

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2564



# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

---

From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development  
Report: #2025-INFO-51  
Date: June 13, 2025

---

**Subject:**

BACD Starter Company Plus Update

---

**Recommendation:**

Receive for information.

---

**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight the activities and notable statistics from the Starter Company Plus Program for the last reporting year of April 2024 to March 2025.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Starter Company Plus Program, fully funded by the Province of Ontario and managed through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, is an initiative that provides business training and mentorship geared towards assisting those entrepreneurs in need of business knowledge and support as well as providing the opportunity to apply for a business grant of up to \$5,000. This program has been running since 2014.
- 2.2 Upon completion of three days of mandatory hybrid training, applicants that pursue the \$5,000 financial grant are required to submit a viable, sales-ready business plan as well as a two-year cash flow forecast. This is a competitive process, and a limited number of grants are awarded after each training session held four times per year.

Applicants must be able to contribute cash or in-kind of at least 25% of the grant amount.

2.3 Eligibility for the program is as follows:

- 18 years of age or older at the time of application
- Proposing a new company, expansion of an existing company or buying a business in Ontario
- Not attending school full-time or not returning to school
- Be a resident of Ontario
- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- Have not previously participated in the Starter Company Plus Program
- Not enrolled in other provincially employment or self-employment related programs that include or do not include financial assistance Starter Company Plus – Successful Applicants 2
- Not currently enrolled concurrently in any self-employment or entrepreneurship training/financing programs offered by government funded organizations.

2.4 Proposed Businesses must:

- Be an independent, for-profit business venture based in Durham Region
- Not be a business that relies on commissioned sales (MLM)
- Be a legal business in Ontario
- Not be a franchise
- Operated at arms-length from family business ventures
- Operate full-time as defined in the business plan
- Have a Master Business License or Articles of Incorporation, or register the business prior to launch
- Maintain a business banking account
- Follow all government rules and regulations and applicable by-laws for the operation of the business
- Demonstrate a viable and sales-ready business plan at the time of funding

**3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

3.1 There have been no previous reports or decisions on this topic.

#### **4. Starter Company Plus Program Update**

4.1 Notable statistics for the Starter Company Plus Program for the prior fiscal year are as follows:

- 34 Completed program participants
- 34 Grants issued
- \$170,000 Ministry funded grants
- 16 Businesses started
- 17 Jobs Created
- 18 Businesses expanded (new location, physical location, large contracts)
- \$876,744 Investment leveraged

4.2 Select Starter Company Plus companies that were supported by BACD through this program are showcased in Appendix A.

#### **5. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

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

- **Resilient Local Economies**
  - 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.

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

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

#### **6. Conclusion**

6.1 The Starter Company Plus Program continues to play a vital role in supporting the growth of new and expanding businesses across Durham Region. The results from April 2024 to March 2025 demonstrate meaningful economic and community impact—supporting 34 entrepreneurs, helping launch 16 new businesses, expanding 18 existing ones, and contributing to the creation of 17 new jobs.

- 6.2 The program's ability to unlock nearly \$900,000 in leveraged investment highlights its value as a catalyst for small business success. Through targeted training, mentorship, and funding, Starter Company Plus aligns with the Region's strategic goals of fostering resilient local economies and supporting a skilled workforce.
- 6.3 Continued investment in programs like Starter Company Plus will be critical to sustaining local entrepreneurship, driving innovation, and creating inclusive economic opportunities across Durham Region.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

---

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer

---

**Appendix A: Showcased Select Businesses Supported in Starter Company Plus Program****Granny Lee's Kitchen: Ajax, Ontario Owner: Leonie Johnson Segall****Website:** [www.grannyleeskitchen.com](http://www.grannyleeskitchen.com)

Granny Lee's Kitchen Limited is a home-based bakery located in Ajax, Ontario, founded in 2016 by Leonie Johnson Segall. They specialize in made-from-scratch baked goods and dry mixes, including muffins, cookies, gluten-free treats, and pancakes and offer a mobile pancake bar service for events, providing pancakes made to order with various mix-ins and toppings. Their products are made from locally sourced ingredients, aiming to bring families together through wholesome food. Granny Lee's Kitchen serves both local customers and the Greater Toronto Area. In 2021, with demand for GLK's pancake mix and baked goods growing online, Leonie entered the Starter Company Plus program with the Business Advisory Centre Durham ("BACD") and received a grant and participated in the training and mentorship program. At the same time, using family savings, Leonie started working with the food industry consultant The Greater Goods on a marketing strategy for the GLK pancake mix and other dry mixes.



**RNRC Aesthetics:** Whitby, Ontario. Owner: Rochele Carpio.

**BACD Profile:** [www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/rnrc-aesthetics/](http://www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/rnrc-aesthetics/)

Website: <https://www.rnrcaesthetics.com/>



RNRC Aesthetics is a growing cosmetic injectables clinic in Durham Region, founded by registered nurse and certified aesthetic injector, Rachelle Carpio. With a professional background spanning medicine, orthopedics, public health, and emergency care, Rachelle brings a deeply rooted commitment to ethical practice and patient care to every aspect of her business.

At RNRC Aesthetics, the mission is simple but powerful: to help women feel confident in their own skin. The clinic offers a range of personalized, non-surgical aesthetic treatments including neuromodulators (like Botox), dermal fillers, and skin boosters. Each service is designed to enhance natural beauty—not mask it—while educating clients on safe, responsible cosmetic care.

Since launching, RNRC Aesthetics has become a trusted name in the community for high-quality, ethical cosmetic services. As a graduate of the BACD's entrepreneurship programs, Rachelle has used the tools, mentorship, and business training provided to build a strong foundation for growth. Her practice is now expanding through thoughtful branding, client education, and a loyal client base built on word-of-mouth and professional reputation.

RNRC Aesthetics is a clear example of how skilled professionals in the healthcare field are successfully transitioning into entrepreneurship—bringing both heart and integrity into the business world. This business represents the kind of quality, community-driven enterprise that enriches the Durham Region economy and contributes to its reputation as a hub for innovation, wellness, and women-led entrepreneurship.

**Ajax Family Physiotherapy and Sports Medicine Centre Owner: Jennifer Brown**

Three locations, Ajax, Bowmanville & Courtice.

**BACD Profile:** [www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/ajax-family-physiotherapy-and-sports-medicine-centre](http://www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/ajax-family-physiotherapy-and-sports-medicine-centre)

Website: <https://www.ajaxfamilyphysio.ca/index.html>



Ajax Family Physiotherapy and Sports Medicine Centre, co-founded and led by Clinic Director Jennifer Brown, has been a cornerstone of rehabilitative care in South Ajax since 2016. The clinic was established to address a growing need for accessible, evidence-based physiotherapy and wellness services in the Durham Region. The clinic offers a comprehensive suite of services, including physiotherapy, massage therapy, chiropractic care, custom orthotics, and wellness coaching. These services are designed to cater to a diverse clientele, from athletes seeking performance optimization to individuals recovering from injuries.

A hallmark of Ajax Family Physiotherapy is its commitment to patient-centered care. The clinic operates with a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals who collaborate to create personalized treatment plans. This approach ensures that each patient receives holistic care tailored to their specific needs and goals.

As a participant in the Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD) Starter Company Plus program, Ajax Family Physiotherapy has leveraged local resources to strengthen its operations and community outreach. Their model exemplifies how healthcare businesses can thrive by focusing on accessibility, personalized care, and community engagement.

## Crave Doughnuts: Two locations, Whitby and Oshawa, Ontario

**Owner:** Nicole Morais and Jeremy Black

**BACD Profile:** [www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/crave-doughnuts](http://www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/crave-doughnuts)

**Website:** <https://cravedoughnuts.com/>



Crave Doughnuts is a boutique doughnut shop founded in 2018 by Nicole Morais and her partner Jeremy Black. Born from a passion for creating unique, handcrafted doughnuts, Crave has quickly become a local favourite. Each doughnut is made from scratch using locally sourced, quality ingredients, offering a fresh twist on the classic treat.

The journey began in their home kitchen, where Nicole and Jeremy experimented with flavours and techniques. Crave's growth is a testament to their commitment to excellence and community engagement.

Crave's marketing strategy leverages social media and creative thinking to stand out in the market. Their unique approach has resonated with customers, fostering a loyal following. Nicole emphasizes the importance of passion and community resources, advising aspiring entrepreneurs to seek help when needed and to remain dedicated to their vision.

The Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD) has been instrumental in Crave's success. Nicole credits BACD's Starter Company Plus Program, mentorship and resources for enhancing their business knowledge and confidence, contributing significantly to their growth.

Crave Doughnuts exemplifies the spirit of local entrepreneurship, combining culinary artistry with a strong community focus. Their story is an inspiration for small business owners and a delightful addition to Whitby's vibrant food scene.

**Louies Cafe and Dessert: Port Perry. Owner: Imran Mohammad.****BACD Profile:** [www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/louies-cafe-port-perry/](http://www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/louies-cafe-port-perry/)

Digital Presence

[https://www.google.com/search?safe=active&sca\\_esv=98c6703634b67c62&rlz=1C1GCEA\\_enCA1129CA1129&kgmid=/g/11nmn5ntbm&q=Louies+Cafe+And+Dessert&shndl=30&shem=lcuae,uaasie&source=sh/x/loc/uni/m1/1&kgs=e9ffcab17d654ff7](https://www.google.com/search?safe=active&sca_esv=98c6703634b67c62&rlz=1C1GCEA_enCA1129CA1129&kgmid=/g/11nmn5ntbm&q=Louies+Cafe+And+Dessert&shndl=30&shem=lcuae,uaasie&source=sh/x/loc/uni/m1/1&kgs=e9ffcab17d654ff7)

Nestled along the scenic shores of Port Perry at 94 Water Street, Louie's Café is more than just a cozy spot for a meal—it's a testament to resilience, community spirit, and culinary passion. Founded by Imran Mohammad, the café began with a single portable fryer and has blossomed into a full-fledged commercial kitchen, offering both dine-in and takeout options.

Louie's Café delights patrons with a menu that combines comfort food classics and sweet indulgences. Their offerings include fresh, never-frozen fried chicken, homemade Turkish baklava prepared weekly, and year-round scoops of Kawartha Dairy ice cream served atop freshly made waffles.

Imran's journey from a modest setup to a thriving café underscores the importance of location, exceptional customer service, and leveraging available resources. He shares that the Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD) for providing invaluable mentorship and innovative ideas that propelled his business forward. His advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is clear: "Location is everything, customer service makes the people come back and seek out startup grants to help with the capital you need."

Louie's Café stands as a shining example of how dedication, community engagement, and strategic support can transform a simple vision into a beloved local establishment. It embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that enriches the Durham Region, offering both locals and visitors a warm, flavorful experience by the waterfront.

**Live Inspired Counselling. Uxbridge, Ontario. Owner, Elaine Dickens**

**BACD Client Profile** [www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/live-inspired-wellness-inc/](http://www.bacd.ca/client-profiles/live-inspired-wellness-inc/)

Website: <https://www.liveinspiredwellness.ca/>



Live Inspired Wellness Inc., located at 37 Main Street North in Uxbridge, Ontario, is a multidisciplinary practice founded by Registered Psychotherapist Elaine Dickens. The clinic offers a range of services, including psychotherapy, counselling, and ADHD coaching, tailored to individuals, couples, and families, including children as young as 10. Specializing in supporting neurodiverse clients and those dealing with anxiety, depression, grief, life transitions, and burnout, the team is dedicated to fostering emotional well-being and personal growth.

Elaine's personal journey as a female entrepreneur and burnout survivor deeply informs the practice's ethos. She emphasizes creating genuine, judgment-free connections, particularly focusing on men's mental health to break down stigmas surrounding topics like depression and anxiety.

The clinic has grown into a team of three clinicians, offering both in-person and online services across Ontario. Their approach is grounded in professional expertise and personal experience, utilizing evidence-based therapies like CBT, EMDR, and EFT to build emotional intelligence and resilience.

Support from the Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD) was instrumental during the clinic's transition to a multidisciplinary model. Through the Starter Company Plus Grant, Live Inspired Wellness rebranded and expanded its online presence, enhancing accessibility and reach. Elaine highlights the importance of networking and building authentic relationships as key drivers of the clinic's growth and success.