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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Planning and Economic Development Committee  
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development  
Report: #2024-EDT-3  
Date: February 6, 2024

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**Subject:**

2023 North Durham Building Business Forum

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**Recommendation:**

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the North Durham Building Business Forum event that was held on November 14, 2023.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Section of the Economic Development and Tourism Division (Invest Durham) delivers economic development programming and initiatives in the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge (north Durham).

2.2 This team led the planning and implementation of the 2023 North Durham Building Business Forum to bring together entrepreneurs and small business owners from across north Durham, share useful information and knowledge to help them grow, and expand the reach of Durham Region business support organizations.

### 3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 The 2023-2027 Growing North Durham: Rural Economic Development Action Plan was received by the Planning and Economic Development Committee on February 7, 2023 ([Report 2023-EDT-2](#)).
- 3.2 The re-introduction and hosting of the North Durham Building Business Forum was a key action identified under the “Support Entrepreneurship” goal of the Growing North Durham Plan.

### 4. North Durham Building Business Forum

- 4.1 The 2023 North Durham Building Business Forum was held on November 14, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. during ‘Do It In Durham Entrepreneurship Week’ at Trail Hub in the Township of Uxbridge.
- 4.2 The free event welcomed more than 100 attendees from a wide range of commercial and home-based businesses, local business support organizations, and north Durham municipalities (staff and members of Council).
- 4.3 The primary goals of the event were to expand the reach of local and regional business support organizations, build knowledge and capacity amongst north Durham entrepreneurs by organizing useful and informative speaking sessions, and to facilitate networking opportunities for attendees.
- 4.4 The following elements were built into the event to help achieve the desired goals:
- a. **Business Support Organization Tradeshow:** More than 15 business support organizations with a presence in Durham Region set up information booths at the event, allowing attendees to learn about the services they offer, ask questions, and connect with staff.
  - b. **Relevant and Informative Speaking Sessions:** A steering committee consisting of north Durham business leaders and municipal/regional staff identified topics of interest and potential speakers. Sessions included:
    - Business Resiliency Fireside Chat – Joanne Richter of Second Wedge Brewing Co.
    - Social Media for Small Business – Panel discussion featuring north Durham entrepreneurs
    - Entrepreneur Spotlight – Zechariah Thomas of SWIFT Hockey

- What Employees Want: Attracting, Engaging, and Retaining Talent in a Changing World – Amy Davies
- c. **Networking Opportunities:** Attendees were given the opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs, small business owners and support staff at multiple points throughout the event.
- 4.5 Following the event, a post event survey was circulated to attendees. Key highlights include:
- a. 96% of respondents said that the event met or exceeded expectations.
  - b. 70% of respondents were 'very satisfied' with the format of the event. An additional 24% stated that they were 'satisfied' with the format.
  - c. 79% of respondents said that they would 'definitely attend' another North Durham Building Business Forum. An additional 18% said they would likely attend another.

## 5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Economic Prosperity: To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership.
    - 3.1 Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business
    - 3.2 Leverage Durham's prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The 2023 North Durham Building Forum was successful in bringing together entrepreneurs from across north Durham to share knowledge, ideas, resources and information.
- 6.2 To continue delivering on the goals of the Growing North Durham Plan, the Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Section plans to host another business forum event in north Durham in 2024. Staff will work with partners to determine whether the format, target audience, size and scale of the event should be adjusted.
- 6.3 This report will be circulated to the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE  
Commissioner of Planning and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer