



# 2020 Durham Region

## Economic Development and Tourism Annual Report



### 2020 Year in Review

- Economic Snapshot
- COVID Response
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**The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities have been significant in 2020. While there have been heartbreaking stories along the way from our business community, there have also been stories of innovation, strength and perseverance.**

Small businesses have demonstrated incredible resilience. Many have launched e-commerce and curbside pick-up, while others have created entirely new products and services. All have been focused on enhanced safety protocols. In Clarington, a Virtual Farmers Market was launched featuring a collection of local agri-food businesses, which provides access to high-quality, fresh, local food. ConnexHealth Inc., a client of Durham College's AI/HUB, partnered with Pharmalinx Medical Centre to offer free prescription delivery, ensuring safe access to this important service. Breweries and distilleries across Durham pivoted their operations very early on to produce hand sanitizer when there was a major shortage. These are just a few of the many stories of business innovation that have emerged in Durham Region in 2020.

In the Economic Development and Tourism Division, we gathered our colleagues from around the region to form the Durham Economic Task Force (DETF). We have been working together to collaborate on dozens of projects since the pandemic was declared in March 2020. We've surveyed businesses, delivered webinars and roundtables, produced online local business directories, and created information websites for businesses and residents alike.

While financial stress continues to be the top impact and concern for businesses, we are seeing signs that our economy will emerge stronger from this crisis. Commercial and industrial development is growing. Investment inquiries are picking up. Some significant and impactful investments are coming soon in our community, including the new Ontario Power Generation Headquarters in Clarington, as well as the first grid-tied Small Modular Reactor in the world, General Motors' vehicle assembly returning to Oshawa, and the opening of the Pickering Casino Resort and Thermëa Spa Resort in Whitby.

We are planning projects for 2021 that will help our business community build back a strong, innovative, resilient local economy. We will promote the region for new investment, assist businesses to grow and create jobs, and support innovation in our technology sector. We will enable agri-food businesses to grow and diversify; promoting our local food producers, retailers and the culinary sector. We'll continue the important work of bringing high-speed broadband connectivity to our underserved communities.



At the heart of what we do—and why we do it—is supporting the growth and prosperity of our community. And I'm full of optimism about what we'll do next.

**Simon Gill**  
Director, Economic Development and Tourism



## Economic Snapshot

Durham Region is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario, experiencing an estimated 8% growth between 2016 and 2019.



1,300,000

Durham Region's expected population by 2051



12,666

Businesses in Durham Region



\$899.3 million

of non-residential investment in Durham Region in  
2019 – 54.9 per cent increase above 2018



79%

of Durham businesses surveyed indicate that financial challenges  
remain the top concern in responding to the pandemic



58%

of companies in the Greater Toronto Area report shrinking



## COVID Response

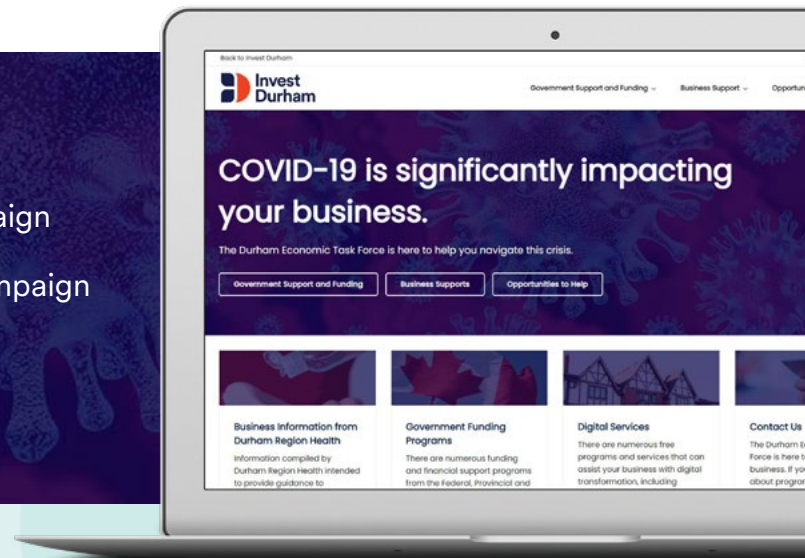
2020 was incredibly challenging for business. In immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Durham Economic Task Force (DETF) was formed.

Made up of Regional and local area economic development teams, our Boards of Trade, Chambers of Commerce and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), the group also includes the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Rural and Agriculture and the Business Advisory Centre of Durham.

Leading numerous projects in coordination with the DETF was a major area of focus for Invest Durham in 2020.

### Major Projects:

- COVID-19 Response Website and Campaign
- Downtowns of Durham Website and Campaign
- Shop in Durham – Shop Local Campaign
- Shop Durham Region Marketplace



### By the Numbers:



26

community partner  
organizations in the DETF



1,225

businesses supported  
through COVID response  
local directory websites



1,040

businesses supported  
through Digital Main Street  
and Digital Durham



1,792

responses to four  
Business Surveys



40,437

residents visited  
DowntownsOfDurham.ca



68,162

people accessed resources on  
the COVID Response Website



## Business Investment Highlights

The following non-exhaustive list details some key new businesses, strategic investments and retained/expanded businesses in Durham Region in 2020. Please note that this list does not include any retail or franchise opportunities and may include opportunities that our team did not directly support.

### Amazon Distribution Facility, Ajax

Construction underway in Ajax on 1,000,000 sq ft

### Amazon Fulfillment Facility, Whitby

Facility opened in Whitby, 354,000 sq ft

### Ontario Power Generation, Pickering

Centre for Canadian Nuclear Sustainability

### Durham Live, Entertainment Facility, Pickering

Construction continues - Pickering Casino Resort

### Thermēa Spa, Whitby

Construction resumes on a world-class spa destination

### General Motors, Oshawa

Announced \$1-1.3 billion investment and return of truck assembly

### Downtown Oshawa Farmers Market, Oshawa

Renovations begin on historic property to transform to year-round indoor market

### Panattoni Development, Oshawa

Occupancy in Q1, 2021 at 1121 and 1147 Thornton Road South

### Olympia Steel, Clarington

Construction underway on new facility

### Downtown Uxbridge Revitalization

Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant received



**Responded to 65 Business Investment Inquiries**

## Entrepreneurship and Innovation

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

- 1855 Whitby and the 1855 Masterclass Series
- Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD)
- Collision Conference and Websummit
- Durham Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Forum (DEEF)
- Digital Main Street
- SiberXChange and SiberX Canadian Women in Cybersecurity
- Spark Centre and Spark Angels
- Synergy Pioneer Program
- World Artificial Intelligence Summit





## Tourism Activities



**7,844**

Monthly consumer  
e-newsletter subscribers



**4,181**

Monthly industry  
e-newsletter subscribers



**89,784**

Engagements on  
Social Media



### Twitter

7,878 followers  
7,008 engagements  
8.7% follower growth



### Instagram

4,883 followers  
14,555 engagements  
9.9% follower growth



### Facebook

5,061 followers  
68,221 engagements  
6.9% follower growth



## Durham Tourism Brand Redesign

The new Durham Tourism brand was approved by Regional Council in May 2020. Completed in house, the brand launched to the public in fall 2020. Fourteen Industry and Community Roundtables were hosted by Durham Tourism to engage local communities in the brand process.



**95,415 Page Views**  
DurhamTourism.ca



**13 Support Local Videos**  
154,000 views





## Tourism Initiative: Canada Day the Durham Way

With support from Canadian Heritage, Durham Tourism—in partnership with all eight local area municipalities—presented Canada Day the Durham Way; a live, interactive, virtual event. This presentation included nine musical performances and a diverse offering of presentations for all ages. The audience was able to engage on social media and resulted in nearly 10,000 views of the Facebook live stream.

## Sport Tourism

### Durham Region Sport Tourism COVID-19 Response



97

respondents to Sport  
Community COVID-19  
impact survey



40

attendees at 3 Sport  
Community COVID-19  
impact round tables



228

respondents to Local  
Sport Parent survey



Organized a return-to-  
play webinar hosted by  
Pickering Football Club

### Sport Event Bidding and Hosting

- Secured the Field Hockey Ontario U18 May Meltdown - Tentatively Scheduled for May 2021
- Secured the 2021 Futsal Canadian Championship - subsequently cancelled



## Rural and Agriculture



**708**

bimonthly industry  
e-newsletter subscribers



**112%**

growth in number of  
social media followers



**352**

total attendees at  
Agriculture and Rural  
workshops

**12,771 Page Views of Invest Durham Local Food Directory**

## Film Durham



**14.5%**

increase in Film and Television  
production in Ontario from  
2019 to 2020



**19%**

increase in Film and Television  
production in Durham Region  
from 2019 to 2020

DURHAM REGION



**DRIFF**



INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL

**100**

domestic and  
international films  
submitted at the  
2020 Durham Region  
International Film  
Festival (DRIFF)

## Broadband

In 2020, the Region of Durham launched a survey for residents and businesses to quantify the broadband needs across our communities. The survey gathered more than 2,600 respondents. COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the challenges faced by people who don't have access to adequate broadband, and in 2020 the Region began exploring grant opportunities from the Provincial and Federal government to build on a vision for a Regional Broadband Network.

## Local Immigration Partnership

In mid-2020 the activities and resources dedicated to the Durham Local Immigration Partnership Council (DLIP) transferred to the Economic Development and Tourism Division.



## Marketing Activities

### Invest Durham



#### Twitter

738 followers  
7,379 interactions  
180% follower growth\*



#### LinkedIn

1,282 followers  
3,548 page views  
564% follower growth\*



#### Instagram

830 followers  
1,755 interactions  
Launched June 11, 2020

\*2020 was first full year of account activity

## Invest Durham Marketing Initiatives



**503,373**

impressions from campaign  
to promote post-secondary  
reskilling programs



**22 episodes**

Dnext podcast



**72,473**

campaign impressions  
from Collision Conference  
Virtual Partnership  
#DurhamAtCollision



## 3 Papers Launched

“Durham Region: Accelerating Energy Innovation”  
“Durham Region: Energy Talent Factsheet”  
and “Artificial Intelligence in Durham Region”



## **Awards**

### **Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC) Annual Marketing Canada Awards**

1. Downtowns of Durham – Category: Recovery Project/Plan in the \$600,000+ size category
2. Vertical Farming Campaign – Category: Social Media/APP in the \$600,000+ size category
3. Invest Durham Annual Report 2019 – Category: Single Publication, Less than 5 pages in the \$600,000+ size category

### **AVA Digital Awards:**

Gold Award – COVID Response Website

### **Sport Tourism Canada 2020 PRESTIGE Awards:**

Canadian Sport Event of the Year Award [Group B: budget less than \$1 million] and Finalist for Sport Event Legacy of the Year Award – Durham Region 2019 Ontario Parasport Games. The 2020 PRESTIGE awards will be presented in April 2021.

### **Tourism Industry Association of Ontario 2020 Tourism Awards of Excellence**

Finalist for Tourism Event of the Year Award – Durham Region 2019 Ontario Parasport Games

### **Festival and Events Ontario (FEO) Achievement Awards**

Canada Day the Durham Way

### **Durham Region Awards of Excellence**

Kristyn Chambers & Lisa MacKenzie: For outstanding innovation in development of the Gates Open events to generate awareness, support, and growth of the Agri-Food sector and local farms.



Kristyn Chambers, Lori Talling & Brandon Pickard: For innovation and collaboration in development and launch of modern and multi-level Tourism communication plans and marketing platforms.

Eileen Kennedy: For dedicated service to continued development and continued growth of the Region's film and television sector.



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