



2025

Economic Development and Tourism Annual Report



2025 Year in Review

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Powered by People, Grounded in Place

2025 was a pivotal year for Durham Region. One that was defined by growth, innovation, and a renewed sense of possibility across our communities. Over the past year, our region has continued to evolve into one of Ontario’s most dynamic places to live, work, invest, and visit. What sets Durham apart is not only the pace of our progress, but the character of it: growth that remains rooted in local strengths, hospitality, creativity, and a deep connection to place.

In 2025, Durham strengthened its role as Canada’s clean-energy capital, with a landmark \$3-billion investment in Ontario Power Generation’s Small Modular Reactor (SMR) project at the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, supported by both provincial and federal governments, along with the announcement of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station refurbishment. These next-generation nuclear initiatives are bringing thousands of high-value jobs to the region and fueling growth among companies such as GE Vernova Hitachi, Laurentis Energy Partners, and Black & McDonald—firms at the forefront of nuclear innovation.

Our business landscape also reflects a dynamic mix of growing SMEs, advanced manufacturers, and food innovators, supported by Regional initiatives like the Business Count, which continues to capture the depth and diversity of Durham’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. In north Durham, the Growing North Durham Plan continued to strengthen agriculture, rural entrepreneurship, and downtown vitality through collaborative forums, labour studies, and the leadership of local business associations across Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge.

Durham’s tourism sector saw remarkable energy throughout 2025, shaped by a blend of our natural beauty, culinary excellence, and cultural vibrancy. The release of Open Skies—the Durham Tourism Discovery Guide—highlighted the region’s standout experiences, from spa days and glamping spots to beloved local restaurants and sporting events.

Our thriving film and music industries continued to grow, where signature events like the Durham Region International Film Festival amplify local creative talent and bring global cinema to our communities.

Collectively, these economic and cultural strengths reinforce what residents, investors, and visitors increasingly recognize: Durham Region is a place of opportunity grounded in community. As we look to the year ahead, we remain committed to building a region that is connected, sustainable, inclusive, and competitive. The work ahead is significant, but so is our momentum. Together, we will continue building a region that leads with innovation, welcomes new partnerships, and reflects the best of our communities.



Simon Gill
Director, Economic Development and Tourism



Economic Snapshot



Booming Growth

- Durham Region’s population grew nearly 10 per cent between 2020 to 2025, reaching an estimated 783,560, and is expected to grow to 1,300,000 by 2051.
- Total business count in the region was approximately 12,970 in 2025; nearly a 3 per cent increase from 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 was named Intelligent Community of the Year by the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF); a recognition of our innovation, workforce development and commitment to inclusion.



Talented

- Ontario Tech University named Research University of the Year for the third consecutive year by Research Infosource.
- Durham College and Trent University also enjoyed success being ranked as one of Canada’s top 50 Research Colleges and one of Canada’s top 50 Research Universities, respectively.



Innovating the Future

- Durham continued large-scale expansion of Durham OneNet, improving broadband access—especially in rural communities—aligning with smart city and digital inclusion priorities.
- In 2025, Durham Region emerged as a global hub for next-generation nuclear innovation, marked by the \$70 million GE Vernova Hitachi investment to build the world’s first BWRX-300 SMR engineering and service centre, a historic \$3-billion commitment from the Federal and Provincial governments to build Canada’s first grid-scale SMRs at Darlington, and a \$26.8 billion investment to refurbish four CANDU reactors at the Pickering Nuclear generating station.



Business Development and Investment Attraction

In 2025, Invest Durham focused on priority clusters as defined in the division’s strategic plan Ready Set Future. As a result, 83 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.



34 pitch proposals and hosted 10 inbound delegations and tours.



Participated in five international missions in targeted markets including Europe, Asia and the United Kingdom.

Responded to 139 business investment inquiries.

- Project managed the attendance of a 38-person Durham delegation to attend Hannover Messe 2025 which included three mayors, Region of Durham’s Chief Administrative Officer and Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development.
- Commenced with the development of a Workforce Development Strategy and Action Plan.
- Developed a Trade Diversification Plan that included hosting two information sharing webinars for businesses in the region, as well as submitted an application for a Trade Impacted Communities Grant to assist regional business to develop export-readiness plans and consider exports to alternative markets to the United States.
- Developed an Advanced Manufacturing database for the Region.
- Developed a Key Accounts Program to work with cities, towns, and townships to support the region’s largest employers.

Hosted 10 inbound delegations and site tours, and attended more than 31 industry related events and conferences.





Business Investment Highlights

The following non-exhaustive list details some key new businesses, strategic investments, and retained/expanded businesses in Durham Region in 2025. Please note that this list may include opportunities that our team did not have the opportunity to directly support.

Ajax

Creekside Ajax Campus – Earthworks complete – 3 Class A industrial buildings.

Triforest Manufacturing Inc. – Phase II expansion underway.

Shandex Warehouse – Build completed.

Brock

Underwood – Added a new storage shed.

Alieh Farms – Added a new dairy barn.

Southpoint Equipment – A new business established in Brock.

Liang – Added new machine storage.

Clarington

Action Car & Truck – Eastern Ontario headquarters, featuring warehouse, assembly, office, and retail space.

D&R Custom Steel – Manufacturing and warehouse facility with office space.

Marriot Hotel – Hotel and event venue offering full-service accommodations and flexible meeting and event spaces.

GEMTEC – Modern office space, specializes in engineering services including civil, geotechnical, environmental, and materials testing.

Hatch – Modern office space, the company specializes in engineering and consulting across the metals and minerals, energy, and infrastructure sectors.

Oshawa

Geodis – Leading logistics and warehouse supply chain solution company.

Ontario Power Generation – New corporate headquarters.

Tru by Hilton – 97-room midscale hotel, across from Oshawa Airport.

Durham Creative Arts Centre – For-profit organization offering co-working and rental spaces for artists, entrepreneurs and creative professionals.

Pickering

Bay Ridges Industrial Centre – State-of-the-art industrial building.

1635 Bayly Street (Retail Plaza Expansion) – Build-out at Brock/Bayly Retail node with government offices and new daycare.

Porsche Experience Centre – Opened in June, 2025.

Lee Valley Tools – New Canadian flagship store.

HiTech Bay 1851 Sandstone Manor – New and improved facility where they process, refurbish and recycle IT assets.



Scugog

Windmill Farms – Expanded their multi-facility site to support growing operations.

Heartee Foods – Entered into a partnership with Windmill Farms.

Port Royal Mills – New facility secured (Opened 2025), Port Perry.

Uxbridge

Rob-Don Properties – Added a new dry goods warehouse as well as distribution and office components.

UCEL – Grand opening, Uxbridge Employment Area – October 2025.

Zano-Con Environmental Inc. – Added a new repair garage and office components.

Continued Downtown Revitalization – RED Grant Funding, Uxbridge.

Whitby

Mazda Canada – Parts distribution center serving dealerships in Canada and U.S.

North American Steel – Extension of existing facility to increase production.

PPFD – Third facility built in Whitby, as part of expansion.

Soft Moc – Consolidated two warehouses.

Toromont – New branch opening in 2026.

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
- Regional Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce
- Durham Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Forum (DEEF)
- Durham Region International Film Festival Emerging Filmmaker Incubator
- Durham Region Innovation and Vehicle Ecosystem (DRIVE), a part of the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), a provincial network of advanced mobility support organizations. DRIVE is led by the City of Oshawa in partnership with Ontario Tech and is supported by key regional partners including the ACE Climatic Aerodynamic Wind Tunnel, Brilliant Catalyst, 1855 Technology Accelerator, the Region of Durham, and the Town of Whitby.



Hannover Messe 2025

Durham Region’s participation in HANNOVER MESSE 2025 (HM25) showcased the region’s expanding global profile as a leader in advanced manufacturing, clean technology, and research-driven innovation. The delegation, supported by Invest Durham, municipal partners, academic institutions, and Project Arrow collaborators, presented Durham’s strengths to international investors, supply chain partners, and technology influencers.

Key Highlights: Project Arrow Showcase

- Featured prominently as Canada’s first all-Canadian, zero-emission concept vehicle.
- Engineered at Ontario Tech University’s ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel, demonstrating Durham’s world-class R&D capabilities.



International Messaging and Marketing:

- A coordinated campaign emphasized Durham’s innovation ecosystem, clean-energy strengths, and investment-ready opportunities.
- Messaging strategically targeted global manufacturers, tech innovators, and potential investors.

Business Engagement and Investment Attraction:

- Invest Durham conducted pre-qualified international meetings, connecting the Region with industry leaders seeking North American expansion.
- The Region made 1,300 new connections and landed almost 60 qualified new leads for prospective investment into Durham.

Overall Impact:

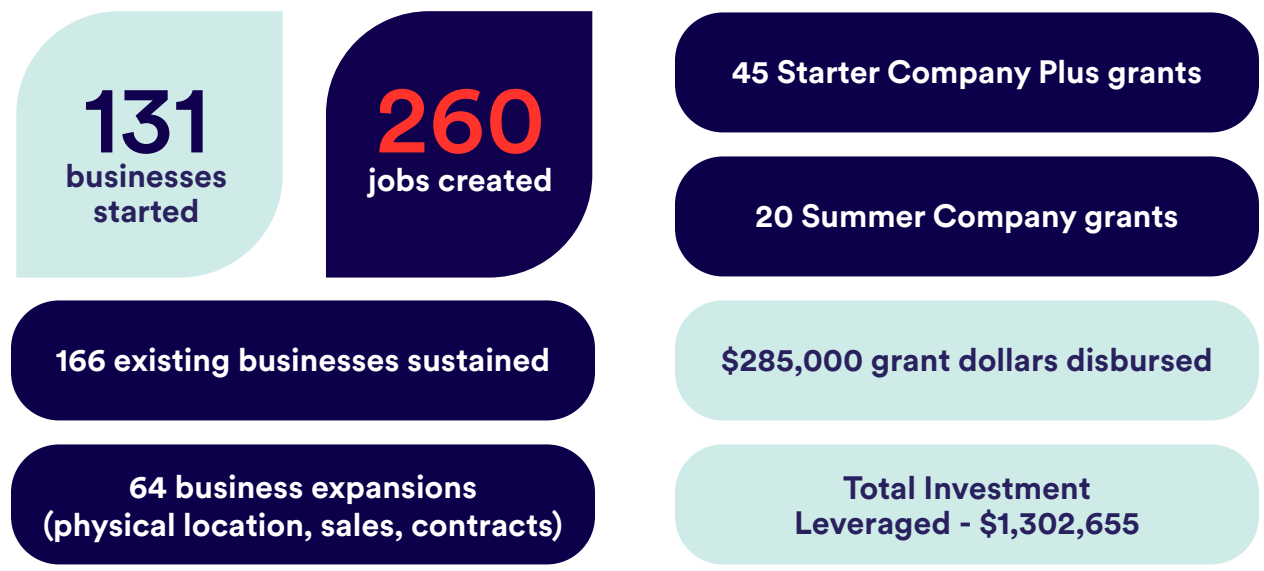
HANNOVER MESSE 2025 significantly strengthened Durham Region’s global profile. By highlighting advanced innovation assets, showcasing clean energy leadership, and securing promising international business connections, the region reinforced its position as a future-focused hub for advanced manufacturing and energy technologies.



Business Advisory Centre of Durham (BACD)

The Business Advisory Centre of Durham (BACD) proudly supports local businesses and entrepreneurs through:

- **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.





Agriculture and Rural Economic Development



1,272

bi-monthly industry e-newsletter subscribers



100

attendees at the Precision Agriculture Day hosted with Durham Farm Connections

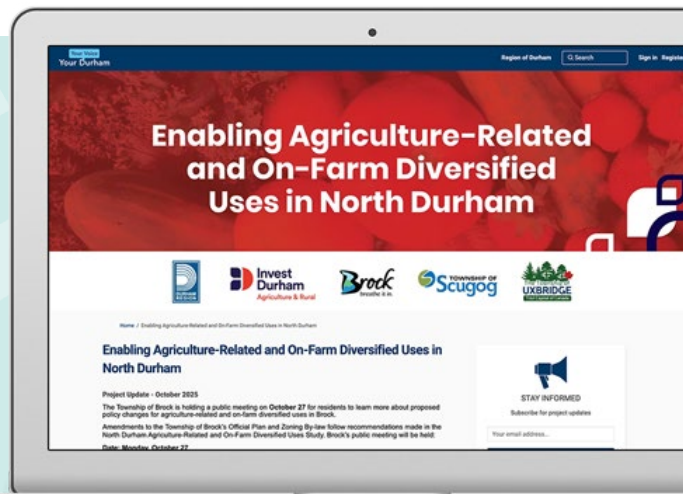
Grants:

Submitted a grant to the Rural Ontario Development Fund in partnership with the Township of Uxbridge to support the ongoing implementation of the Uxbridge Downtown Revitalization Project.

Key Initiatives and Partnerships:

- Partnered with Durham Farm Connections and the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture to deliver an Agriculture Leadership Program to support the next generation of farm leaders in Durham Region.
- Working with the Durham Farm Connections and the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture, delivered targeted hands-on learning opportunities for secondary school students related to farm equipment and meat cutting expertise.
- Developed new and improved processes for coordinating and responding to investment opportunities with our partners in the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock.

Working with the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock (north Durham), a project was undertaken to make it easier for farmers to diversify and undertake new types of uses on their farms. This helps to support a thriving rural economy and supports the creation of new jobs on farms.





Rural Tourism Development

- Completion of Visitor Growth Plans for the Township of Scugog and the Township of Brock in partnership with Central Counties Tourism.
- Partnered with North Durham Historical Societies Collective to form opportunities for collaboration including participation in Culture Days, printed brochures, and determine common themes to help drive visitor traffic.
- Purchased and generated annual tourism economic data sets to help support business-led rural tourism initiatives determine visitation demographics.
- Collaborated with Durham Farm Fresh and Chef Alex Page to deliver six on-farm culinary experiences, showcasing the region’s agricultural assets.
- Hosted a ‘Boost Your Tourism Brand’ workshop in partnership with BACD.
- Rural Event Support: North Durham Pride, Scugog - Skate Market, Uxbridge Beer & Cider Trail, Uxbridge Local Food Month, Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival, The Book Drunkard Festival, Theatre on the Ridge, Canoe the Nonquon, Winding Roads Music Festival, Springtide Music Festival & Activation, Uxbridge Holiday Trail, Autofest, Scugog Pride Skate and Brock Ride & Stride.



Rural Cycling Tourism Program

Durham Tourism is focused on growing rural cycling tourism by making the region a top destination for cyclists. This is being done by connecting cycling loops with local businesses and experiences such as restaurants, farms, and markets. Currently, there are 13 on-road cycling loops that are promoted online at DurhamTourism.ca/cycling. In 2026, new wayfinding signage will be installed to help cyclists better navigate the loops. This program supports the local economy by attracting more visitors to the area. As cyclists travel through the region, they spend money on food, shopping, and services. This increased spending helps local businesses succeed and strengthens the overall economy in Durham’s rural communities.



Marketing and Tourism

Invest Durham

Promoting Durham Region for new investment and job creation.



LinkedIn

8,463 followers
6,009 interactions
24% follower growth



Instagram

3,308 followers
1,288 interactions
18% follower growth



Enews

5,149 subscribers to Invest Durham Enews

4,494 subscribers to the Weekly Careers Round Up LinkedIn Newsletter

Key Initiatives and Partnerships:

- In 2025, Invest Durham highlighted several major initiatives and milestones that showcased the region’s economic momentum, commitment to innovation, and support for community and business growth. Invest Durham also showcased a variety of businesses and their stories across our blog and news channels.
- Invest Durham’s marketing team played a hands-on role in planning, promoting, and producing a wide range of strategic events—including the Beyond the Music industry event series, Workforce Development Planning Session for Employers, Film and Television Career Fair, a film and television industry seminar for businesses, and the Durham Agriculture Leadership Program.
- The marketing team’s participation at HANNOVER MESSE 2025 delivered exceptionally strong performance, with the campaign generating 2.84 million paid and organic digital impressions, far surpassing the 350,000 baseline, and driving 10,296 deeper website engagements, more than double the initial target of 4,000. Supported by the campaign, Invest Durham’s presence at the event earned 17 major media mentions. Combined with more than 100 registrants for the team’s “Smart Solutions for a Common Future” networking session, these results demonstrate a substantial increase in global awareness, engagement, and brand recognition for Durham Region.
- The Durham Region Relocation Guide was developed in partnership with the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce to provide comprehensive information about living and working in all eight municipalities, including lifestyle, employment, utility services, tourism, and practical relocation resources to support the attraction of a skilled workforce.





Durham Tourism



Facebook

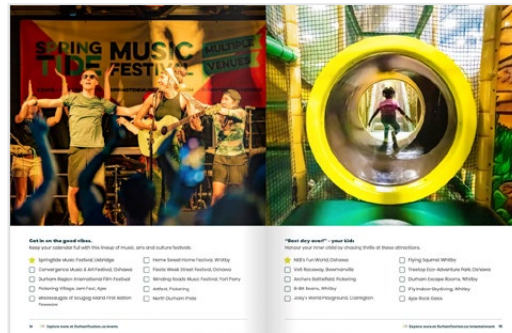
12,174 total audience
1,241,787 impressions
45 per cent growth



Instagram

32,610 followers
38,064 engagements
49 per cent follower growth

8,889 monthly visitor e-newsletter subscribers
4,423 monthly industry e-newsletter subscribers



Strategic Planning:

- As part of the Tourism Strategic Action Plan, the team launched the 2025 Open Skies Discovery Guide and associated campaign across digital, print, social media, and other platforms. The landing page saw 18,293 visitors, and reached 444,813 users on social media. Over 100,000 guides were produced for distribution at local events, businesses, and trusted partners—including travel centres and hotels—as well as to homes across Ontario through Toronto Life, Maclean’s, Chatelaine, and the Toronto Star.

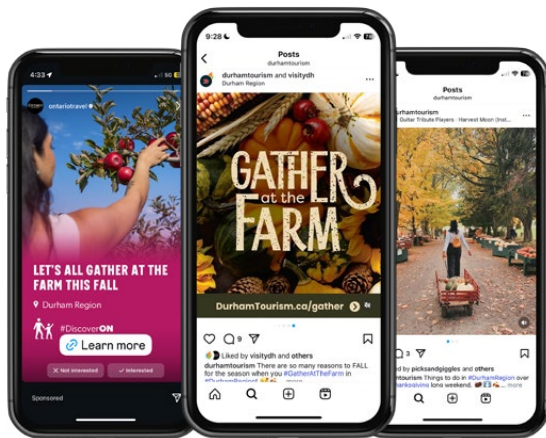
Marketing and Campaigns:

- The Destination Ontario Partner Campaign, which focused on Family Attractions and Fall Farm activities in Durham, generated more than 162,000 leads to partner pages and more than 13 million impressions. The campaign was one of the highest partner performers across the Destination Ontario suite.
- The Recreate the Magic holiday campaign generated significant interest, reaching an audience of 89,357 and generating 214,539 impressions. With paid digital placement and radio ads, the campaign was consistent with measurable spikes aligned to promotional activity.



Event Support and Community Engagement:

- Supported and promoted the Home Sweet Home Festival, Springtide Music Festival, Convergence Music and Art Festival, Oshawa Student Orientation, Uxbridge Holiday Trail, Durham Cocktail Trail, Canoe the Nonquon, Small Town BIG, Uxbridge Scottish Festival, Scugog Beer and Cider Festival, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation Pow Wow, Sunderland Maple Syrup Festival, and more.
- 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.




Gather at the Farm

Durham Tourism partnered with Destination Ontario to promote fall activities and events at farms across the region through an extensive digital advertising plan, and partnered with Durham Farm Fresh to host a culinary activation at a local farm. The campaign reached more than 7,442,045 impressions and the landing page saw 88,000 visitors.

Sport Tourism

Supported events include 2025 Quadball Canada National Championship, 2025 Wheelchair Basketball Canada National Championships, 2025 CCAA Women’s Volleyball National Championship, 2025 Canadian Junior Cup (curling), U15 and U19 Eastern Canadian Softball Championships, Ontario Tech Carriage Cup, and the Ontario Lacrosse Festival.

 **Awarded 2027 Special Olympics Ontario Games.**







Creative Industries: Film and Television

Durham was host to 56 feature films, TV series, commercials, documentaries and music videos—generating 80 film permits. Projects included Blue Collar, Copenhagen, Dutch & Knuckles, Father of Us, Framed, Ginny and Georgia, I Will Find You, Kestrel, Memory of a Killer, Murdoch Mysteries, Radical, Reacher, Sherrif County, Something Very Bad is Going to Happen, The Big Kill, The Testament, The Way Home, and Witness Protection.

 **65 film-related investment inquiries.**

 **18 new filming locations added to the Ontario Creates Digital Locations Library.**

 **118 attendees at the How to Do Business with the Film and Television Industry Seminar.**

- 845 attendees at the 2025 Film and Television Industry Career Fair with 17 partners including unions/guilds, post-secondary, Ontario Creates, Ontario Green Screen, Canadian Firearms Certification, and other industry supporting organizations.

- Partnered with Ontario Tech University to host The Movies: AI and Climate Change event focusing on the movie industry, weighing the potential benefits and detriments of artificial intelligence and the film industry’s own contributions to climate change.

- 7 major studios from Los Angeles, California sent production executives to tour Durham’s 20-acre Sunbelt Rentals Film and TV backlot, the largest in Canada.

Durham Region International Film Festival (DRIFF) 2025:

- 806 attendees at (DRIFF) events.
- 98 films were submitted in five categories, and 14 films were screened across three venues with 30 sponsors and partners.

Music

- 257 attendees at two Beyond the Music events—a new series in 2025 to build the music ecosystem, provide professional development opportunities and showcase talent. Hosted at the Centennial Building and BOND|ST Event Centre focusing on Business Skills, Branding, Venues and Tech Readiness.
- Partnered with Durham Region Excellence in Arts, Music & Sound (DREAMS!) on events to celebrate music, strengthen and grow the local music ecosystem through performances, showcases, workshops, and a Music Summit and Awards.
- Supported the Durham Battle of The Bands, featuring 11 Durham bands competing for the \$1,000 grand prize and supporting that year's charity, Feed the Need in Durham.



Awards

Economic Development Awards:

- EDAC Award – Durham Tourism Instagram Contest Strategy – App/Social Media
- EDAC Award – Durham Tourism Out of Office Billboard – Single Advertisement

MarCom Awards:

- Invest Durham – Hannover Messe 2025 Video – Platinum Winner
- Durham Tourism – Page's Platefuls Recipe Series – Gold Winner
- Open Skies Durham Tourism Discovery Guide – Honourable Mention

Viddy Awards:

- Volt Raceway, Durham Tourism Instagram Reel – Gold Winner
- Out of Office Instagram Giveaway, Durham Tourism Instagram Reel – Platinum Winner



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