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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development
Report: #2025-INFO-49
Date: June 6, 2025

Subject:

Invest Durham Annual Report 2024

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a brief overview of the Region's Economic Development and Tourism Division's 2024 activities and programs. Included as Attachment #1 is the Invest Durham Annual Report 2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Annual Report summarizes activities undertaken by the various sections of the Division which include Business Development and Investment, Agri-Food and Rural Economic Development, Business Advisory Centre of Durham, Marketing, and Tourism.
- 2.2 In addition, the Annual Report provides an economic snapshot, and contains spotlights on specific initiatives, sector development projects, highlights from programs and activities, as well as an awards list.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 A Year-in-Review report from the Economic Development and Tourism Division is provided annually.

4. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 4.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Connected and Vibrant Communities

- C6. Continue to revitalize and transform downtowns into hubs of economic, social, and cultural connection.
- C7. Create accessible, lively, and culturally welcoming public spaces, including opportunities to access nature.

b. Resilient Local Economies

- R1. Attract and retain quality employers that strengthen key economic sectors, including energy and technology.
- R2. Support the growth of new business startups and small to medium local businesses.
- R3. Develop, attract, and support a skilled and qualified workforce, including youth and newcomers.
- R4. Protect and strengthen the local agriculture sector and food supply chains.
- R5. Cultivate and promote local arts, culture, quality of place, and tourism that embrace urban excitement and country charm.

c. Strong Relationships

- S1. Enhance inclusive opportunities for community engagement and meaningful collaboration.
- S2. Build and strengthen respectful relationships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.
- S3. Collaborate across local area municipalities, with agencies, non-profits, and community partners to deliver co-ordinated and efficient services.
- S4. Advocate to the federal and provincial government and agencies to advance regional priorities.

4.2 This report aligns with/addresses the following Foundation(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. People: Making the Region of Durham a great place to work, attracting, and retaining talent.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Invest Durham Annual report will continue to be produced on an annual basis.

5.2 This report will be delivered to Durham Region area municipalities.

6. Attachments

Attachment #1: Invest Durham Annual Report 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer



2024

Economic Development and Tourism Annual Report

2024 Year in Review

- Economic Snapshot
- Business Investment and Attraction
- Business Investment Highlights
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Business Advisory Centre of Durham
- Agriculture and Rural Economic Development
- Marketing and Tourism
- Awards





Durham's Momentum is Real – and It's Accelerating

In 2024, Invest Durham proudly delivered Year 2 of **Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham**, our bold and strategic roadmap for economic development and tourism. The results are in. Durham's time is here.

This past year, we connected vision with action, hosting high-impact events like our Realtor and Developer Social. This gathering of top-tier commercial real estate leaders, developers, municipal officials, and economic strategists was more than a networking opportunity—it was a catalyst. It spotlighted Durham's booming potential and built the kinds of relationships that turn big ideas into transformative investments.

Durham's reputation is now resonating far beyond our borders. We were recognized by Site Selection Magazine as one of the best places to invest in Canada in 2024. This is an international validation of what we already know: Durham Region is a magnet for growth.

That growth is driven by our leadership in clean energy, anchored by major investments from companies like Black & McDonald and AtkinsRéalis. The momentum continues with the upcoming opening of Ontario Power Generation's headquarters which further reinforces Durham's identity as the Clean Energy Capital of Canada.

Our impact stretches across the entire region, from urban centres to rural townships. In the north, our Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses initiative is laying the groundwork for long-term job creation and rural economic resilience.

Meanwhile, Durham's creative and cultural identity is flourishing. With growing media coverage, thriving festivals, and our work to catalyze our music scene, we've helped place our independent restaurants and unique destinations in the spotlight, bringing new energy to our brand and new visitors to our region.

We also looked beyond 2024, investing significant effort into planning a powerful international presence. In partnership with NGen Canada, we worked with local post-secondary institutions, all eight municipalities, the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association and Spark Centre to build a dynamic delegation for Hannover Messe 2025 and became poised to amplify Durham's voice on the global stage.

Our investment pipeline tells the story of a region on the rise. Volkswagen Canada's expansion in Ajax. Major moves by Lactalis and Martin Brower in Oshawa's business park. Tourism game-changers like the Porsche Experience Centre Toronto-Pickering and Volt Raceway in Bowmanville. Durham Region is not just participating in Ontario's economic growth. We're driving it.



Simon Gill
Director, Economic Development and Tourism



Economic Snapshot



Booming Growth

- Durham Region's population grew nearly 12 per cent between 2021 to 2024, reaching an estimated 780,300, and is expected to grow to 1,300,000 by 2051.
- Approximately 915 new businesses opened in Durham Region in 2024.



In Demand

- Plans are underway to build four new GO transit stations for the Lakeshore East GO Extension, opening new opportunities for transportation and development.
- Durham Region named one of Canada's best places to invest by Site Selection Magazine.



Talented

- Ontario Tech University named 2023 and 2024 Canadian Research University of the Year.
- Durham College opened the Vanhaverbeke Family EV Training Centre and named one of Canada's top 50 Research Colleges.



Innovating the Future

- Trent University Durham GTA launched a new program in Artificial Intelligence, while celebrating 50 years in our community.
- Durham Region recognized as a fully certified Intelligent Community by the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF), a designation provided to communities that are poised for investment, and set to succeed economically, socially, and culturally.



Business Development and Investment Attraction

In 2024, Invest Durham focused on priority clusters as defined in the division's strategic plan Ready Set Future. As a result, 86 per cent of inquiries handled by the team were in the targeted sectors. Strong relationships with important partner organizations were bolstered, further creating awareness of Durham's reputation and value proposition for investment.

**Responded to
161 Business
Investment
Inquiries**



Directly landed two investments:
Black & McDonald (pictured above)
and CTNS

99 leads remain open

**48 pitch proposals and eight
international investment
attraction missions**

**Signed a Memorandum of
Understanding with Business
Tampere**

**64 industry events, conferences
and trade shows**

**21 inbound delegations
and site tours**

Commercial and Industrial Realtor and Developer Social

We held a Realtor-Developer Social networking event in Toronto, and showcased a portfolio of 41 commercial and industrial properties available for development in Durham Region, to the real estate and development community, primarily operating in the Toronto area.





Business Investment Highlights

The following non-exhaustive list details some key new businesses, strategic investments, and retained/expanded businesses in Durham Region in 2024. Please note that this list may include opportunities that our team did not have the opportunity to directly support.

Algoma Orchards – Facility Expansion, Clarington

AtkinsRéalis – New Offices, Pickering

Black & McDonald – New Offices, Pickering

Business Point – Corporate Centre Development, Pickering

Continued Downtown Revitalization – RED Grant Funding, Uxbridge

Farm Operation Expansions – Examples include a Poultry Barn Build (Schillings Family), Whitby, and Sheep Barn Build (Found Family), Clarington

Lactalis Canada – Facility Opened, Oshawa

Lakeridge Logistics Centre – 1.2m sq. ft. Zero Carbon Distribution Centre, Ajax

Lightcaster Brewery – New Brewery Opening, Clarington

Market at 70 King – Food Hall Opened, Oshawa

Martin Brower of Canada – Facility Opened, Oshawa

Ontario Power Generation – New Corporate HQ Renovations, Oshawa (Completion: Summer 2025)

Ontario Power Generation – Research & Development Facility, Ajax (Occupancy Expected May 2025)

Ontario Power Generation – Small Modular Reactor Development, Clarington

Ontario Power Generation – Pickering Nuclear Generating Station – Refurbishment Announced, Pickering

Pingle's Farm – Animal Education Barn Addition (Agri-Tourism), Clarington

Planning Grant – New Whitby Hospital Secured, Whitby

Porsche Experience Centre Toronto – Opening Summer 2025, Pickering

Port Royal Mills – New Facility Secured (Opening 2025), Port Perry

Prompt Assembly and Packaging Inc. – Expansion to New Location, Ajax

Sky Canoe – Facility Completed, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation

Shandex Group – New Warehouse Facility, Ajax

Trioquest – Bay Ridges Industrial Centre Development, Pickering

Triforest Inc. – Planned Expansion, Ajax

Volkswagen Canada – 115,000 sq. ft. Expansion (Training, Storage, Shipping), Ajax (Site Plan Approved 2024)

Volt Raceway – New Entertainment Centre Opened, Clarington

Whitby Health Centre – Facility Opening, Whitby



Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Invest Durham supported a wide range of innovation and entrepreneurship organizations and initiatives, including:

- Spark Centre
- 1855 Technology Accelerator
- Business Advisory Centre of Durham (BACD)
- Brilliant Catalyst Innovation Challenge
- 1855 and 360Insights Hackathon
- Collision Conference
- Durham Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Forum (DEEF)
- Durham Region International Film Festival Emerging Filmmaker Incubator – Hold The Sauce was the 2024 winner
- OPEN.innovate Creative Arts Incubator of Durham Region
- Durham Regional Technology Development Site, a part of the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), a provincial network of advanced mobility support organizations. The local partnership includes the Spark Centre, Ontario Tech University, Durham College and Regional Municipality of Durham.
- Launched the Agri-Food Gateway Pilot Program with NRC-IRAP and Durham College, providing agricultural training.

NGen Roadshow

We hosted the NGen Roadshow at ACE Core Research Facility at Ontario Tech University. NGen is Canada's Manufacturing Supercluster and the roadshow was designed to showcase Canada's role as the partner country for **Hannover Messe 2025**.



Hannover Messe is one of the largest industrial tradeshows in the world, attracting more than 130,000 attendees and 4,000 businesses. Invest Durham, Durham's local municipalities, along with Durham College, Ontario Tech University, Trent University Durham GTA, Spark Centre and Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association-Project Arrow collaborated to showcase Durham Region at Hannover Messe in 2025.



Business Advisory Centre of Durham (BACD)

Celebrating 25 Years of Empowering Entrepreneurs in Durham Region

The Business Advisory Centre of Durham (BACD) proudly marked its 25th anniversary—celebrating a legacy of empowering entrepreneurs and small businesses in Durham Region. BACD transitioned from a standalone office to join the Invest Durham team at the Regional Headquarters, strengthening its ability to serve the local business community.

How BACD Supports Businesses

BACD is more than just a resource—it's a launchpad for entrepreneurial success.

- **Business Advisory Services:** Personalized consultations with business advisors on business planning, marketing, operations, and more.
 - **Workshops and Training Programs:** Business planning, financial management, digital marketing and more.
 - **Funding and Grants:** BACD helps navigate funding opportunities, including government grants, loans, and micro-financing programs. Programs like Starter Company Plus and Summer Company—funded by the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade—offer training, grant funding and mentorship to new and young entrepreneurs.
- **139 businesses created with BACD's support**
 - **228 jobs created**
 - **48 grants totaling \$200,000 issued — supported by the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade**
 - **Starter Company Plus:** \$135,000 granted to 28 businesses.
 - **Summer Company:** \$60,000 granted to 20 student-run businesses.
 - **Do It In Durham Entrepreneurship Week:** 62 events with 1224 attendees.



6,823
e-newsletter
subscribers



30,000+
visitors to bacd.ca



9,217
social media
followers



1,349
business consultations



2,686
inquiries handled



1,575
workshop attendees
across 133 sessions



Agriculture and Rural Economic Development



1,272

bi-monthly industry
e-newsletter
subscribers



29%

increase in social
media followers



114

attendees at the North
Durham Building
Business Forum

Grants:

- Completed a successful Rural Economic Development (RED) grant for the Uxbridge Downtown Revitalization, in partnership with the Township of Uxbridge.
- Supported the Durham Federation of Agriculture in securing a Revive Grant from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to fund the 2025 Durham Agriculture Leadership Program.

100

attendees at
the Precision
Agriculture Day
hosted with
Durham Farm
Connections

Key Initiatives and Partnerships:

- Completed the North Durham Labour Force Study, highlighting local labour market trends.
- Partnered with Durham College Photography Program to capture imagery of nine North Durham businesses for future marketing.
- Worked with the Township of Scugog and a hired consultant to develop the Scugog Business Program Final Report and 2025 Action Plan.
- Created building, business, and parcel inventories for downtowns and employment lands in North Durham.
- Updated and expanded community profiles for each township, including refreshed content, interactive data tools, and improved website integration.
- Engaged an external planning consultant for a regional study on agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses in collaboration with Scugog, Uxbridge, and Brock—a study aimed at modernizing land-use policies in north Durham, while protecting farmland.
- Co-created the “From Farm to Plate” apple value chain video series with Durham Farm Connections to raise public awareness about local food systems.





Marketing and Tourism

Marketing Activities – Invest Durham

Promoting Durham Region for new investment and job creation.



LinkedIn

6,815 followers
4,380 interactions
32% follower growth



Instagram

2,793 followers
2,033 interactions
14% follower growth



Enews

3,006 subscribers to
Invest Durham Enews

3,625 subscribers to the Weekly Careers Round Up LinkedIn Newsletter

Key Initiatives and Partnerships:

- The Invest Durham website underwent a comprehensive overhaul—introducing innovative digital tools, strategically aligning content with the Ready Set Future plan, and executing a site-wide content modernization to better serve investors and stakeholders.
- The digital refresh included the redevelopment of the Signature Sites marketing package—a promotional tool that showcases high-potential land, buildings, and investment-ready properties. This package was promoted through multi-channel digital campaigns, high-profile industry events, and targeted outreach.
- The team successfully created and launched a compelling International Value Proposition, a key deliverable that fulfilled Action 1.6 of the 2023–2027 Marketing Plan—requiring collaboration, in-depth market research, and strategic messaging tailored to global investors.
- Invest Durham’s marketing team played a hands-on role in planning, promoting, and producing a wide range of strategic events—including the Realtor Social, NGen Roadshow, film and television industry gatherings, and Music Region program—driving engagement, regional visibility, and economic opportunity across sectors.





Durham Tourism



Facebook

8,400 total audience
435,904 impressions
18 per cent growth



Instagram

21 960 followers
55,539 engagements
61 per cent follower growth

8,372 monthly visitor e-newsletter subscribers
4,543 monthly industry e-newsletter subscribers

Strategic Planning:

- Completed the Durham Tourism Five-Year Action Plan, formally endorsed by the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee.
- Initiated a comprehensive review of website content to enhance SEO and user experience, resulting 301,000 page views in 2024.
- Supported a refreshed Uxbridge Community Tourism Plan in partnership with Central Counties Tourism.
- Developed and launched the Scugog Tourism visitor tracking initiative.

Marketing and Campaigns:

- Launched the innovative Out of Office campaign, achieving 1.4 million impressions across billboards, print, social media, and Spotify platforms.
- Revitalized the Durham Tourism event activation toolkit by procuring a portable, customizable photo booth to create engaging, sustainable onsite experiences.





Event Support and Community Engagement:

- Supported and promoted the Springtide Music Festival, Culture Days, Convergence Art and Music Festival, Oshawa Student Orientation, Uxbridge Holiday Trail, Canoe the Nonquon, Small Town BIG, Uxbridge Scottish Festival, Scugog Beer and Cider Festival, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation Pow Wow, Lucy Maud Montgomery 150 Celebrations, Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival, and more.
- Supported the creation of the Durham Region Arts and Culture Mapping Report in partnership with grassroots organizers.
- Formed a partnership with North Durham Pride, supporting events in Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge, and hosted a Rainbow Registered info session—helping two businesses achieve accreditation.
- Engaged post-secondary students through guided walking tours, orientation support with Durham Region Transit, and participation in student events.
- Delivered Shop in Durham Week, featuring a flag-raising and shop-local campaign to promote downtown cores and small businesses across the region.

Rural Tourism Development



- Promoted business-led rural tourism initiatives including Sideroads of Scugog, Backroads of Brock, and the Leaskdale Loop to drive increased visitation to northern communities. An influencer tour hosted in partnership with Central Counties Tourism funding brought a bus of 12 social media influencers to six destinations in rural Durham Region.
- Collaborated with Durham Farm Fresh and Chef Alex Page to deliver three on-farm culinary experiences, showcasing the region's agricultural assets.



Gather at the Farm

Durham Tourism and Durham Farm Fresh collaborated to launch this month-long campaign. The program included print and digital advertising, a culinary activation and promoted fall activities and events at farms across the region. The campaign reached more than 800,000 impressions and the landing page saw more than 15,000 visitors.



Rural Cycle Tourism Program

Durham Tourism launched 13 on-road rural cycling loops in the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge, and the Municipality of Clarington. The routes are promoted on Ride with GPS and Strava at DurhamTourism.ca/cycling. The program was launched with an event at The Nourish Community Hub in Cannington.

Sport Tourism

- Submitted a successful bid for 2026 Quadball National Championship with the City of Oshawa.
- Supported events, including 2024 Quadball Canada National Championship, 2024 U SPORTS Men's Soccer Championships, Canadian Police Curling Championship, HiSports CPA Pro Tour Pickleball Championship, Baton Canadian Championship, 2024 OFSAA Hockey Championships, 2024 OUA Baseball Championship, Ontario Tech Carriage Cup, and the Ontario Lacrosse Festival.





Creative Industries: Film and Television

Durham was host to 69 feature films, TV series, commercials and documentaries—generating 102 film permits. Projects included *The Way Home*, *Reacher*, *Fubar*, *Level 2*, *Fairview*, *Accused*, *Tall Pines*, *Bet*, *Overcompensating*, *Twisted Metal*, *Motorheads*, *Mistletoe Murders*, *Purgatory*, and *A Novel Christmas*.



21 new filming locations added to the Film Durham and Ontario Creates Digital Library.



80 attendees at the Locations Seminar.



856 attendees and 22 partners at 2024 Film and Television Industry Career Fair.



23 U.S. and UK production studio executives, academia and companies toured Durham's film studios, backlot and MRC studio.

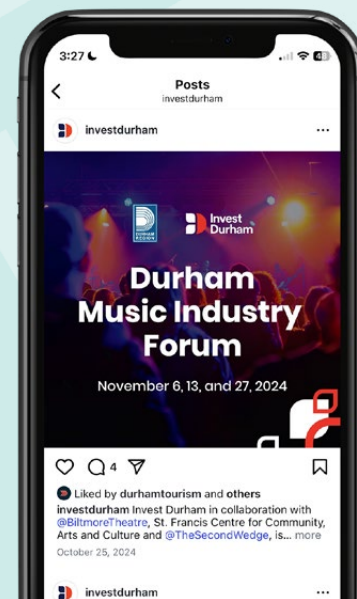
68 film-related investment inquiries

Durham Region International Film Festival (DRIFF) 2024:

657 attendees (31 per cent tourists) attended the Durham Region International Film Festival in 2024. 89 films were submitted in six categories, and 17 films were screened across three venues with 27 sponsors and 20 Emerging Filmmaker Incubator applicants.

Music

- Hosted three Durham Music Industry Forum event and promoted industry survey.
- Events hosted across three venues with nine performers and a keynote speaker.
- 360 music stakeholders participated in roundtable discussions.
- 286 Durham Music Industry Survey respondents.





Awards

Economic Development Awards

- **Bronze 2024 Excellence in Economic Development Award in the Special Event Category for Durham at Collision**, presented by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC)

MarCom Awards:

- Invest Durham and Durham Tourism Marketing Team, Team's Body of Work Achievement – Platinum Winner
- Invest Durham Innovation and Inclusivity blog series – Platinum Winner
- Durham Tourism E-newsletter Refresh – Gold Winner
- Durham Tourism OOO Campaign – Honourable Mention
- 10 Ways To Have A Brat Summer In Durham Region – Honourable Mention

Viddy Awards:

- M & L Motors Cafe, Durham Tourism Instagram Reel – Gold Winner
- Pink Coffee Trailer, Durham Tourism Instagram Reel – Gold Winner
- Out of Office, Durham Tourism Instagram Reel – Honourable Mention Winner



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