

# CANADA'S INNOVATION CORRIDOR SUMMIT

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## OPINION PIECE

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### **Promoting Hamilton on a bigger stage**

By Keanin Loomis

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is invested in helping our member businesses prosper. That means working on multiple fronts in our home community to spark an entrepreneurial culture that produces quality jobs for more Hamiltonians. It also requires us to get involved in initiatives beyond Hamilton that provide opportunities for our members — and Hamilton at large — to create value on a bigger stage.

One example is our chamber's leadership role in advancing Hamilton as an essential part of Canada's Innovation Corridor.

The corridor — anchored by Toronto, Waterloo Region and Hamilton-Burlington, and enhanced by a mix of contiguous communities — is a global economic region responsible for more than one fifth of Canada's economy. Ten chambers of commerce and boards of trade in Southern Ontario, including the Hamilton Chamber, have formed a team to build up the corridor. It's called Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council.

Working with a host of partners, including local municipal leaders, our goal is to make Canada's Innovation Corridor a global top 10 region by 2025. The benefits of a rising tide will flow to Hamilton and other corridor communities. And it will define Hamilton's specialized future in an economy fuelled by innovations in science, technology and advanced manufacturing.

Below are three reasons our chamber is on the Corridor Business Council representing Hamilton's interests.

**Shape the Narrative:** Significant efforts are being made to further develop and market a world class economic region based on the global reputation of Toronto. It's the right strategy given the strengths that enable Toronto to consistently rank among the world's premier cities. These strengths — the pillars of a modern economy — result from a unique combination of talented people, manufacturing and technological prowess, quality of life, stable institutions, and access to capital and global markets.

Toronto is our region's calling card to the world. The task is to advance the narrative of an inclusive regional economy powered by Toronto and a dense concentration of interconnected communities.

That's a major reason we've teamed up with our chamber counterparts. Canada's Innovation Corridor has the potential to take root and blossom as a brand that attracts significant domestic and international attention and investment. We need to ensure Hamilton is woven into the story used to market this regional economy in Canada and around the world. Business concierge services like the Ontario Investment Office and Toronto Global demonstrate the use of collaborative marketing methods in economic development. Canada's Innovation Corridor mirrors this trend.

**Learn About Neighbouring Communities:** There's value knowing how individual communities within Canada's Innovation Corridor contribute to our region's success. These insights highlight local assets and areas of expertise. Fact sharing also helps identify centres of excellence and make the case for strategic investments at the community level. Equally important, the exercise of learning more about neighbouring communities reveals the DNA of a highly interconnected regional economy.

Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council provides a workbench to assemble the puzzle pieces, appreciate local priorities and see the advantages of collaboration. For example, a bird's eye view of the corridor shows dense patterns of economic activity along Highway 401 (the Toronto-Waterloo Region connection) as well as the QEW (the Toronto-Burlington-Hamilton connection). This insight adds to our understanding of regional connectivity and the potential for collaboration that draws on the combined strengths of the Hamilton-Burlington community.

**Advance Shared Initiatives:** Our chamber's participation on the Corridor Business Council also helps drive the implementation of signature regional initiatives important to Hamilton and other communities across Southern Ontario. For example, the council continues to assist the roll out of Canada's Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster centred in the corridor. In cooperation with Next Generation Manufacturing Canada, we're contributing to an innovation system needed to accelerate the deployment of Industry 4.0 in Hamilton and beyond. Another example is our council's focus on improved regional transportation infrastructure. Together, we're advocating for bold regional solutions to streamline the movement of people and goods, corridor-wide.

The Hamilton Chamber has stepped forward to organize the inaugural Canada's Innovation Corridor Summit at Royal Botanical Gardens on June 26. This regional gathering is an initiative of the Corridor Business Council and is designed to promote integration across the corridor. It's inspiring to see Hamilton and Burlington, Ontario's Bay Area, shine in a regional spotlight. Bonds with other corridor communities and links to the global economy ensure an even brighter future for Hamilton businesses.

*Keanin Loomis is president and CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, lead organizer of the inaugural Canada's Innovation Corridor Summit on June 26. Learn more at [corridorsummit.ca](http://corridorsummit.ca) or call 905-522-1151 x 100.*