



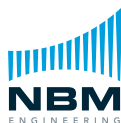
CANADIAN • CROATIAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

21ST ANNUAL
BUSINESS
EXCELLENCE
AWARDS

AWARD RECIPIENTS

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN OUR
CROATIAN-CANADIAN COMMUNITY

MAY 2, 2025



MNP

Bell



Celebrating leaders in the business community

At CIBC, we play a unique and vital role in enabling a more secure, equitable and sustainable future for our clients and communities.

That's why we're proud to sponsor the 21st Annual Business Excellence Awards Gala hosted by the Canadian-Croatian Chamber of Commerce, which recognizes leadership, innovation and excellence within the Canadian-Croatian community.



Award Categories

Large Business of the Year Award

This award will be presented to an outstanding Croatian-Canadian business with more than 25 employees.

Small Business of the Year Award

This award will be presented to an outstanding Croatian-Canadian business with 25 employees or less.

Executive of the Year Award

This award will be presented to a Croatian-Canadian individual exemplifying extraordinary achievement in executive management and leadership within a major corporation.

Entrepreneur of the Year Award

This award will be presented to a Croatian-Canadian entrepreneur who has achieved business success through vision, innovation, creativity, and risk-taking.

Professional of the Year Award

This award will be presented to a Croatian-Canadian professional out of the following fields: accounting, architecture, chiroprody, chiropractic, consulting, dentistry, denturists, education, engineering, financial planning, law, medicine, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology, real estate, and veterinary medicine.

Community Achievement Award

Two awards will be presented to two individuals whose selfless dedication, contribution or philanthropy has positively impacted the Croatian-Canadian community.

Nomination Criteria

- Leadership and entrepreneurship
- Product/service/market innovation
- Any unique business achievements
- Sales and/or employment growth and technological advancement
- Excellence in community relations/promotion
- Customer service and reliability
- High standards of employee relations

Krpan Group

John Krpan, Chief Executive Officer of Krpan Group, has been a transformative force in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area's real estate landscape. Launching his career as a Realtor at just eighteen, John's early vision for vertical integration and strategic partnerships laid the foundation for Krpan Group's evolution into a premier real estate enterprise. Under his leadership, through his team he has developed/built over 10,000 homes and millions of square feet of commercial space, with standout communities like Glen Abbey Encore, Seven Oaks, and Bronte Creek among more than 60 landmark projects that have elevated property values and enriched community life.

A hallmark of John's future-forward thinking is the Award winning iConnect Community in Hamilton – a 400-acre, complete community seamlessly integrating living, working, shopping, and playing. This bold initiative has become one of the most cutting-edge communities in the country with 6,000 future residents and 3,000 people currently employed by almost 100 tenants within iConnect. Fortune 500 companies and global tenants like Stryker Medical and L3 Harris now call the iConnect Business Park home, underscoring Krpan Group's reputation for excellence.

John's entrepreneurial reach extends beyond real estate. He played a key role in negotiating and financing the historic acquisition of the Las Vegas Raiders, helping the first Black player and Hall of Famer and who played for the team become an NFL franchise owner – changing the culture of the league forever.

John has also positioned Krpan Group at the forefront of sustainable development. With LEED- certified buildings, and a geothermal-heated apartment building currently under construction, his leadership has helped set a new standard for eco-conscious building practices.

His developments have created tens of thousands of jobs, supporting contractors, tradespeople, local service providers and businesses. His philanthropy includes helping raise over \$60 million for the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital and serving as lead donor for the Burlington Public Library expansion, stepping up when the community needed it most.

A contributor to Forbes, John shares industry insights as a respected thought leader. His passion for negotiation extends into the world of poker, where he's earned millions and appeared as himself in the Academy award nominated film Molly's Game, directed by Aaron Sorkin, and starring Jessica Chastain, Idris Elba, and Kevin Costner.

John is a proud Canadian-Croatian whose identity is deeply shaped by his parents, Mary and Tony. Immigrants who built a life through sheer determination, they instilled in John the values of resilience, integrity, sacrifice, and an unwavering work ethic. Their example taught him to dream big, remain humble, and lead with heart – principles that have guided every step of his journey.

John looks to the future with the same passion and purpose that have defined his career. His legacy of innovation, community impact, and values-driven leadership make him a remarkable recipient for the Large Business of the Year Award.



Bionic SportMed & Physiotherapy

Dr. Paul Biondich, B.Sc.Kin, DC is a Chiropractor who designs Custom High Performance Nutrition programs for Elite and Professional athletes and is considered as one of the top Sports Supplement experts in the world. Most recently he has a patent pending filing on a revolutionary sports supplement that has already attracted the interest of Real Madrid FC, the US Special Forces, Duke University and will guarantee that the athlete will be able to break their personal best record after only one use. This revolutionary product will create a massive paradigm shift not only in the Sports Nutrition market globally, but will significantly be able to enhance an athletes ability to repair, recover and grow like no other product currently on the market.

Throughout his 26 year career, Dr. Paul has worked with players from; Major League Soccer, Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, CFL, numerous Canadian National Team players. He has worked as the director of Sport Science for the Canadian National Areal Soccer Team and has consulted for numerous professional organizations in various sports including the new woman's pro soccer team AFC Toronto.

With his professional athletes, he has traveled to Japan, London England, throughout the US and to Brazil where UFC Heavyweight, Stipe Miocic won the UFC World Championship Title. Prior to working with Stipe Miocic for the past 13 years, Paul has worked with UFC Welter Weight World Champion Carlos Newton amongst numerous UFC fighters over the past 22 years starting back at UFC 34 in 2002.

Paul also helped develop an endurance supplement called Amped NOX for Isagenix, an international Health and Wellness company. He also formulated and launched Bionic Pain Cream in the US, Canada and Australia. He also designed and patented a hockey mask called the I2, to improve reaction time and peripheral vision that is currently being used by NHL goalies and also as a player mask used by both US and Canadian Jr National teams. The I2 mask is currently being sold by CCM and it is nicknamed the "Oreo Cage".

Paul is an international speaker on High Performance Sports Nutrition who has lectured throughout the US, Canada, England, Ireland and Scotland in front of audiences of up to 7,000 and will be launching his new book this year titled "No Cardio Required" which outlines the secrets to building muscle and burning fat without using cardio.

Dr. Paul runs and operates two full service Sports Medicine clinics in Etobicoke (Etobicoke SportMed & Physiotherapy) and Oakville (Bionic SportMed & Physiotherapy) where he offers Chiropractic, Physiotherapy, Massage Therapy, Acupuncture, Shockwave, Class 4 Laser, Spinal Decompression, Active Release, Orthotics and Naturopathic services. He is a great supporter of the Croatian community over the years sponsoring and supporting various Croatian youth sports teams. For more information, follow Dr Paul on Instagram @drbiondich



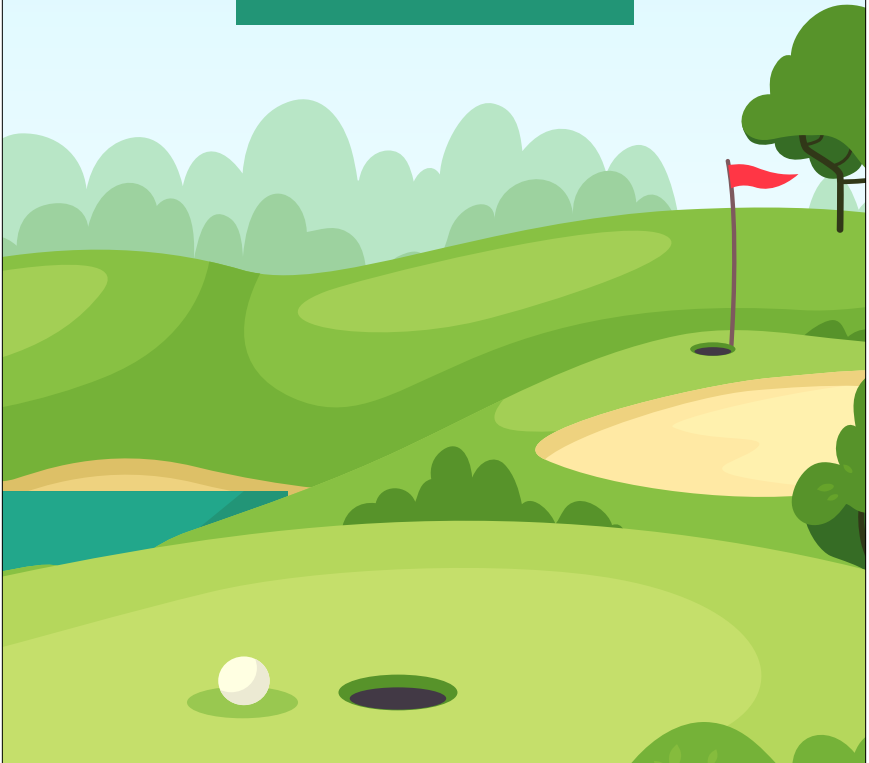
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Annual

Taste of Croatia™
Golf  Tournament

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Croatian food and beverages at select holes.

SEPT 12, 2025



This Year's Award Print



KLOBUČAR FINE ART

Tvrtko Klobučar

Girl with Morčić

Watercolour and ink on Prepared Paper

12 x 16

The piece "Girl with Morčić" holds significance in the realm of folklore, where contemporary youth engage with its foundations in today's society. As an artist, Tvrtko strives to connect traditional techniques and influences, such as Johannes Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring," with modern symbolism as it is practiced today. His goal is to resonate with both traditional and modern audiences.

The final artwork highlights the symbolism of the "morčić" in Croatian culture. A morčić is a traditional piece of jewelry, most often in the form of earrings. It is a symbol of Rijeka, Kvarner, and Hrvatsko primorje, representing regional history, tradition, and loyalty, as noted by Visit Rijeka. The design of the morčić is often inspired by the white turbans of the Ottoman army, linked to a legend about a military victory on Grobnik Field in Rijeka.

Additionally, the image features a young girl in a traditional folklore costume tuning her instrument. This depiction allows for a glimpse into the process of a musician, something that is traditionally overlooked. The artwork evokes a sense of reality and candidness, enabling it to resonate with any audience. It interprets symbolism and traditions that connect the viewer historically and in a contemporary context.

Executive of the Year

Ivan J. Čondić



Ivan J. Čondić is the Vice President, Finance and Chief Financial Officer of NuVista Energy Ltd. Ivan joined NuVista in 2014 and was appointed to Vice President, Finance and Chief Financial Officer on January 1, 2023.

NuVista is a large publicly traded oil and natural gas producer in Canada. Ivan has played a key role as part of a successful management team at NuVista, taking on corporate strategic, financial, and people leadership while forging partnerships with external stakeholders including the investment community. Notably, in 2024, NuVista was recognized as part of

the TSX30 for the third consecutive year, which recognizes the thirty top-performing companies on the Toronto Stock Exchange, ranking sixth place out of over three thousand publicly listed companies. Ivan's leadership at NuVista has put him at the forefront of the Canadian oil and gas industry.

Born and raised in Calgary, Ivan is the son of Croatian immigrants from the Imotski area. He earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary and is a Chartered Professional Accountant. Ivan articulated at KPMG in Calgary and also completed a secondment to KPMG Croatia. After leaving public accounting, he has held various positions of increasing responsibility in the oil and gas industry for over 20 years.

Beyond his corporate success and achievements, Ivan is dedicated to giving back and is a proud and committed member of the Croatian community in Calgary. He and his wife, Mandy, daughter Alana and son Dario are very active in the Croatian Catholic parish, Our Lady of Marija Bistrica. He and Mandy previously served several years on the parish council. Mandy has also been the lead Croatian school teacher in Calgary since 2009. For many years, Ivan also played soccer with the Calgary Croatia Sports club. Ivan has deep ties with family, friends and former colleagues and enjoys frequent visits to Croatia.

MLS Regular Season

SATURDAY OCT 18, 2025



Toronto

6:00pm



**Orlando
City**

**CROATIAN HERITAGE NIGHT
SAVE THE DATE**

5TH ANNUAL
CROATIAN
CHRISTMAS
MARKET
AND
CANDY CANE HUNT



The Canadian-Croatian Chamber of Commerce, Consulate General of the Republic of Croatia in Mississauga and Croatian Sports and Community Centre of Hamilton invite all members of the Croatian community to join us to celebrate and share in the joyous Christmas season in the company of family and good friends.

This is a free event and will be accommodated on a first come, first served basis.

Croatian Sports and
Community Centre of Hamilton, Inc.

166 Green Mountain Rd E, Stoney Creek, ON L8J 3A4

SHOPPING • CRAFTS • FOOD AND DRINK
LIVE MUSIC AND CHRISTMAS CAROLING
A SPECIAL SURPRISE VISITOR WITH TREATS



NOV 30TH – SAVE THE DATE

Interested vendors please email contactus@croat.ca
Chamber members may participate as a vendor at no charge!

Sabrina Šančić



Sabrina Šančić, the founder and CEO of Bella Crystal Design, is a visionary entrepreneur renowned for her innovative business approach and unwavering commitment to making a positive impact on her clients while creating exceptional designs.

In 2013, Sabrina founded Bella Crystal Design, driven by her passion for creativity and aesthetics. Initially conceived as a small-scale endeavour, the business has since grown into a globally recognized enterprise.

Sabrina's exceptional work has garnered recognition from influential figures such as Avril Lavigne, Jennifer Lopez, the Kardashian-Jenner family and Shania Twain. Her story serves as an inspiration to aspiring entrepreneurs, demonstrating that with passion, perseverance, and innovation, dreams can be transformed into reality.

Beyond her business accomplishments, Sabrina is deeply committed to community service. She spearheads initiatives that support the Norval Church and The Kolo Group Kraj Zvonamir, making a significant contribution to the community.

When not dedicated to leading Bella Crystal Design, Sabrina pursues personal interests such as reading, spending time with her family, engaging in physical fitness, and savouring exquisite cuisine, which she believes contributes to a balanced and fulfilling life.

Sabrina continues to shatter barriers and establish new standards, demonstrating that the future of entrepreneurship is brimming with possibilities.



Dr. Agatha Komšić-Vranjković, PhD



Dr. Agatha Komšić-Vranjković (PhD) has a remarkable heritage and background that speaks to the values we hold dear. Agatha is a distinguished researcher and ethics leader whose career has been defined by scientific excellence, ethical integrity, and a deep commitment to public health. Agatha's commitment to mentorship is driven by her belief in the power of education to shape lives and build a better future. By sharing her knowledge, experience, and unwavering support, she hopes to inspire and empower the next generation to make meaningful contributions to their fields and communities.

Born in Montreal to Polish and Croatian parents, Irena Krašniak and Marko Komšić, Agatha embodies a deep respect for hard-work, integrity, and compassion. Raised in the vibrant Croatian community surrounding the Sveti Nikola Tavelić Church, Agatha developed a lifelong appreciation for cultural identity, which continues to inform her personal and professional values.

Agatha holds a BSc in Microbiology and Immunology from McGill University and a PhD in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Immunology from the University of Ottawa. Her doctoral research significantly advanced the field's understanding of HIV immunopathogenesis and the immune effects of antiretroviral therapies. Throughout her academic training, she received numerous accolades, including two studentship awards from the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Graduate Scholarships from the University of Ottawa, and multiple travel grants to present her work at national and international conferences such as the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections and the Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research.

Currently, Agatha serves as a Senior Research Associate at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute under the Chronic and Infectious Diseases Program, where she plays a key role in an immunology research laboratory focused on the effects of chronic liver disease on the immune system through basic science and translational research. Her specialization lies in the fine analysis of cellular immunity in chronic infectious diseases such as hepatitis C and B and HIV, as well as metabolic liver disease. She has honed her skills in high-throughput multi-parameter technologies, which speaks to her commitment and expertise in the field.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, Agatha was the first researcher to begin processing blood samples from hospitalized SARS-CoV-2 patients. While the institute was largely shut down, she continued this crucial work under high-stress conditions, exemplifying her dedication to public health and scientific advancement.

Beyond the bench, Agatha is the Research Ethics and Access Officer for the Canadian Biobank Alliance (formerly CoVaRR-Net Biobank). She brings her extensive experience as a long-time member of the Ottawa Health Science Network Research Ethics Board to the national stage, ensuring the application of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDI) principles in all aspects of human health research. She co-authored the Biobank's first white paper on pandemic preparedness biobanking (Saginur et al., JAMMI 2022) and played a leading role in developing key legal and ethical frameworks. Her advocacy has also led to the creation of an authorship clause that ensures fair recognition of contributing scientists.

Agatha is a passionate advocate for mentorship and education, committed to fostering the next generation of scientists and medical professionals. As a mother of two, she understands the transformative power of guidance and support, having benefited greatly from the mentorship she received throughout her career. Inspired by those experiences, she actively works to empower young minds and help them reach their full potential. Within the lab, Agatha mentors undergraduate Honors and Co-op students, as well as MSc and PhD graduate students, guiding them through complex research and scientific discovery. She also plays a vital role in shaping future medical professionals as an instructor in case-based learning groups at the University of Ottawa's medical school.

Regardless of her demanding career, Agatha consistently finds time to offer her support to those in need and makes the time to lend a helping hand. Agatha has made significant contributions to the Croatian community of Ottawa where her assistance to the Croatian Folklore ensemble 'Croatoan' and to the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in Canada has been of great importance. Furthermore, for many years, she has devoted her time to teaching the Croatian language to our future generation through the International Languages Program with the Ottawa Catholic School Board.

Ivan Basar



Ivan Basar was born and raised in Jaškovo, county of Ozalj, Croatia. He emigrated to Sudbury, Ontario in 1970 at the age of 17. Upon completing high school education a few years later, he went on to university to major in modern languages and literatures. As a student in Sudbury, Ivan also continued to study the accordion under a very reputable and internationally well-known teacher, Karl Pukara. Ivan was also a member of the Karl Pukara Accordion Orchestra, a North American champion orchestra, for five years. He eventually

earned a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from The University of Western Ontario.

Ivan moved to Ottawa in 1981 in search for employment as a librarian. After some stagnation, he ended up working for the National Library of Canada, later Library and Archives Canada, a federal government institution, where he remained for the next forty years. He held there a number of different positions over the years, the latest one being the team leader of the Serials Cataloguing Team. For the past twelve years in his position as the team leader, he was also the head of the Canadian Centre for ISSN (International Standard Serial Number). He retired in 2022.

Upon arriving in Ottawa, he became a member of the Croatian community. He is still serving as president of the Croatian parish council, the role he assumed in 2000, advocating for parish needs at both the local and archdiocesan levels. He is also the church organist and finds joy in participating in parish activities. He also taught briefly the Croatian language to children at the Croatian school offered through the Ottawa Catholic School Board. He was known for being generous with his time—always ready to offer help to others, provide job references, and support anyone in need in the community. A voice of calm and reason, Ivan always looks to give others the benefit of the doubt during challenging times as he leads with patience during conflict resolution in the community - a testament to his good nature and kind heart.

During the war of aggression in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, as an active member in the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) branch in Ottawa, he helped organize Croatian demonstrations on Parliament Hill. He was also a strong defender of the Croatian language. During his career as a librarian at the National Library of Canada he continuously promoted issues and facts about the Croatian language among his colleagues. Let us not forget that it was not until about the year 2000 when the ISO (International Standards Organization) and Library of Congress in Washington finally adopted the proper name for the Croatian language. On one occasion Ivan purchased multiple copies of Branko Franolić's book, *A Short History of Literary Croatian*, which he sent as gift to numerous Canadian libraries to be added to their collections. He also published a letter to the editor in *Focus*, a publication of the Ontario Library Association, defending the name of the Croatian language which had been under attack in the same magazine from the Serbian community in Toronto.

Ivan met his beloved late wife Nada at Hrvatski Dan in Ottawa in 1991. Together, they raised their children in the Croatian Catholic faith & community. He looks forward to watching their legacy continue through his children, who remain deeply active in the community to this day. His son, who once served as an altar boy and church organist, is now studying at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Zagreb to become a priest. His daughter is an active church member who loves to help out in the Ottawa community. Both continuing the family's deep-rooted connection to faith and homeland.

Ivan can be found on Sundays playing the organ in church or smiling and joking with other community members. His love for Croatia and its people is unwavering. He worked hard to foster togetherness within the community, always encouraging unity, cultural pride, and mutual support. Croatia and his faith are not only in his heart, but guide his actions. He built bridges between individuals and families, helping countless members connect and thrive. Throughout his life, he remained deeply connected to his Croatian heritage and Catholic faith. Using both his education and love of Croatia, he helps make a positive impact in his community.

Frank Muretić



Frank Muretić has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to the Croatian community, both within and outside of Kitchener-Waterloo. His unwavering dedication to preserving and promoting Croatian culture has made a lasting impact wherever he is involved.

In the Kitchener-Waterloo region, where several ethnic clubs have unfortunately closed, the Croatian community continues to thrive—largely thanks to Frank's vision and determination. Under his guidance, the KW Croatian Club (Hrvatski Dom KW) has become a vibrant and financially stable hub for cultural, social, and athletic activities. Frank has served as a player, coach, and manager of the KW Hrvat soccer club

since the early 2000s. In 2016, he organized the HNNS Labour Day Tournament, raising critical funds that helped rescue the club from financial collapse.

In 2017, Frank assumed the role of president and led a group of volunteers in revitalizing the club. Through strategic planning, hard work, and community engagement, he helped quadruple membership and restore the club's facilities. Major upgrades—including a renovated banquet hall, updated sports club, an outdoor bar and patio, bocce courts, and a new children's playground—have transformed the club into a place the community is proud to call its own.

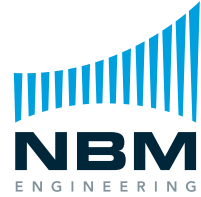
Even after relocating to Georgetown, Frank continues to serve as president of the KW Croatian Club and remains deeply involved. He volunteers with the Kraljica Mira Parish in Norval and coaches in Norval's youth soccer program, further contributing to the strength and unity of the Croatian community in the Norval area.

Frank's passion for Croatian culture extends beyond Ontario. Nearly 25 years ago, he co-founded Noćni Raj, a band that became a favorite at Croatian celebrations across North America. From Toronto to Vancouver, and from New York to Los Angeles, Frank has consistently shared his love for music, culture, and community with others.

Frank's ability to contribute so significantly to our communities is made possible by the support of his devoted wife, Renata, and his children, Frankie Jr. and Petra. Their consistent encouragement and understanding enable him to dedicate so much of himself to others. Through his actions, values, and the way he honors his heritage, he imparts to his children the importance of family, tradition, and pride in their cultural roots.

His passion is fueled by the belief that children are the foundation of our future, and he is dedicated to doing whatever it takes to nurture that promise. His integrity, charisma, and unwavering dedication make him an outstanding role model and ambassador of Croatian heritage.

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