Leeds Grenville Economic Development Summit

Presenter Biographies

November 20, 2026

What's Ahead for the U.S. – Canada Trade Relationship

Rick Tachuk | President & CEO

American Chamber of Commerce in Canada (AmCham Canada)



Rick Tachuk serves as President and CEO of the American Chamber of Commerce in Canada (AmCham Canada) representing major U.S. and Canadian companies on cross-border trade and investment issues. Over his 30-year career Rick has held a number of executive positions in the technology and government relations fields. In the public sector he served with the U.S. Commercial Service as the U.S. International Trade Administration's Senior Commercial Representative in Canada responsible for export and investment promotion and trade policy. In the private sector he served as President and CEO of DCI Enable, a publicly traded Canadian E-business firm and President and CEO of the Technology Professionals Canada. He is also the Founder and President of Electric Strategies, Inc., an Ottawa-based public affairs agency specializing in cross-border issues management. Rick currently serves on the North Grenville Community Economic Development Advisory Committee, the advisory board of Hire Immigrants Ottawa and is Vice Chair of Community Futures Grenville.

Defence Sector Growth in Leeds Grenville

Rhiannon V. Iles, P. Eng. | President, HFI Pyrotechnics Inc.



A respected leader, Rhiannon began her career at Procter & Gamble, developing deep expertise in operations, smart manufacturing, project delivery, and organizational capability at local, business unit, and global levels. In 2020, she joined HFI Pyrotechnics as Chief Operating Officer and was promoted to President in 2023. Under her leadership, HFI has doubled annual revenue to $18–$21 million and grown its workforce from approximately 60 to 130 employees. Her passion for operational excellence, workforce culture, and capability development has been instrumental in positioning HFI for continued success in a safety-critical industry.

Rhiannon holds a Mechanical Engineering degree from University of New Brunswick and is a Professional Engineer Registered in Ontario.

Healthcare: A Growing Sector in Leeds Grenville

Morgan Hawn | Executive Lead, Lanark, Leeds & Grenville Ontario Health Team



Morgan Hawn is a strategic, collaborative, purpose-driven health system leader dedicated to improving health care quality and experience. Drawing on more than 20 years of experience as a Registered Nurse and health care leader, she is passionate about bringing people, organizations, and ideas together to tackle complex challenges and drive meaningful change. Morgan works across sectors to strengthen primary care, improve access to services, and align partners around a shared vision for healthier communities. Known for her ability to navigate complexity, build strong relationships, and turn strategy into action, she is focused on creating a more connected and sustainable health system for the future.

Julie Caffin | President & CEO, Brockville General Hospital



Julie joined Brockville General Hospital in 2017 as Senior Vice President, Chief Nurse Executive and Chief Operating Officer. She now serves as the President and CEO. Previous positions have included frontline and leadership positions in both community and tertiary, academic health care organizations.

Julie has a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Carleton University, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Honours Degree from York University and a Master of Health Sciences Degree from the University of Toronto. She is certified in Advanced System Leadership from the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management Executive Program and is a Fellow in The Ivy Academy Community Shift Executive Leadership Program. Julie has successfully completed the Advanced Good Governance certification through The College Centre of Board Excellence. She is an active member of the College of Nurses of Ontario and has an Adjunct Academic appointment in the Queen's University School of Nursing.

Julie has received recognition awards from Kingston Health Sciences Centre including the Team Award for Leadership with the Emergency Department Information System Implementation project and Team Award for Care for her efforts introducing the Inter-professional Collaborative Practice Model. She was nominated to the Canadian College of Health Leaders for a National Nursing Leadership Award.

Julie was appointed to the St. Lawrence College Board of Governors in September 2018 and currently serves as Chair.

Alice Lacroix | Director of Care, G. Tackaberry and Family Home



With more than 10 years of nursing experience, Alice has built a diverse career spanning acute care, public health, infection prevention and control, and long-term care leadership. She began her nursing journey in labour and delivery and pediatric care before contributing to public health pandemic response initiatives during COVID-19. The transition into long-term care allowed her to develop expertise in Infection Prevention and Control while fostering a deep commitment to resident-centred care. Over the past two years, she has advanced into leadership roles with Maple View Lodge, where she has focused on team development, quality improvement, and operational excellence. She is excited to continue this work as she transitions with the team to the G. Tackaberry and Family Home.

Melanie Kirkby | Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Gananoque



Melanie has served in municipal government in Leeds and Grenville for 25 years. She began her career as an Accounting Clerk with the Town of Prescott, where she worked for three years before accepting the position of Deputy Treasurer with the Township of Elizabethtown-Kitley in 2003. She became Treasurer in 2008 and joined the Town of Gananoque as Treasurer in 2014.

In 2018, Melanie completed the AMCTO Executive Diploma in Municipal Management. In 2024, she transitioned into her current role as Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Gananoque.

Melanie values teamwork and is committed to leading Gananoque's dedicated municipal staff in delivering services to the community. With a strong background in municipal finance, she brings a focus on fiscal responsibility, effective municipal management and supporting a strong local economy.

G.O.A.T. Animal Adventures

Lindsay Hadcock | Owner, Goat Ridge Farm



Lindsay is an engineer turned goat farmer in Seeley's Bay, Ontario. Along with a herd of Nubian goats, Lindsay and husband Dan grow garlic and hay. Goat Ridge Farm is on a rugged 300+ acres in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere where trees, rocks and wetlands are more plentiful than cultivated land. Spring through fall they invite visitors to walk the property with their herd of very friendly goats, offering a unique agricultural experience. Lindsay enjoys learning and sharing her knowledge of goats, mentoring new goat owners to grow their own happy and healthy herds. In between milking the gals and tending the herd, Lindsay creates pottery in her on-farm studio.

Shelbi McFarlane | Business Development Officer, United Counties of Leeds and Grenville



Shelbi McFarlane is the Business Development Officer for Leeds Grenville, where she supports local business growth through business retention and expansion. Drawing on experience in both upper- and lower-tier municipal government, including land-use planning, she helps businesses navigate government processes, overcome roadblocks and access funding opportunities. She also works to connect businesses with the people and resources they need to succeed.

Shelbi holds a Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management from Carleton University and an Executive Diploma in Municipal Management from the AMCTO.

KEYNOTE: Protecting Ontario

Hon. Kinga Surma | President, Ontario Treasury Board



Kinga Surma was first elected as the Member of Provincial Parliament for Etobicoke Centre in 2018 and was re-elected in 2022 and 2025. She has served as Ontario's Associate Minister of Transportation and Minister of Infrastructure before being appointed President of the Treasury Board in September 2026.

During her five years as Minister of Infrastructure, Surma led the province's historic expansion of high-speed internet access, managed Ontario's realty portfolio, the largest public real estate portfolio in the province, and advanced innovative project delivery models, including Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) and progressive design-build approaches, to deliver critical infrastructure more efficiently and provide better value for taxpayers. She also played a key role in Ontario's subway expansion, the largest in Canadian history, including the introduction of the province's first Transit-Oriented Communities program.

Surma's guiding principle has always been respect for the taxpayer. This commitment informs every decision she makes as President of the Treasury Board, helping ensure Ontario families, workers and businesses have access to the health care, education, transit and infrastructure they rely on.

Born in Poland, Surma immigrated to Canada with her family at the age of four. As both a successful immigrant and proud Canadian, she understands the opportunities and challenges newcomers face as they build a life in Canada.

She holds a degree in Public Policy, Business and Commerce from the University of Guelph, as well as professional public relations designations from Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University.)

Thee Farm Event & Wellness Centre

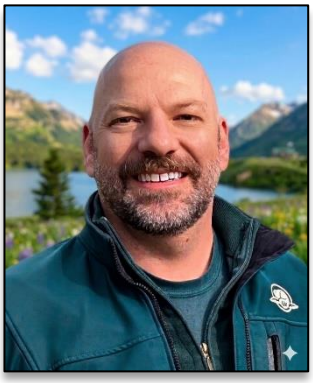
Sean McGrath | President, Thee Farm Event & Wellness Centre



Sean is a hospitality and tourism executive with more than 30 years of experience leading hotels, conference centres, catering operations, and destination event venues in the Ottawa region. Throughout his career, he has held senior leadership positions with Delta Hotels, Westin Hotels, and the Centurion Conference & Event Centre, and currently serves as President of Thee Farm Event & Wellness Centre. Sean has also contributed extensively to the industry through service on the boards of Ottawa Tourism and Ronald McDonald House Ottawa, participation on Algonquin College's Hospitality Program Advisory Committee, and as a professor mentoring the next generation of hospitality professionals.

Leveraging Rideau 200 to Unlock the Canal's Full Potential

John Festarini | A/ Director, Ontario Waterways, Parks Canada



John is the Acting Director for Ontario Waterways at Parks Canada where he is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and stewardship of the Rideau Canal and Trent-Severn Waterway. Throughout his career with Parks Canada, John has led historic canals, national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas across the country. Prior to joining Parks Canada, John worked in a variety of leadership roles at the Canadian Coast Guard, Dell, and IBM. Across his time in the public and private sector, he has amassed extensive experience in service delivery, operations, relationship management, and strategic planning.

Marie White | Economic Development & Cultural Heritage Coordinator, Township of Rideau Lakes



Marie brings over 20 years of experience in municipal government, having held positions across Ontario in Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Heritage. As an honours graduate of Cultural Management from the University of Waterloo with her certification in Economic Development, Marie enjoys working in her field of study and proudly implements award winning campaigns to promote Rideau Lakes as a world heritage destination.

Leeds Grenville / 1000 Islands Rideau Canal Waterways

Ann Weir | Economic Development Manager, United Counties of Leeds and Grenville



Ann has been the Economic Development Manager for the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville for the past 18 years and has recently completed the AMCTO Executive Diploma in Municipal Management in 2024. In 2017, she won the Eastern Ontario's Economic Developer of the Year award.

Ann manages economic development through a collaborative environment with ten municipalities and four partner communities to positively influence the growth and well-being of the Counties and its communities. Ann has worked collaboratively across the region to bring new funding and investments to the region. She has spearheaded many programs including the Business Support Working Group, the Regional Tourism Destination Strategy and the Counties Business Retention and Expansion program.

Ann has an extraordinarily strong belief in the importance of relationships, networks, and partnerships. She is visionary, committed, and enthusiastic in continuing to develop the region's attributes.