities. "Throughout the pandemic, Kingbridge has been proud to serve the community through its partnership with York Region and the Salvation Army. Now looking forward to resuming regular business operations, we are excited to build an ecosystem of businesses that are focused on driving innovation, developing climate change solutions and setting the stage for future prosperity," Dubeau added. The Chamber's new "home" at Kingbridge will facilitate the group's work, and give Alison Mumford, the Chamber's newest "go-to person" an office. Alison will be there weekly, with perhaps more of a presence down the road as her position becomes more permanent. "The King Chamber has worked tirelessly through the pandemic to support local businesses through a Shop Local campaign, advocacy efforts, and rallying business to support community. We are excited to start in-person events again, and to build strong programs that will benefit our businesses," said Angelo Santorelli, President of the King Chamber of Commerce. "Our partnership with the Kingbridge Centre will accelerate the economic recovery of local businesses, celebrate successes, and create strategic project and partnering opportunities." The King Chamber of Commerce will be holding weekly drop-in sessions for member businesses at the Kingbridge location, on Wednesdays beginning in April. Upcoming joint events will be published on the King Chamber website and all are invited to participate. Dubeau added Kingbridge has been very active in terms of building partnerships in the past couple of years, strengthening ties with the Township as well as Seneca College. They've assembled a unique mix of companies who offer a diverse arsenal of ideas. They include Seneca Innovation, Compass Foods, Boreal Greens, AlteX Academy and Element3 Robotics - everything from agricultural to robots. Kingbridge has been far from idle during the pandemic, developing its Living Lab and focussing on the sustainability of forests, pollinators and food sources. King Councillor Debbie Schaefer noted this partnership will enhance the input into King's newly minted Climate Action Plan, which is in the final stages of development. "This kind of partnership will help make the CAP better," she said. Mayor Steve Pellegrini said the Township has always valued its relationship with the Chamber and this new collaboration will take things to a new level. Council, and King's Economic Development Officer Jamie Smyth are here to help, he said. Smyth said the new affiliation will help mold and shape the future as we work together to implement new initiatives. Organizations interested in learning more about the partnership should contact Karen Dubeau at [Karen.dubeau@kingbridgecentre.com](mailto:Karen.dubeau@kingbridgecentre.com) or Alison Mumford at [info@kingchamber.ca](mailto:info@kingchamber.ca)