

Welcome Remarks by
Roger Anderson
Durham Regional Chair and CEO
to the
Idea Summit 2.0
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Check against delivery.

Thank you for that introduction. Good morning everyone. On behalf of the Region of Durham, it is my pleasure to help welcome you to Idea Summit 2.0. As the Chair of the Region, I never pass up an opportunity to speak about everything that makes Durham a great place to live, work, innovate and invest. Events like this are becoming more frequent. That tells me that we all have the same objective – to develop and support local innovation – and that we need to keep the momentum going.

Since most of you live or make a living here in Durham Region, you know how much we have to offer. As the largest municipality in the GTA, we feature an impeccable blend of natural spaces and urban amenities.

More than 350 kilometres of scenic trails along the waterfront or through the forests of the Oak Ridges Moraine provide opportunities to explore nature just minutes from home. In the same day, you can ski in the morning north of Highway 7 and golf in the afternoon along the lakeshore. Durham residents enjoy a wide variety of cultural attractions, world class dining experiences, sporting events, theatre, wineries, craft breweries and nightlife.

But we are about more than fun and games.

Durham is one of the fastest growing communities in North America, on track to reach one million residents by 2031. As the eastern gateway of the GTA, we offer ready access to a diverse market of over six million people.

Immigration continues to be a significant catalyst for growth, contributing to our rich cultural diversity.

Our post-secondary institutions are internationally recognized for innovative, market-driven programming, generating a steady stream of bright and competent graduates.

Local centres of excellence bring entrepreneurs, innovators, investors, researchers and students together to exchange ideas and help each other succeed. These centres and our post-secondary community are working with local companies to foster and support innovation. Together, they are creating an ecosystem to generate, design and test solutions to real world problems.

Durham manufacturers, health care institutions, researchers, start-up companies and even our municipalities are leading creative efforts in their sectors.

As a Regional Municipality, Durham is deeply committed to sustainable development, striving for carbon neutrality and resilience. Our Community Climate Change Local Action Plan sets aggressive greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Durham's 2016 Community Climate Adaptation Plan received rave reviews from provincial and federal ministers of the environment and climate change. They say we are setting a "gold standard of municipal sustainability".

The Plan combines the best available science with the knowledge and experience of local experts to ensure climate resilience for our health, infrastructure and economy.

Our integrated transportation network includes highways, transcontinental and commuter rail lines, cargo-loading and deep-sea shipping ports. The Oshawa Executive Airport, with its new main runway, puts corporate air travel within easy reach of Durham businesses. It is a great asset to this community.

In a global economy, airports connect businesses to their suppliers and their market. Development of a modern, sustainable, connected airport at the federal lands in Pickering would be a game changer for the eastern GTA.

Durham is home to a growing aviation and aerospace sector, anchored by firms developing innovative technologies. Companies are actively exploring opportunities to expand their operations in the 407 east corridor, and we are ready.

Everyone in business wants lower taxes and costs. Compared to our GTA neighbours, the Region has some of the lowest commercial and industrial land costs and most competitive development charges and lease rates. All of this makes us an attractive choice for investment. As an added bonus, our residential real estate has remained affordable.

So the question for innovators looking to expand or set up shop shouldn't be "why should I locate in Durham Region", but rather "why would I go anywhere else?"

Our new Regional Economic Development strategy includes a focus on innovative technology and production as a sector. Later this morning our Director, Kathy Weiss, will tell you about key assets across the Region.

Recently we had the opportunity to tell the Durham story as part of a Toronto region bid for Amazon's second North American corporate headquarters. As you all know, the company's RFP captured the interest of many municipalities on both sides of the border. For a company like Amazon, our Region provides room to grow.

We worked intensively with area municipalities and our regional economic development organization, Toronto Global, to put forward the best possible submission.

Now, we all know attracting Amazon is a long shot. And we're also aware that governments need to be cautious about just how much they cater to big international companies. But the immediate and valuable outcome of the past few weeks was that we demonstrated our ability to pull information together and respond quickly.

At the end of the day, Amazon's choice is beyond our control. But the exercise was useful in preparing us to highlight for potential investors what Durham has to offer.

Over the past three years, about 150 new investments have created nearly 6,500 jobs in Durham Region. This includes companies like Hans Steel and BRIC Engineered Systems, as well as industrial cable manufacturer Shunchao Industries. The Canada China Innovation City plans to attract 500 innovative, high growth technology companies to invest \$5 billion over the next ten years to become the global leader in Cleantech, Biotech, Infotech and advanced materials.

As a result of foreign direct investment efforts in China, collaboration between the Beijing Future Science Park and the Spark Centre resulted in an Ignite event award.

Recently, many of you in this room were involved in the development of a consortium-led bid for Phase 1 of the federal Innovation Superclusters Initiative. Unfortunately, our Clean Energy Technology Innovation Supercluster proposal was not selected, but the process of preparing the bid was valuable. The groundswell of support for making Durham Region an innovation and technology hub is undeniable. The foundation has been laid, there will be other funding programs, and we will be ready.

Innovation is about really creative problem solving that takes us outside our comfort zone. That's why collaborating with new and different partners (like new technology developers, researchers, community agencies and end users) is crucial. Everyone brings different skills, approaches and ideas to the problem being tackled.

If we want a new solution, we need a fresh perspective. So, we get a richer set of possibilities when we collaborate.

For government, trying to be more innovative means we must get more comfortable with the risk of making mistakes or the worst of all “f” words – Failure. We need to embrace the idea of trying something new at a small scale, learning from that, and trying again, until we have a product or service that works well, that meets our objectives.

For the Region’s part, we recognize that high-speed broadband is a critical piece of every company’s basic infrastructure. Next year, we will release a Regional Broadband Strategy to identify gaps and solutions.

I'm also pleased to introduce our new Manager of Investment Attraction, Simon Gill. Simon in particular will work closely in attracting investment in the tech sector.

Let's all keep our eye on opportunities and seize them when they come along. Whether its electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, climate innovation, data integration or artificial intelligence, we know that we have the people and the potential to rise to the challenge.

I thank each and every one of you for your work to make Durham the most attractive dot on the map. We appreciate your commitment to your community and your efforts to help us grow together. Thank you.