

Top employers work hard to attract the best employees



PETER LEE, RECORD STAFF

Employees of eSentire, from left, Eldon Sprickerhoff, Matthew Smith, Kellen Bailey, Kathryn Hodge and Andy Fawcett enjoy the challenge of working in the field of cybersecurity.



Dave Pink, Special to The Record

WATERLOO REGION — In an atmosphere of day-to-day technical innovation and lofty customer expectations, the area's most highly rated employers say they understand the need to recruit and retain the very best personnel they can find — and that means providing the best possible working environments.

Among the businesses named to this year's Mediacorp Canada list of the top 20 employers in the Waterloo Region area, there's an understanding that if people are asked to perform

at a consistently high level and rise to the never-ending challenges of a global marketplace they must feel appreciated. And that means more than just a good paycheck.

"We're looking for multifaceted people, people willing to work in an atmosphere of chaos and uncertainty," says Eldon Sprickerhoff, co-founder of eSentire, a cybersecurity firm in Cambridge that, for reasons that are apparent if you pay attention to the news about hacks, is experiencing phenomenal growth.

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A look at the top 20 employers of 2018 in Waterloo Region area | **Business, D4-D5**

Sobeys to slash 800 office jobs

David Paddon

TORONTO — The Sobeys grocery business will cut about 800 office jobs across Canada as part of efforts to create one efficient national organization out of five regional operations, the company announced Friday.

"The future success of Sobeys, and our continued service to over 900 communities across the country, depends on our steadfast commitment to transform our business," said Michael Medline, who is chief executive of Sobeys and its parent company, Empire Co. Ltd.

Local reports of the news began to emerge late Thursday ahead of an internal announcement to Sobeys staff. The company confirmed the reports Friday morning.

Sobeys operates about 1,500 stores across the country under the Sobeys, FreshCo, IGA, Safeway Foodland and Thrifty Foods banners.

Sobeys is Canada's second-largest grocery company, after Loblaw Cos. Ltd., and faces many of the same challenges in the industry: competition from new rivals, higher costs from rising minimum wages in some areas and technological change.

However, the company has also been struggling for several years with problems arising from its acquisition of Safeway Canada — which gave Sobeys a much bigger presence in Western Canada.

"The first phase of our plan to transform our business, which has been focused on resetting the foundation of

► **Sobeys** continued on D2

Michael Lee-Chin shares secrets to success

Find good businesses, not too many, and stick with them

Brent Davis, Record staff

WATERLOO — He's one of Canada's wealthiest people, with a flair for philanthropy that reflects his philosophy of "doing well and doing good."

Michael Lee-Chin grew his first acquisition — a Kitchener-based investment firm, Advantage Investment Council, later AIC Ltd. — from a business with about \$800,000 in assets under management to more than \$15 billion at its peak; the business was later sold to Manulife.

The privately held investment company he founded and chairs, Portland Holdings, owns businesses in sectors ranging from media and tourism to financial services and consumer goods; the Jamaican-born Lee-Chin is chair of the National Commercial Bank Jamaica Ltd., and that country's largest bank, and in 2016, he was appointed chair of Jamaica's new Economic Growth Council.

His family name graces an expansion at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, an institute for corporate citizenship at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, and the newly opened patient tower at Burlington's Joseph Brant Hospital.

On Friday, Lee-Chin returned to Wilfrid Laurier University — where he served as chancellor from 2011 to 2016 — to share some of the secrets of his success with more than 800



BRENT DAVIS, RECORD STAFF

AIC founder and billionaire, and former Wilfrid Laurier University chancellor, Michael Lee-Chin speaks Friday at Laurier's Lazaridis School of Business and Economics.

students at the school's Lazaridis School of Business & Economics.

One of the keys, he said, is to establish a framework for investing and stick with it. A dogmatic adherence to that framework can counter the lack of emotional control that so often befalls investors.

"It's not easy to be consistent over the long run," Lee-Chin said. "It's not easy to persevere over the long run." But it's imperative for success.

People should invest in a few high-quality businesses in long-term growth industries, and really understand them. Use other people's money to invest where possible, but do it prudently, and hold those businesses for the long term.

"I just gave you a framework of how wealth is created at the individual level," said Lee-Chin, an engaging speaker who cites his mother and famed investor Warren Buffett as role models.

The businesses Lee-Chin

seeks to invest in are those where the owner and operator are one and the same and ownership is heavily concentrated, with personal identification between the owners and the business. There should be an entrepreneurial, autocratic approach, and low management turnover.

He also looks for a system of symmetrical risk and reward for management, a long-term outlook and a board that's focused on growth. The business' value is based on fundamentals like customers, sales, market share and margins. "I figured it out once and I just locked it in," Lee-Chin said.

"You can live your life based on your principles and be frustrated in the short run," he admitted. "Once you know that what you are doing is the right thing, it will keep you going ... This is my life. This is who I am. This is what I do."

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IN BRIEF

ECONOMY Operating profits top \$100B in third quarter

OTTAWA — Statistics Canada says strong performance in the financial sector drove Canadian corporate operating profits to just over \$100 billion in the third quarter, up 17.2 per cent from the same period last year. The federal agency says profits were up \$7.9 billion, or 8.5 per cent, compared with the second quarter. Operating profits in the financial sector rose 20 per cent from the second quarter to \$34.9 billion in the three months ended Sept. 30. Operating profits for non-financial corporations increased 3.3 per cent from the second quarter thanks to positive returns in 11 of 17 industries.

MARIJUANA Aurora formally launches hostile bid for CanniMed

VANCOUVER — Aurora Cannabis Inc. launched its all-stock hostile takeover bid for CanniMed Therapeutics Friday, on the condition that the medical marijuana producer cancel its own planned acquisition of marijuana company Newstrike Resources Ltd. The Vancouver-headquartered licensed marijuana company said that its takeover bid circular for its offer, valued at \$24 a share, will be mailed to CanniMed's shareholders. "We believe that we will be able to accelerate CanniMed's growth more effectively than current management, and so we invite and encourage CanniMed's shareholders to tender their shares to the bid," Aurora CEO Terry Booth said.

GAMBLING PokerStars owner sells stake in NYX Gaming for \$35 million

TORONTO — The Stars Group Inc. has agreed to sell all of its stake in NYX Gaming Group Ltd. for \$35.5 million cash to a company that's been working on a friendly takeover of the Las Vegas-based company. The buyer is Scientific Games Corp., which will pay \$2.40 for each ordinary share of NYX and each preferred share of NYX Digital Gaming (Canada) ULC purchased from Stars Group — owner of PokerStars. Scientific Games has also agreed to a price adjustment for the Toronto-based Stars Group in certain circumstances if it pays more than \$2.40 per share to acquire the rest of NYX — which has an enterprise value of about \$775 million.

E-COMMERCE Amazon workers in Germany, Italy stage Black Friday strike

BERLIN — Workers at six Amazon distribution centres in Germany and one in Italy walked off the job Friday, in a protest timed to coincide with "Black Friday" to demand better wages from the U.S. online giant. In Germany, Verdi union spokesperson Thomas Voss said some 2,500 workers were on strike at six Amazon facilities. In a warehouse near Piacenza, in northern Italy, some workers walked off the job to demand "dignified salaries." The German union has been leading a push since 2013 for higher pay for some 12,000 workers in Germany, arguing Amazon employees receive lower wages than others in retail and mail-order jobs. Amazon says its distribution warehouses in Germany are logistics centres and employees earn relatively high wages for that industry.

TRANSPORT Uber told SoftBank about data breach before the public

SAN FRANCISCO — Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi reportedly learned about a large data breach at the ride-hailing service two months ago and informed potential investor SoftBank before making the incident public. In the breach, which took place in October 2016, hackers stole names, email addresses and phone numbers of 50 million Uber riders and seven million drivers. Uber said it told SoftBank, the telecom and internet firm that is seeking to invest about \$10 billion in Uber, about the breach as part of disclosures about issues that could have an impact on the company.

News services

— ADVERTORIAL —

Waterloo Area's Top Employers: Gore Mutual Insurance Company

By Jane Pinzhoffer

In the ten years that the editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers have held the Waterloo Area's Top Employers competition, Gore Mutual Insurance Company in Cambridge has been on the coveted list of top fifteen companies located in Guelph, Cambridge, and Kitchener-Waterloo for the last nine years in a row.

In business since 1839, Gore Mutual is Canada's oldest property and casualty insurance company. Despite having a long history, the company is not bound by it. Instead, it continues to push forward by making bold moves and utilizing technology to create modern solutions to meet the changing needs of today's insurance customers. To match its innovative, entrepreneurial way of thinking, the company playfully refers to itself as an "1839 start-up."

"We have firmly established ourselves as a future-forward company," said Catherine Leclair, Vice President, Human Resources at Gore Mutual Insurance. "We leverage technology to make a difference to our customers, our employees and the Canadian insurance industry as a whole. Our start-up mindset creates unique opportunities for our employees to apply their talent and passion to make a real difference and not be bound to traditional insurance roles."

Gore Mutual employs more than 300 employees with a wide range of skillsets that have helped the company to receive some other very esteemed awards in addition to its Waterloo Area's Top Employers designation.

Earlier this week, Gore Mutual was recognized for having one of Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures. The organization has also been included on the 2017 list of Best Workplaces in Financial Services and Insurance by Great Places to Work and winning an RGD In-house Design Award for graphic design – a prize most people wouldn't expect an insurance company to receive. Last year, Gore Mutual won the 2016 Celent Model Insurer for Digital and Omni Channel Technologies Award as well.

"Our size and open, collaborative work environment really allow our employees to see the impact of their contributions," says Leclair. "Our employees are ambitious and like challenges. They all play a huge role in our continued growth."

Supporting people is what Gore Mutual is in business to do. The company does this not only through its insurance products, but also its actions.

Gore Mutual Foundation was established in 1998 and has donated more than \$10 million to over 650 charities. Gore Mutual employees are also given opportunities to volunteer on a regular basis.

"For our employees, it is not about just having a career, it is about making a difference in our community," says Leclair. "Everyone has the opportunity to give back to the community via Hearts in Action, a grassroots initiative we started in 2015 that pays employees to volunteer their time and expertise to help local charities. We also believe in building strong communities in areas in which Gore Mutual does business via the Gore Mutual Foundation."

Through its foundation, Gore Mutual has been celebrating Canada 150 by donating money to better local communities in 150 ways. More than \$1.3 million has been given to date in partnership with insurance brokers – including \$500,000 to the Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation--and the campaign will continue to run until late December.

"From the very beginning, Gore Mutual has been built on the idea of people helping people," says Leclair. "It is in our DNA."

Reasons Gore Mutual Insurance Company's was selected as one of Waterloo Area's Top Employers (2017) include:

- A flexible health benefits plan that allows employees to select coverage that best suits their needs with the ability to transfer unused credits to additional salary or savings
- Flexible hours, telecommuting, and shortened and compressed work week options
- Retirement planning assistance and phased-in work options
- Year-end bonuses and new employee referral of up to \$2,500
- Maternity increased to 100 percent for the first six weeks of leave
- Employee sports teams and free access to an onsite fitness facility



Two Gore Mutual employees volunteering at Meals on Wheels in Breslau, Ontario.



Gore's executive team volunteering at the YMCA Teen Drop-in Zone in Cambridge, Ontario.



▶ MAKE YOUR MARK

Our people make us great.

We've been one of the area's top employers nine years running. How do we do it? We've got amazing employees who are doing cool and innovative things. Their talent and passion are driving change in our business and industry, making it an exciting time to work at Gore Mutual.

Whether your future is insurance, technology or something a little different, you should check out the unique and challenging opportunities we have to offer.

LEARN MORE AT GOREMUTUAL.CA



GO FORWARD

Top 20 employers in Waterloo Region area

Allianz Global Assistance
Travel insurance and assistance services
4237 King St. E., Kitchener
810 employees in Canada

- Helps employees save for the future and offers financial benefits, including signing bonuses for some employees, year-end bonuses for all and referral bonuses of up to \$750 for employees who recruit candidates from their personal network.
- Offers tuition subsidies for job-related courses (to \$1,000 a year), subsidies for professional accreditation, and in-house and online training programs.
- Supports local and national charitable organizations, focusing on initiatives that support children, and provides employees with a paid day off to volunteer in the community.

The Centre for International Governance Innovation
Think tank on international governance
67 Erb St. W., Waterloo
82 employees

- Offers on-site meditation and yoga classes, and encourages employees to lead active, balanced lives with a health-club subsidy of \$300 annually; it also hosted a health and wellness fair, featuring more than 20 vendors, blood pressure and glucose testing, and free massages.
- Supports employees who are new mothers and fathers, including adoptive parents, with maternity and parental leave top-up payments, to 75 per cent of salary for up to 10 weeks.
- Offers starting vacation allowance of three weeks, paid time off during the winter holidays and up to three paid personal days off, which can be scheduled at the employee's discretion.

Crawford & Company (Canada) Inc.
Insurance adjusting and risk management services
539 Riverbend Dr., Kitchener
920 employees

- Offers financial incentives, including a share purchase plan, available to all employees, signing bonuses for some, profit-sharing and year-end bonuses for all and referral bonuses to encourage employees to refer candidates from their network (up to \$1,000 per referral).



RECORD STAFF FILE PHOTO

The Gore Mutual Insurance Co. has appeared on Mediacorp's list of the top employers in the Waterloo Region area for nine years in a row.

- Offers academic scholarships to children of employees (to \$2,500 per child) as well as tuition subsidies for employees for job-related courses.
- Supports local and national charitable organizations and encourages employees to give back to local communities by providing paid time off to volunteer and matching employee donations.

D2L Corp.
E-learning software
151 Charles St. W., Kitchener, Suite 400
606 employees

- Head office employees enjoy a unique workspace, featuring an outdoor patio with hammocks and accessible WiFi, daily lunch deliveries and snacks, and an employee lounge with foosball, a Star Wars pinball machine, guitars and ukuleles, and an assortment of vintage computer games.
- Recognizes exceptional performance through a number of incentives, including the Bravo recognition program, the Inventor's Incentive Bonus program for filed and successful patents (also includes an annual banquet for all inventors with the president and CEO and executives) and the President's Club trip for sales employees who meet or exceed their annual quota.
- Provides maternity leave top-up



payments for new mothers (to 85 per cent of salary for eight weeks) and offers the option to extend their leave into an unpaid leave of absence.

Economical Insurance
Property and casualty insurance
111 Westmount Rd., S., Waterloo
2,419 employees

- Supports national charities, focusing on safety and security, youth and education, health and wellness, and arts and culture initiatives; it also encourages employees to give back to the community, matching employee donations as well as providing financial donations to charities where employees volunteer their time (\$500 for 40 volunteer hours).
- Provides financial incentives, including signing bonuses for some employees, profit-sharing for all employees and referral bonuses for employees who recruit candidates

- from their personal network (up to \$2,500).
- Offers flexible health benefits, allowing employees to allocate flex dollars however they choose, as well as transfer unused credits to savings, additional vacation days, or health and personal wellness accounts.

Equitable Life Insurance Co.
Insurance and financial services
1 Westmount Rd. N., Waterloo
582 employees

- Recognizes exceptional performance through initiatives including the President's Award for top employees (who are invited to join senior leaders for a performance at the Stratford Festival) and the Equitable Life Award for both managerial and non-managerial staff (up to \$5,000 in gift cards).
- Offers a defined contribution pension plan and health benefits that extend to retirees (with no age limit).
- Provides employees with a health spending account of up to \$1,500, allowing employees to top up existing levels of coverage depending on their needs.

eSentire Inc.
Provider of cybersecurity services
278 Pinebush Rd., Cambridge, Suite 101
245 employees

- Helps employees save for the future, and offers signing and year-end bonuses for some employees and referral bonuses for employees who recruit candidates from their personal networks (to \$5,000).
- Offers tuition subsidies for job-related courses and reaches out to the next generation of talent through co-op opportunities and paid internships.
- Offers a busy social calendar with a number of company subsidized events, including a summer picnic, tour of a craft brewery, snow tubing event, holiday celebrations and themed Star Wars Day.

Farm Mutual Re
Provides farm, personal and commercial insurance products to insurance members
350 Pinebush Rd., Cambridge
72 employees

- Offers on-site amenities, including a quiet room for meditation and religious observance, employee lounge with television and board games, and free membership to a shared use fitness facility, featuring state-of-the-art equipment as well as instructor-led classes (from kick-boxing to yoga).
- Offers academic scholarships to children of employees (to \$1,000 per child) and tuition subsidies for current employees.
- Helps employees save for the future, and provides retirement planning assistance and phased-in work options to help those nearing retirement transition.

Gore Mutual Insurance Co.
Property and casualty insurance
252 Dundas St. N., Cambridge
350 employees

- Offers tuition subsidies for courses taken at outside institutions, subsidies for professional accreditation and financial bonuses for some course completion.
- Helps employees save for the future, and supports employee efforts to plan for the longer term with retirement planning assistance and phased-in work options.
- Offers maternity leave top-up payments to employees who are new mothers (to 100 per cent of salary for up to six weeks) and supports employees who want to

➤ **Region** continued on page D5



Crawford Named a Top Employer in the Waterloo Region

For the 10th year in a row, Crawford & Company (Canada) Inc. has been selected as a top employer in the Waterloo region. We are dedicated to cultivating a corporate culture that promotes employee innovation through collaboration, with a focus on quality and customer service, positioning us as a leading independent provider of claims management solutions.

Our "One Crawford" cultural approach is further supported by our employees, who play a vital role in our company's success. We are proud of our employees and their commitment to quality, customer service teamwork and dedication to supporting the communities in which they live and work through the Crawford Cares program.

As a top employer, we are dedicated to attracting and fostering the development of the best and the brightest within the insurance industry. If you have a passion for customer service, a commitment to exceptional quality and the ability to work in a dynamic team environment, consider joining the Crawford and Company (Canada) Inc. team and grow your career with us.



www.crawfordandcompany.com

OCAS

For the third consecutive year,
OCAS is proud to be recognized as a
Top Employer in the Waterloo area.

WATERLOO AREA'S
TOP EMPLOYERS
2018

We celebrate this recognition with our
73 employees, who each year provide the
pathways, information and support for college
explorers working towards a brighter future.

OCAS

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Available on the Google play

Want to make the world a better place?

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www.ocas.ca/careers

REGION

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start a family with a subsidy for IVF (if needed).

Intelligent Mechatronic Systems Inc.

Automotive telematics
435 King St. N., Waterloo
118 employees

- Offers a variety of work perks, from 20-minute chair massages to free yoga classes to free breakfasts served weekly; employees can rest in an on-site nap room and quiet room, or unwind in the employee lounge, featuring video games, ping pong and foosball.
- Helps employees save for retirement, and offers retirement planning assistance and phased-in work options to help those nearing retirement transition.
- Offers referral bonuses as an incentive for employees to recruit candidates from their personal networks, to \$2,000 per successful hire.

Novocol Pharmaceutical of Canada, Inc.

Manufacturer of dental anesthetics
25 Wolseley Court, Cambridge
337 employees

- Provides opportunities for students and new grads to gain meaningful career experience through summer employment, paid internships and co-op placements, and offers academic scholarships to children of employees interested in post-secondary studies.
- Along with maternity leave top-up payments, supports employees who want to start a family with a subsidy for IVF (to \$5,000).
- Offers flexible work hours and up to eight paid personal days off each year, which can be scheduled at the employee's discretion.

OCAS Application Services Inc.

Provides administrative systems and application processing services to Ontario's colleges
60 Corporate Court, Guelph
65 employees

- Along with more than four weeks of starting vacation allowance, offers paid time off during the winter holidays and summer months.
- Offers generous maternity and parental leave top-up payments to employees who are new mothers and



RECORD STAFF FILE PHOTO

Waterloo North Hydro offers its employees subsidies for gym membership, up to \$300 per year.

fathers, including adoptive parents (to 93 per cent of salary for a full year).

- Offers tuition subsidies for job-related courses (to \$2,500 per year), subsidies for professional accreditation and a number of in-house and online training options.

Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan

Insurance services for Ontario education employees
125 Northfield Dr. W., Waterloo
475 employees

- Encourages employees to adopt healthy habits, offering on-site fitness consultations, wellness programs and challenges, on-site yoga, cardio and bootcamp classes, a wellness spending account and healthy snacks provided monthly by the organization's wellness consultant.
- Offers tuition subsidies to employees for courses taken at outside institutions and academic scholarships for children of employees (to \$1,500 per child).
- Provides maternity leave top-up payments for new mothers as well as parental top-up for adoptive parents (to 90 per cent of salary for 17 weeks) and offers the option to extend leave into an unpaid leave of absence.

OpenText Corp.

Enterprise information management software
275 Frank Tompka Dr., Waterloo
1,626 employees

- Employees have the opportunity to become owners of the publicly traded company through a share purchase plan.

- Supports employees who are new mothers with maternity leave top-up payments (provided on a sliding scale depending on length of service) and offers the option to extend leave into an unpaid leave of absence.

- Offers a busy social calendar with company organized events, including summer barbecues, an Oktoberfest celebration, Halloween dress-up contest, evening Christmas party for employees and their partners as well as a separate party for children of employees, and full-day winter ski trip.

Reid's Heritage Group of Companies

House construction
6783 Wellington Rd. 34, Cambridge
212 employees

- Supports employees who are new mothers with maternity leave top-up payments, to 80 per cent of salary for up to 17 weeks.
- Offers flexible work hours, and helps employees balance work and their personal commitments with up to 10 paid personal days, which can be scheduled at employees' discretion.
- Offers referral bonuses as an incentive for employees to help recruit candidates from their personal networks, to \$1,500 per successful hire.

Sleeman Breweries Ltd.

551 Clair R. W., Guelph
991 employees
Canada's third largest national brewery

- Invests in ongoing employee development with tuition subsidies (to

\$3,000 per year) and offers opportunities for the next generation to gain meaningful experience through summer employment and co-op placements.

- Helps employees save for the future, and provides retirement planning assistance and phased-in work options to help those nearing retirement.
- Lets everyone share in the company's success with year-end bonuses and profit-sharing (varying by employee group).

TextNow Inc.

Develops social media apps for Android and iOS mobile devices
375 Hagey Blvd., Waterloo, Suite 310
73 employees

- Offers a share purchase plan, available to all employees, and generous referral bonuses of up to \$2,500 for employees who recruit candidates from their personal networks.
- Offers opportunities for students and new grads to gain career-level experience through co-op placements, paid internships and summer employment.
- Provides introductory maternity and parental leave top-up for employees who are new mothers or fathers, including adoptive parents.

Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada Inc.

Auto manufacturing
1055 Fountain St. N., Cambridge
8,620 employees

- Offers 3.8 weeks of paid vacation after the first year on the job, increasing to four weeks after two years of

employment and up to 6.4 weeks for long-serving employees.

- Helps employees prepare for life after work with retirement planning assistance and contributions to a defined contribution pension plan; employees can take advantage of discounts for the lease or purchase of new vehicles (to \$1,000), a perk that extends to family members (to \$800).
- Offers on-site amenities such as free membership to a fitness facility (with full gym), employee lounge with games room, quiet room for meditation and religious observance, outdoor walking trails, baseball diamond, basketball court, tennis courts, soccer field, children's playground and community garden.

University of Waterloo

University with more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students

200 University Ave. W., Waterloo
5,254 employees

- Encourages ongoing employee development through its Organizational and Human Development Office, which offers a wide range of training programs on topics including business communications, leadership development, information systems and technology, and a seven-part inclusivity program.
- Encourages employees to prepare for the future with contributions to a defined benefit pension plan, retirement planning assistance and health benefits that extend to retirees (with no age limit); a retiree association helps retirees stay connected and represents retiree concerns related to pension and benefit matters, HR issues and university policy changes.
- Offers three weeks of vacation allowance to new employees, increasing to four weeks after four years of employment.

Waterloo North Hydro Inc.

Electrical power distributor
526 Country Squire Rd., Waterloo
121 employees

- Contributes to a defined benefit pension plan and helps employees plan for the future with retirement planning assistance.
- Encourages employees to lead active, healthy lives and offers subsidies for gym membership, up to \$300 per year.
- Offers opportunities for the next generation to gain career-level experience through co-op placements, summer employment and in-house apprenticeships; about 20 per cent of the organization's employees are former co-op students.



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Our talented and caring people delight in helping Canadian travellers, anytime and anywhere. We answer the call to assist, inspired by our mission every day.

Soar with us
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Global Assistance

Allianz 

EMPLOYERS

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“The people we need to work here are those who can get fired up and want to solve different problems,” he says.

At Kitchener-based Allianz Global Assistance, employees not only sell travel insurance, they deal with the problems their clients encounter — 24 hours a day, seven days a week in any part of the world. The company employs the kind of people who can bring calm reassurance to people in a troubling and confused situation.

“We have to be on the pulse of the problem. We have to ensure that the best care is done,” says Phil Hibbert, the firm’s president and CEO. “Our asset is our people.

“We deal with real-life expectations. We’re faced with getting them back to Canada, and getting them back safely.

“There’s a lot of job fulfilment in that.”

At Intelligent Mechatronic Systems (IMS) in Waterloo, the emphasis is on innovation, and the creation of a comfortable working atmosphere that allows for collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

“We’re talking about creative ideas. These ideas foster in different ways,” says Dale Scott, a technical lead who has been with the company for 13 years.

IMS develops telematic systems that can read data from automobiles and analyze the driver’s habits — technology that will change the way insurance companies set their rates.

“We have an innovation department, but that’s not the only place where innovation happens,” Scott says.

The atmosphere at IMS “allows different people to share ideas and bring them out,” he says. “We get to know people, and this allows us to be more productive. It’s a very open culture, and a very supportive management. It’s this diversity of culture that allows for different viewpoints, and this is where ideas come from.

“What comes from this is a lot of respect for other people and for their ideas.”

Other companies on the Mediacorp list of top employers in



MATHEW MCCARTHY, RECORD STAFF

Phil Hibbert, right, chief executive of Allianz Global Assurance, and employee Frank Flores say there is a lot of job fulfilment in working for the provider of travel insurance.

- the Waterloo Region area are:
- The Centre for International Governance Innovation
 - Crawford & Company (Canada) Inc.
 - D2L Corp. (formerly Desire To Learn)
 - Economical Insurance
 - Equitable Life Insurance Co.
 - Farm Mutual Re
 - Gore Mutual Insurance
 - Novocol Pharmaceutical of Canada
 - OCAS Application Services
 - Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan
 - OpenText Corp.
 - Reid’s Heritage Group of Companies
 - Sleeman Breweries
 - TextNow Inc.
 - Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada
 - University of Waterloo
 - Waterloo North Hydro
- OpenText, Toyota and the University of Waterloo also are on Mediacorp’s list of Canada’s

top 100 employers.

Typically, companies on the local list offer flexible working hours along with generous maternity arrangements, retirement benefits and retirement counseling, and almost all of them encourage regular staff gatherings such as barbecues and group outings to special events. Most encourage staff involvement in the community and support for charitable causes. Some offer cafeteria meals prepared by visiting chefs, and gourmet coffee.

Common to almost all of the companies on the list is the belief among employees that they are listened to and that their ideas and abilities are respected.

“You’re valued here,” says Andy Fawcett, a security operations centre analyst at eSentire. “They recognize what you can do, and that’s all you can ask.”

Matt Smith, a solutions engineer with five years of service at eSentire, adds that “I’ve had the opportunity to take on new roles, and my ideas have

been listened to.

“If there’s a problem, we fix it.”

“There is a sense of empowerment here, a sense that this is something you can take responsibility for,” says Kellen Bailey, who started working at eSentire two years ago, right out of UW. “Everyone here wants to try to improve things, that they can take the bull by the horns and go.”

The company employs 250 people and is adding staff as qualified people becomes available.

The need for computer security has never been more evident, says Sprickerhoff. “Everybody is online. Everybody knows someone who has been hit by ransomware or had their bank accounts hit.

“The job has changed since our beginning,” he says. “The attacks are different, and their tactics change every six to eight months. It’s never been so in-your-face as it has been this last year.

“I think of our people here as one part air traffic controller and one part bouncer.”

As Kathryn Hodge, eSentire’s senior director of human resources, points out, “this business is not for the light of heart.

“The people here are OK with unpredictability. The culture here is really, truly a team-oriented culture.

“It’s an energetic, can-do culture and the people are ready to do leaps and bounds.”

Because eSentire employees are expected to deal with the unexpected, the company provides a concierge service, to provide staff with everything from lunch at their desks or buying special occasion gifts for their loved ones at home.

At IMS, the emphasis is on the creation of a comfortable and friendly working environment, says Sharon Wehrle, the company’s director of human resources. There’s an on-site games room and “rejuvenation room,” and space where employees can freely mix and mingle.

► **Employers** continued on page D7



Reid’s Heritage Group of Companies is honoured to be recognized as one of Waterloo Area’s Top Employers for 2018, and for the third year in a row, one of Canada’s Top Small and Medium Employers.

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EMPLOYERS

► continued from D6

The company employs 140 people — half of them women — most of them with a thorough understanding of cutting-edge technology.

“There is a whole culture change with this generation. People are just looking for that relaxed atmosphere, so that they can be as comfortable here as they are in their own homes,” says Wehrle.

“We work to be an employer of choice, to attract and retain employees.”

Managers have regular lunch-time gatherings with employees, and employees are offered a referral bonus of \$2,000 to \$4,000 if they can entice skilled developers and testers to join the company.

“We need top talent in these areas in order to be creative and innovative,” says Wehrle. “We’re always looking for top talent.”

At Allianz, Hibbert also understands the necessity of meeting the expectations of a younger generation.

“We have a high number of millennials working here. The challenge is that these people need to be constantly stimulated,” he says.

Hibbert originally is from New Zealand. He worked several years for Allianz in Australia, then did one year in Singapore before taking charge of the Canadian operation in Kitchener just over 16 months ago.

Worldwide, Allianz employs about 1,000 people. “That’s a significant amount of people, but what’s wonderful is the diversity of our people.”

“This is truly an international company.”

Hibbert says the company is growing rapidly, with business up by about 20 per cent just over the past year. He’s forecasting even greater growth as Allianz continues to attract and represent some of the largest insurance companies in the world.

“We touch on a lot of big



IAN STEWART, SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

Sharon Wehrle and Dale Scott work for Intelligent Mechatronic Systems, a Waterloo company that develops technology that can read data from automobiles and analyze the driver’s habits.

brands, and we’re attracting more of them because of our growth.”

However, what matters to Frank Flores, who works in the company’s TD insurance sales

department, is the caring attitude Allianz shows its employees.

“Coming here was the best decision I ever made,” he says. “From the day I was interviewed I

knew this was the right culture.

“One of the strengths of this organization is that it’s not strictly regimented, and that is so much better than any experience I ever had before,” he says. “For anyone who had never had my previous experiences, it would be hard for them to imagine how good this really is.”

“I know that I’m in a good spot.”

Flores was born in Guatemala and is fluent in Spanish, and considering the worldwide nature of the business, “that’s come in handy.”

He says that his wife had a difficult time during her last pregnancy, and the company stood by the couple throughout some stressful times. “It was not a good time, but I felt secure here.

“I couldn’t believe the level of support I got. Everybody chipped in and helped us out. That kindness is something I will remember forever.

“When you know that your job is secure and you can take the time you need, what more can any employees ask of a company?”



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