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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Community Growth and Economic Development Committee  
From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development  
Report: #2026-EDT-2  
Date: April 7, 2026

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**Subject:**

Growing North Durham Plan 2025 Annual Activity Report

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**Recommendation:**

That the Community Growth 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 annual report on the implementation of the [Growing North Durham: Rural Economic Development Action Plan](#).
- 1.2 The report will be accompanied by a staff presentation from Stacey Jibb, Manager of Agriculture and Rural Economic Development and Jessica Rhynas, Rural Economic Development Specialist.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Growing North Durham Plan was endorsed by Regional Council as well as the Councils of the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock in early 2023. It sets out goals and actions to support economic growth across north Durham to 2027.

### 3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 The 2023-2027 Growing Durham: Rural Economic Development Action Plan was received by Planning and Economic Development Committee on February 7, 2023 ([#2023-EDT-2](#)).
- 3.2 The Growing North Durham Annual Activity Report for 2024 was received by Community Growth and Economic Development Committee on March 4, 2025 ([#2025-EDT-6](#)).

### 4. Implementation Update

- 4.1 The delivery of economic development programming in north Durham relies on collaboration between Durham Region (Economic Development and Tourism staff), the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock, and various business support organizations including the Brock Board of Trade, North Durham Chamber of Commerce, Scugog Economic Development Advisory Committee, and Uxbridge Downtown Revitalization Committee.
- 4.2 This collaborative approach encourages community stakeholders to take part in identifying opportunities and solutions to economic challenges and has been integral in the implementation of the Growing North Durham Plan so far.
- 4.3 The Growing North Durham Plan (“the Plan”) is structured under three pillars: People, Places and Prosperity. Each pillar contains goal areas and actions that support a community-driven approach to economic development. Identified below are some of the key activities that were either underway or completed within each pillar in 2025:
  - a. **People:** This pillar recognizes the strong correlation between human capital and economic growth.
    - Working with partners at the Brock Board of Trade (BBoT) and the North Durham Chamber of Commerce (NDCC), staff supported several business workshops on topics related to workforce needs including Succession Planning, Workforce Insights, and AI and Digital Marketing.
    - Rural Economic Development content, including business success stories, is shared through the Invest Durham e-newsletter and media channels, and Durham Tourism channels when relevant. Invest Durham

and Durham Tourism continue to grow their online presence which benefits entrepreneurs and small business owners in north Durham.

- The North Durham Labour Force Study identified workforce barriers related to transportation in north Durham, staff have continued to work with Durham Region Transit, the NDCC and municipal partners to explore solutions that could benefit the workforce in north Durham. For instance, the Agriculture and Rural Economic Development team along with Durham Region Transit staff participated in webinar hosted by the NDCC in early 2026 and plans are underway to explore ways to collaborate to gather better data to inform future transit planning.
  - In late 2025, Economic Development and Tourism Division staff began work on a campaign to attract talent to north Durham. The [North of Unexpected](#) campaign launched on February 23, 2026, and will run until April 3, 2026. The campaign primarily targets an audience currently living and working in Toronto, in the technology and manufacturing sectors, between the ages of 25-55, who may consider a career move to north Durham.
- b. **Places:** This pillar highlights and strengthens north Durham's unique qualities of place that stimulate meaningful connections with the community.
- In partnership with the Business Advisory Centre Durham, a workshop titled *Boost Your Tourism Brand* was held in the Township of Uxbridge to help businesses learn the ins and outs of marketing their business in north Durham.
  - Several initiatives and campaigns led by the Division's Marketing, Tourism and Rural Tourism staff have been delivered over the last year with strong north Durham content or focus, including *Gather at the Farm*, *Rural Routes*, *Durham Region Signature Sites*, *Recreate the Holiday Magic* and *#ShopinDurham Week*.
  - Across the Invest Durham, Durham Tourism and Downtowns of Durham platforms, north Durham or a north Durham business was mentioned 129 times in blog posts throughout 2025.
  - Staff supported the development of the Scugog Economic Development Advisory Committee's "*Home Sweet Scugog Welcome Wagon Program*", which was implemented by the Committee in 2025.

- Working closely with the Township staff, a Rural Ontario Development (ROD) grant was submitted in 2025 for continued support of implementing the Downtown Uxbridge Strategic Plan and Action Plan.
  - Staff continue to support implementation of Uxbridge Downtown Revitalization initiatives, including representation on the Uxbridge Downtown Revitalization Committee and will be assisting with completion of downtown report cards this spring.
  - Staff attended selected business openings and celebrations and connected with new businesses to make them aware of support available. One-on-one support was provided to 57 current or prospective north Durham businesses throughout 2025 and early 2026. This support included activities such providing letters of support, identifying funding opportunities, assisting with site selection, facilitating connections to industry partners, and sharing relevant information and data.
- c. **Prosperity:** The prosperity pillar is about business retention and making informed decisions to encourage and enable economic growth.
- Staff worked closely with the Township of Scugog to assist with preparing and delivering the Scugog Business Program (SBP) Final Report and Action Plan. In the second half of 2025, staff worked to develop a workplan to assist with implementation.
  - Recently, the Township of Scugog and Regional Economic Development and Tourism staff worked together to apply to the ROD Program to support ongoing implementation of the SBP to 2028.
  - Using the SBP as a model, staff are developing options for a standardized approach to ongoing business visitations across north Durham to more effectively deliver business retention programming. Plans are underway to launch a business visitation program in 2026.
  - In Coordination with Township staff from across north Durham, Regional Economic Development and Tourism staff respond to investment inquiries on an ongoing basis. Most investment inquiries are generated through the Region's Business Development and Investment Team who undertake investment attraction work on behalf of all Durham municipalities. In other cases, investment leads are received directly by Regional Economic Development and Township staff. Of the 21

investment inquiries circulated to the Durham Economic Development Partnership (DEDP) in 2025, at least one north Durham site was deemed suitable and was submitted on 10 occasions.

- Township-specific Business Toolkits were updated and promoted.
- Staff continue promote the [Invest Durham Signature Sites](#) document which features key investment opportunities across Durham.
- Staff continue to develop relationships with owners or representatives of developable employment and commercial land across north Durham, share servicing information, and discuss opportunities with potential investors and partners.

Staff continue to engage in discussions on the servicing of north Durham employment lands, highlight the importance of servicing for economic growth.

## **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:

a. Connected and Vibrant Communities

- C6. Continue to revitalize and transform downtowns into hubs of economic, social, and cultural connection.

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.

5.2 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.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 The Growing North Durham Plan represents an ongoing commitment for a collaborative north Durham approach to the delivery of economic development programming in the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock. Updates have been scheduled throughout April to each Council in north Durham to provide updates on the progress of implementing the Growing North Durham Plan, and planned activities for 2026.

6.2 Plans are underway to support, advance, or launch several key initiatives that will continue to advance goals of the Plan. Areas of focus will include ongoing execution of the North of Unexpected talent attraction campaign, development of a standardized business visitation program, exploration of a job fair to be hosted with north Durham partners and implementation of the Scugog Business Program.

6.3 For additional information, contact: Stacey Jibb, Manager of Agriculture and Rural Economic Development.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Sandra Austin  
Commissioner of Community Growth and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer