



For Immediate Release

Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce and Municipality Align on Elect Respect Commitment

Chatham, ON – June 19, 2026– The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent are together affirming their commitment to respectful public discourse, safe civic participation, and a healthier democratic culture by supporting the *Elect Respect* campaign and its principles.

The Chamber's Board of Directors formally adopted the *Elect Respect* pledge on May 21, 2026, endorsing a resolution that calls on public leaders, candidates, organizations, businesses, and residents to treat others with respect in all spaces, reject harassment and personal attacks, and focus public debate on ideas, records, and policies rather than individuals. At the same time, the Chamber has respectfully requested that Council adopt the official *Elect Respect* resolution, aligning the municipality with the same principles and standards for democratic discourse.

"The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce believes our community is best served when public discussion is grounded in respect, facts, and accountability," said **Rory Ring, President and CEO**, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. "By standing together with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent in support of *Elect Respect*, we are sending a clear message that threats, intimidation, and toxic behaviour have no place in public life and that people from all backgrounds should feel safe to step forward and serve."

The *Elect Respect* campaign highlights growing concerns about hostility and harassment directed at elected officials and candidates, including the impact of toxic online behaviour and the misuse of social media, which can amplify misinformation and discourage qualified, community-minded individuals from seeking office. The resolution recognizes that democratic decision-making is strongest when public debate is constructive and when diverse genders, identities, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, ages, and abilities are represented around council tables.

In its letter to Council, the Chamber emphasized that healthy democracy depends on the ability of individuals to participate fully and safely in civic life, and that public service should never come with threats, intimidation, or abuse. Adoption of the resolution by both the Chamber and the Municipality would signal a shared commitment to a civic culture grounded in respect, inclusion, and integrity, and would align Chatham-Kent with a broader effort across Ontario and Canada to strengthen democratic participation and promote safe, respectful conditions for public service.

By supporting *Elect Respect*, the Chamber and the Municipality are jointly committing to: treating others with respect in public, private, and online spaces; rejecting and calling out harassment, abuse, and personal attacks; focusing debate on ideas and policies rather than individuals; helping build a supportive culture where people of all backgrounds feel safe to run for and hold office; calling on relevant authorities to ensure the protection of elected officials who face abuse or threats; and modelling integrity and respect by holding one another to the highest standards of conduct.

“On behalf of Council, I am proud that the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is joining the Chamber in supporting the Elect Respect campaign and its pledge,” **said Mayor Darrin Caniff**. “Public service should never come with threats, intimidation, or toxicity. By standing together in favour of respectful debate, fact-based dialogue, and inclusive participation, we are sending a clear message that Chatham-Kent is a community where people of all backgrounds can feel safe stepping forward to lead and serve.”

The Chamber and the Municipality encourage elected officials, candidates for office, community organizations, businesses, and residents to learn more about the campaign and sign the pledge at electrespect.ca. Together, these actions demonstrate Chatham-Kent’s leadership in promoting civil discourse, countering toxic behaviour, and strengthening local democracy for the benefit of the entire community.

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