

CANDIDATE BRIEFING

GROWTH FROM WITHIN

Existing businesses, local support, procurement and connected supply and value chains

Prepared for municipal candidates, members and the public | September 29, 2026

The next investment decision may belong to a business already here.

Growth from within means understanding what existing businesses need to remain viable, reinvest, improve productivity, reach customers and transfer ownership. It connects continued local support with commercial opportunity and practical follow-through, alongside the attraction of new investment.^{1,2}

1. Existing businesses are part of the investment pipeline

An expansion does not have to arrive from another community to count as economic development. A farm adding processing, a manufacturer upgrading equipment, a retailer building online sales, a contractor entering a new supply chain, or a successor buying an established firm can all represent investment in Chatham-Kent. These are illustrative growth pathways, not reported BRE results.

Ontario's Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) manual describes a structured, action-oriented, community-based process: learn about business issues and opportunities, respond to immediate needs, and develop and implement priorities. Its focus is not simply to persuade a company to stay; it is to understand the conditions affecting its next decision.¹

Retention, productivity, expansion and succession are distinct outcomes. Retaining a viable enterprise can preserve services and supplier capacity. Modernization may increase output without increasing headcount. Succession can maintain continuity through a change of owner. None of these automatically establishes a net employment or tax-revenue gain for the whole municipality.

2. Continued local support means more than promotion

The BR+E manual includes buy-local campaigns among possible actions, but also identifies approvals, infrastructure, workforce information, training and property inventories. The Chamber's leadership report similarly connects business engagement to practical referrals and longer-term community improvements.^{1,3}

Applied to CK, continued support can include regular business contact, access to professional advice, understandable municipal requirements, communication during road works, reliable services, introductions to customers, and follow-up after a referral. Consumer spending is one part of this picture; business-to-business purchasing and institutional demand are others.

The question is not only, "Who can we attract?"

It is also, "What is preventing the businesses already here from making their next investment?"

3. BRE: from listening to implementation

The four-stage Ontario model is **Preparation; Collect and Analyze; Develop Goals and Action Plans; Implement and Monitor**. The CK presentation uses the same sequence. Interviews are an input to action, not the final product.^{1,2}

During interviews, **red flags** identify urgent retention risks, such as possible closure, relocation or layoffs; **green flags** identify time-sensitive opportunities, including expansion. The manual calls for follow-up that records the responsible person, action, outcome and completion date, rather than waiting for the final community report.¹

The division of responsibilities described in the CK presentation

The September 2026 leadership presentation distinguishes task-force leadership, program administration, strategic sponsorship and service delivery. These are program roles, not ownership of the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem.²

Participant	Role in the presentation
Growth Council / CK Leadership Economic Growth Committee	Task Force Lead: confirms scope and priorities, aligns partners, reviews findings and monitors progress.
Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce	Program manager and administrator: manages the work plan, budget, coordinator, communications and reporting.
Chatham-Kent Leadership Cabinet	Strategic sponsor: brings cross-sector participation, connections and alignment.
Coordinator and resource network	Organize confidential interviews and referrals. Municipal Economic Development, the Small Business Centre and specialist partners retain responsibility for their services.

The presentation specifically distinguishes BRE from a second business concierge, duplicate coaching service or replacement for existing grant and advisory programs. Its contribution is systematic listening, referral, shared learning and follow-through.²

Confidential does not mean anonymous

The manual makes this distinction explicitly: businesses are identifiable to authorized project participants so that a specific concern can be addressed privately. Volunteers sign confidentiality agreements, listen and record rather than diagnose, and promptly flag urgent matters. Public findings and supplier directories serve different purposes; confidential interview information is not automatically public marketing information.¹

A practical extension is an **opt-in supplier capability profile**, separate from the BRE interview record. A business could authorize the sharing of products, certifications, capacity and contact details without disclosing its customers, pricing, financing or succession plans. Any such profile would need agreed access, consent and updating arrangements.

Program design is not a result.

Business visits, referrals and action plans can be counted immediately. Retained operations, completed investment and new commercial relationships require subsequent evidence.

4. Strengthening supply chains and creating more value

For this briefing, a **supply chain** is the sequence of inputs, production, services, transport and distribution that gets a product to a customer. A **value chain** focuses on how linked activities create value for that customer. Ontario's agriculture guide describes value-chain partnerships among producers, processors, marketers, retailers, food-service firms, shippers and supporting organizations.⁴

Its agricultural-system model on printed page 5 combines the productive land base with infrastructure, inputs, services and supportive communities. Its value-chain discussion on printed page 46 explains why mapping those connections can reveal opportunities that are not apparent when each business is considered alone.⁴

Illustrative connections relevant to CK

Business setting	Opportunity to investigate	Questions before proceeding
Agriculture and agri-food	Connect growers with processing, packaging, cold storage, food-service buyers and distribution.	Is there customer demand? Can volume, seasonality, food safety, utilities and delivery requirements be met?
Manufacturing and trades	Connect existing firms with tooling, fabrication, automation, maintenance, logistics and professional services.	Are quality certification, tolerances, lead times, cybersecurity and working capital sufficient?
Main streets, tourism and not-for-profits	Connect local services, food, events, hospitality, cultural activity and social enterprises to recurring customer needs.	Does the arrangement add sales or service value, fit budgets and capacity, and provide a sustainable margin?

These examples apply the guide's connection-and-capability approach beyond agriculture. They are opportunities for investigation, not claims that the identified facilities, contracts or gaps already exist locally.

Local connection and outside markets are complementary

The agriculture guide cautions that functional systems extend beyond municipal boundaries and includes export and trade development alongside local procurement. Growth from within therefore does not mean an economy closed to suppliers, customers or investment from elsewhere.⁴

A purchasing review can ask why spending leaves CK: no capable supplier, insufficient scale, an existing contract, price, quality, delivery or simply low awareness. Only some of these are addressable locally. Import replacement has value when a feasible local alternative meets the need; imported equipment or specialist inputs may instead help a CK business compete in larger markets.

Local purchasing is not automatically the same as local value added. A local reseller may supply imported products; a larger externally owned firm may employ CK residents and purchase local services. Analysis needs to distinguish vendor location, production, employment and actual local expenditure, rather than treating the full contract value as new local income.

Connect demand to capability.

A buyer introduction can reveal an opportunity. Quality, capacity, financing and delivery determine whether that opportunity becomes a durable commercial relationship.

5. Procurement as a route to market

Procurement is how an organization turns a need into a purchase and a supplier relationship. The agriculture guide identifies institutional purchasing as a way for farmers, food entrepreneurs, distributors and processors to access larger markets. Its 2017 examples are economic-development guidance; current procurement requirements must be assessed separately.⁴

The buyer matters. Households, private companies, municipalities, hospitals, educational institutions and not-for-profits do not all purchase under the same rules. Some not-for-profits have public-sector or funding-agreement obligations. Municipal purchasing and the broader-public-sector framework are addressed on the next page.^{5,6,9}

Operational options for buyers and business-support partners

Practice	How it can widen participation	Trade-off or safeguard
Make opportunities visible	Publish planned purchases where feasible; offer open supplier information sessions and explain registration.	A forecast is not a contract. Material tender information must reach eligible bidders fairly.
Use clear requirements	Explain deliverables, qualifications, insurance, submission steps and evaluation methods in understandable terms.	Requirements must still protect service quality, safety and delivery; simplification is not a waiver.
Consider contract structure	Assess separate, commercially sensible lots or subcontracting opportunities that smaller firms can deliver.	More contracts can add administrative cost. Do not split requirements to evade trade obligations.
Assess whole-life value	Where permitted, evaluate maintenance, service, reliability, operating cost and disposal alongside purchase price.	Criteria must be disclosed, relevant and applied consistently; they cannot disguise an unlawful preference.
Develop supplier readiness	Offer general bid education, capability development, feedback and access to qualified advisers.	Support does not guarantee an award. Active tender questions belong with the designated buyer.
Manage the contract well	Use clear acceptance and invoicing processes and pay valid invoices within agreed terms.	An order still requires working capital and performance capacity. Avoid dependence on one customer.

These options draw on procurement-assistance services, competition guidance, trade-agreement safeguards and CK's purchasing framework; they are not an adopted CK supplier-development program.^{5,7,8,10,11}

For private buyers, a supplier-development conversation can explore a trial order, technical qualification, realistic demand forecasts and an eventual repeat contract. For institutional food purchasing, the equivalent discussion may involve seasonal menus, pack sizes, traceability, aggregation and distribution. The business case must work for both buyer and supplier.

Chatham-Kent already provides a **Bid Opportunities Portal** through its Purchasing Info & Forms page. Procurement Assistance Canada offers free learning and personalized assistance for businesses considering federal contracts. Local support can help firms navigate these existing channels instead of creating a competing tender system.^{10,14}

6. Public purchasing: local opportunity within the rules

Local support, Buy Ontario and CK-only eligibility are different concepts. A local business address does not by itself establish that a product is Ontario-made, that a service meets a directive's definition, or that a geographic preference is permitted in a particular procurement.^{6,7,8,9}

Current Ontario context: September 29, 2026

The Municipal Buy Ontario Procurement Directive applies to prescribed municipal-sector entities. For municipalities, its general and covered light-duty fleet requirements took effect on April 13, 2026, and its capital-infrastructure requirements on May 15, 2026. Covered infrastructure procurement includes domestic-supply-chain requirements. Definitions, category coverage, exceptions and documentation matter; this is not a blanket CK-only purchasing rule.⁶

Ontario has a **separate Buy Ontario Procurement Directive** for provincial and designated broader-public-sector entities. A hospital, educational institution or other public buyer needs to apply the framework that actually governs it, rather than assuming the municipal rules are identical.⁹

Trade commitments and municipal policy still need attention

For covered procurement, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement addresses non-discrimination, regional preferences, equal access to information and artificial splitting of purchases. CETA also contains non-discrimination and offset rules for covered procurement. Coverage depends on the buyer, goods or services, value and applicable exceptions. Below one threshold does not mean outside every rule.^{7,8}

CK's published Purchasing By-law 19-2026 addresses non-discrimination and fair treatment. It assigns Council the roles of establishing purchasing policy, prioritizing purchasing needs through the budget and referring supplier inquiries to the Purchasing Officer. The provincial directive and the municipal by-law are separate instruments: Procurement Services and legal counsel must determine their application to each purchasing decision.^{5,6}

Supplier development is not a promise of a contract.

The practical opportunity is to help capable firms understand, qualify for and compete for work, while applying any required domestic-procurement measures and preserving the applicable purchasing safeguards.

Collaboration is not collusion

Supply-chain cooperation can include lawful joint ventures or subcontracting. It must not become secret bid coordination, price-fixing, customer allocation or agreements not to compete. The Competition Bureau advises businesses to make independent pricing decisions and obtain legal advice before joint bidding; relevant arrangements require appropriate disclosure.¹¹

The Chamber can convene buyer-supplier learning and share public opportunities. It cannot award municipal contracts, promise preferential treatment or circulate commercially sensitive bid information. The same separation protects businesses interviewed through BRE and maintains the distinction between business support and procurement decisions.

This is general educational information, not legal advice. Purchasing decisions require confirmation of the current by-law, directives, trade coverage, funding conditions and solicitation documents.

7. Connecting business needs to infrastructure and budgets

Growth from within connects directly to the earlier Chamber briefings. A firm may have a customer but lack wastewater capacity, suitable premises, skilled people or a reliable route to market. BRE can identify the barrier; the relevant business, municipality, utility, lender or service provider remains responsible for the decision and its delivery.^{1,2,4}

Infrastructure: distinguish renewal needs from additional capacity, identify who benefits and test the full lifecycle cost. **Financing:** compare grants, reserves, borrowing and partner contributions with their restrictions and repayment obligations. **Taxes and charges:** examine affordability and investment feasibility alongside the services and infrastructure being funded. **The annual budget:** show the staff, service and capital resources needed to deliver any agreed response.

These are analytical connections, not a presumption that every business request warrants public expenditure. Relevant tests include commercial demand, wider public benefit, alternatives, operating costs, fairness to other businesses and what happens if the expected growth does not occur. Employment growth alone is not proof that a project pays for its municipal costs.

Roles and strategic fit

Council and the Mayor exercise public responsibilities within their statutory and delegated authority; staff advise and implement. In this context, leadership concerns policy, resources and oversight, while purchasing and business-assistance files follow their authorized processes. The Chamber and other partners contribute connections and business evidence, not ownership of the economy.^{2,5,12}

CK Plan 2035 links economic prosperity to **improving infrastructure, growing agri-industries, cultivating business and developing skills**. Its wider focus includes quality of life, inclusion and environmental sustainability. These connections allow a business-support proposal to be considered alongside community-wide obligations, not in isolation.¹³

Questions and measures for public review

Are issues being resolved? Track referrals completed and elapsed response time, not only visits. **Are firms gaining capability?** Record qualifications, modernization and succession milestones, with permission. **Are market connections working?** Distinguish introductions, eligible bids, awards, completed orders and repeat customers. **What is the community result?** Assess verified investment, job quality, continuity of services and net fiscal effects alongside public costs.^{1,3}

Use a defined period, baseline and geography. Separate existing jobs from genuinely at-risk jobs retained, and avoid double-counting the same contract or investment across partners. Supplier participation and local expenditure are useful measures, but neither alone proves additional community growth. Report aggregated results while protecting business-specific information.¹

Community prosperity depends on more than the arrival of a new investor.

It also depends on whether established firms can keep serving customers, adopt better methods, transfer ownership and join productive supply chains. Continued support, workable procurement processes and dependable infrastructure affect how those opportunities develop.

The municipality participates; businesses decide; partners connect; outcomes must be demonstrated.

Sources and references

Superscript numbers identify sources. Local illustrations and operational options are applications for discussion, not reported program results or commitments by participating organizations. Public sources were checked September 29, 2026.

1. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2020). Business Retention + Expansion Coordinator's Manual, Version 3.

Supplied PDF. August 2020 edition; pp. 6-14 (purpose and process), 22-24 (confidentiality and measures), 31-39 (interviews and immediate follow-up), 56-58 (implementation and reporting). General guidance is not a current CK job-creation estimate.

2. Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce (September 2026). BRE Program Purpose and Leadership Roles.

Supplied presentation: CK_BRE_Program_Governance_and_Budget_Leadership_Presentation (2).pptx. Slides 3, 5-8 and 12-16 provide program purpose, methods, role allocation and non-duplication boundaries. Program design and planned outputs are distinguished from completed outcomes.

3. Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce (September 21, 2026). Board Update Report: Chatham-Kent Leadership Council, Economic Growth Task Force and Economic Growth Subcommittee.

Supplied file: CK Leadership Cabinet BRE Report(1).docx. Pages 2-6 describe intended support, referrals, outcomes and integration with existing initiatives. Earlier planning dates and alternatives in the report are not a current delivery-status confirmation.

4. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (2017). Agriculture Economic Development: A Resource Guide for Communities.

Supplied PDF. Printed pp. 5, 12-13, 29, 38-40 and 46: agricultural-system model; promoter/connector/educator/enabler/organizer roles; asset mapping; institutional purchasing; value-chain analysis. Procurement examples reflect the 2017 guide, not a complete statement of current law.

5. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent \(2026\). Purchasing By-law 19-2026, Schedule A.](#)

Passed February 23, 2026. Sections 4, 16, 24 and 26, and RFP evaluation provisions: best value, fair treatment, non-discrimination, Council roles and lifecycle evaluation. Read together with current provincial requirements.

6. [Government of Ontario \(2026\). Municipal Buy Ontario Procurement Directive.](#)

Sections 3, 4.1, 4.2 and 6: scope, effective dates, documentation, fleet and capital-infrastructure requirements, and definitions. The published directive provides the basis for the municipal update.

7. [Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Chapter Five: Government Procurement.](#)

Articles 502-505 and related tender provisions: covered procurement, non-discrimination, preferences, valuation and the prohibition on structuring or splitting purchases to evade obligations. Current coverage and exceptions require review.

Sources and references | continued

8. [Global Affairs Canada. CETA, Chapter Nineteen: Government Procurement.](#)

Articles 19.2, 19.4, 19.7 and 19.9: coverage and valuation, non-discrimination and offsets, participation and technical specifications. Relevant annexes determine entity and procurement coverage.

9. [Government of Ontario \(2026\). Buy Ontario Procurement Directive.](#)

Separate framework for the Ontario public service and designated broader-public-sector entities; includes the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, U.S.-business restrictions and strategic categories. Applicability differs from the municipal directive.

10. [Public Services and Procurement Canada. Procurement support for businesses.](#)

Procurement Assistance Canada: free seminars, resources, preparation and personalized support for smaller and diverse businesses considering federal procurement.

11. [Competition Bureau Canada. Preventing bid-rigging: Tips for bidders; Tips for tendering authorities; Certificate of Independent Bid Determination.](#)

Guidance on independent pricing, joint-bid legal advice and disclosure, tender design, supplier participation and fair procurement. These materials inform the competition safeguards, not a blanket ban on lawful collaboration.

[Tendering-authority guidance](#) | [Independent-bid certificate](#)

12. [Government of Ontario. The Ontario municipal councillor's guide: Role of council, councillor and staff.](#)

General statutory division of public policy, financial oversight and staff implementation. Particular decisions also depend on current legislation and delegations.

13. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. CK Plan 2035.](#)

Supplied one-page plan, approved January 23, 2017. Strategic focus areas and economic-prosperity objectives 1.1-1.4; community-wide collaboration, quality of life and sustainability.

14. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Purchasing Info & Forms.](#)

Official entry point for the Bid Opportunities Portal, procurement documents and purchasing terms.