

A bright outlook for Ontario's small business sector

A recent survey of members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business showed that Ontario's small business sector continues to lead the country in optimism.

“Last fall, when virtually every economist was predicting a recession, our small- and medium-sized business members stayed relatively optimistic,” said Judith Andrew, the federation's Ontario vice-president.

Forty-three per cent of the survey's Ontario respondents said their firms are enjoying stronger performance compared to the same period last year. Looking ahead three months, 41 per cent of Ontario respondents expect their business's performance to remain about the same; 47 per cent expect it will be stronger.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises generated an estimated 500,000 net new jobs between 1996 and 2001. That's 61 per cent of total private-sector job creation.

“The Ontario government has established a solid foundation for small business growth by cutting taxes, balancing budgets, eliminating red tape and removing barriers to business,” said Jim Flaherty, Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. “And the 2002



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Internet sites a key source on how to establish a new business

*Company: David Trahair,
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Location: Toronto
Contact: www.mywebca.com*

You want to set up a small business in Ontario but you're wondering how to go about it. And you have lots of questions. Should you operate as a sole proprietorship or as a corporation? How do you register your company name? How do you deal with the GST? These days, the Internet is often the first place entrepreneurs go for answers.

The Internet offers bountiful information. A recent search on "starting a small business in Ontario" came up with 171,000 links. There were connections to government of Ontario Web sites, to individual municipalities, banks, corporations, associations – with each site offering a multitude of information and advice.

The Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation Web site (www.ontario-canada.com) links a series of Ontario government services for small businesses. This comprehensive site helps make prospective small business owners aware of the basic requirements of starting a business and assists them in evaluating both themselves and the business being contemplated. It points entrepreneurs toward the many services offered by Ontario's 41 Small Business Enterprise Centres (consultations, business plan review, workshops, mentoring) plugs them into Ontario Business Connects (online registration, renewal and reporting processes for Ontario businesses), and helps find information on such varied matters as access to capital, exporting, marketing and more.

Web sites for entrepreneurs

There are many Internet Web sites designed to assist small business. Here are some representative examples.

<http://www.ontario-canada.com> – Ontario Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation Web site with links to help small businesses start up and grow

<http://www.cbs.gov.on.ca> – offers an array of services to help small business

<http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca> – offers information on small business development in the tourism, culture and recreational industries

<http://www.oce-ontario.org> – Ontario Centres for Excellence established by the government of Ontario to strengthen links between academia and industry

<http://www.mywebca.com> – practical information and articles on small business start-up

<http://www.businesstown.com> – a site for small business information

<http://www.canadaone.com> – a small business site with resources, a business directory and tools, and articles

<http://www.yea.ca> – Young Entrepreneurs Association of Canada

<http://www.strategis.gc.ca> – Industry Canada site supplying business and consumer information online (government of Canada site)

<http://www.bsa.cbsc.org> – government of Canada site to assist Business Start-up Assistance tools provided by Canada Business Service Centres

<http://www.rc.gc.ca/business> – Revenue Canada (Canada Customs and Revenue Agency) small business page

<http://www.royalbank.com/sme/> – Royal Bank site for business

<http://www.cibc.com> – Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce small business information

<http://www.scotiabank.com> – Scotiabank's site includes services for small business

<http://www.profitguide.com> – PROFIT Magazine's business resources for entrepreneurs

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A bright outlook for Ontario's small business sector

provincial budget maintains the schedule for implementing previously announced tax reductions for small businesses.”

By 2005, Ontario's small-business tax rate will be cut in half, to 4 per cent, and the small-business income threshold will rise to \$400,000. Capital tax has been eliminated for more than 11,000 small businesses, and self-employed regulated professionals will have the option of incorporating.

Government is consulting with business leaders to ensure that its policies encourage continued growth. Last summer, Minister Flaherty met with members of the Ontario Business Advisory Council to discuss issues affecting Ontario's competitiveness.

Sponsored by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, this advisory council is an informal forum for the exchange of ideas between senior political leaders and the Ontario business community.

Fostering innovation in small business is another key component of Ontario's economic strategy. Innovation, which may be defined as the “identification, promotion and commercialization of industry-relevant science and technology,” is flourishing in Ontario, thanks in part to the Ontario Centres of Excellence.

“Innovation needs a supportive environment to produce results,” said Flaherty. “The Centres of Excellence have a very successful record of creating just that kind of environment, which is why we just renewed their mandate with more than \$160 million in funding over the next five years.”

Ontario companies are adept at creating new employment. Business services and manufacturing led Ontario job growth over the six-year period ending in 2001, with each sector adding about 210,000 jobs.

With this very positive outlook, can small business expect any new challenges in the coming year?

“The shakeout of entrepreneurial ventures is essentially complete,” said Niraj Bhargava, managing director and CEO at the Queen's University Centre for Enterprise Development in Kingston. “The strong have survived, but to thrive, grow and sustain themselves in very uncertain times, the true small business leaders are relying on more knowledgeable and capable management teams.

“Past success does not mean future success, even for fast-evolving companies,” he said. “In today's business context, successful entrepreneurs are realizing that getting competent, on-the-ground help is vital to ongoing success.”

The Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation's Small Business Enterprise Centres are helping to meet that need. These centres, which are located throughout Ontario, provide support to start-ups and small enterprises during their first five years of operation. Entrepreneurs have easy access to business consulting services and to information about management, marketing, technology and financing.

Securing investment capital is another area of concern for small business. Last spring, the ministry hosted a forum in Toronto that focused on angel groups: high-net-worth investors willing to risk their capital on emerging high-growth firms.

“Emerging growth firms represent just two per cent of all business in Ontario, yet they create about 35 per cent of all new jobs in the province,” said Flaherty. “Support from angel groups will ensure that Ontario businesses attract investment, innovate, create jobs and compete globally.”

In an environment of encouragement, Ontario's small business sector is poised for continued growth in an expanding provincial economy.

Ontario has thousands and thousands of small businesses. On every street corner, in every office tower, in every village and town and city across the province, there are individuals who believe in the need for their product or service.

And they have decided to take the risk, embrace the challenge, hang out their shingle and become their own boss.

As minister, I give enormous credit to these entrepreneurs, innovators and business owners. Through their success, they propel Ontario's economy. Small- and medium-sized enterprises generated half a million new jobs from 1996 to 2001 – about 61 per cent of total private-sector job creation. They are Ontario's manufacturers, retailers, exporters and more. Many continued to enjoy strong performance during the slower economic times of the past year. And their future remains bright.

This issue of *The Ontario Business Report* celebrates the success of the small business community. We profile small business success stories and highlight some of the organizations, information and services that are available to help entrepreneurs get their new businesses up and running, and establish them firmly on the path to success.

Our government is proud of its continuing role in the strength of Ontario's small business sector. Businesses across the province have responded strongly to the positive actions we have taken to enhance business growth and investment – steps that include lowering taxes, reducing red tape and regulation and balancing the budget.

Further, we have established an environment to encourage and promote innovation, and move the results of research from the laboratory to the marketplace. We have developed a comprehensive Web site (www.ontario-canada.com) that links a series of Ontario government services for small businesses, including online registration, renewal and reporting services. We have set up 41 Small Business Enterprise Centres in communities across the province. And we have launched a Young Entrepreneurs Strategy to help Ontario's young people access small business support, services and financing.

Our government understands the importance of Ontario's small business community. We recognize and appreciate its major contribution to Ontario's economic success and job creation. And we will continue to make sure the conditions are in place so that small business can continue to thrive. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I congratulate the many thousands of dedicated, innovative and hardworking small business owners all across this province.

Jim Flaherty
Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation



Investment funds make it possible for ordinary Ontarians to support new ventures

A big challenge to small business start-up and growth is access to capital. Small- and medium-sized enterprises increasingly rely on alternative sources of funding, such as Canada's \$10-billion pool of venture capital.

Venture capital financing is provided to new or young entrepreneurs and early-stage enterprises that often don't have track records or marketplace-tested products.

In order for the pool to increase, domestic sources of venture capital are encouraged through incentives such as tax breaks for the investor. In this way, every Ontarian, through their registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) contribution, can also support the province's economic growth because almost all investment funds are RRSP-eligible.

Ontario is doing its part to help with this "ground-floor" kind of investment through two government programs: the Labour Sponsored Investment Funds program (LSIF) and Community Small Business Investment Funds program (CSBIF).

Ontario established labour-sponsored venture capital corporations in 1991. These investment funds must be sponsored by employee organizations, such as trade unions, their associations and worker co-operatives. Investors can buy Class A shares and receive Ontario tax credits in return.

"Every fund sees an incredible number of business plans per year from young companies hoping to tap into the venture capital pool," says Tim Leitch, director of Portfolio Development and Valuations for Covington Capital Corporation. "There is much more demand for venture capital than there is supply."

The Community Small Business Investment Funds program was established in 1997 to encourage community sponsors to develop partnerships that provide greater access to capital for small local businesses. A community sponsor may be a municipality, a university, college or research institute or a First Nations council.

John Bruce, vice president at Skylon Capital Corporation, sees great potential for growth through the program. "There was a need to direct 'seed capital' to earliest-stage companies. The CSBIF program was created for this," explains Bruce. "The university community in particular has supported CSBIFs, using them for technology transfer in the areas of new drugs, software and biotech products."

Skylon Capital has actively combined both programs to create successful funds, such as the Brighter Future (Balanced) Fund. When labour-sponsored funds, financial institutions, corporations and individuals invest in a community small business investment fund, small business and high-quality jobs are stimulated.

"CSBIFs bridge the venture capital funding gap that often leaves research-and-development projects stranded," says Bruce. "It's an opportunity for an institution to take a promising research-and-development project and [develop] it into a commercially viable technology or business."

For its Brighter Future Fund, Skylon established a community small business investment fund for three universities: Queen's University, the University of Guelph and the University of Toronto. In fact, of the province's 12 community-sponsored business investment funds, 11 are actually sponsored by institutions. (A municipality-driven investment fund partnership is under way in Niagara region.)

By attracting and focusing capital, such funds encourage communities to work together. And long-term growth is evident when communities partner in creating investment funds.

Bruce calls it "patient capital." "We don't expect or target overnight successes," he says.

How to develop **high-performance** management teams outlined in **new Leading Growth Series report**

What makes growing companies successful? A key challenge that CEOs face as firms move up the growth curve is working more effectively through their management teams rather than trying to do everything on their own. While there is more than one way to develop a winning management team, there are a number of key success factors that CEOs use to effectively evolve their executive team.

The latest Leading Growth Series report by the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation – entitled *Winning Management Teams – CEO Perspectives* – is now available. It provides a practical overview of how CEOs in Ontario's high-growth companies are developing managerial talent and teams and how performance management, rewards and

recognition practices can be used to promote growth and success.

The report is a record of the last Wisdom Exchange, a peer-discussion forum held yearly to help promising Ontario companies make connections to foster new business relationships.

Published this month, *Winning Management Teams – CEO Perspectives* was a ministry partnership with Deloitte and Touche. The Leading Growth Series is sent regularly to leading and emerging growth firms across Ontario.

Winning Management Teams – CEO Perspectives is being made available at the Bridges to Better Business events throughout Salute to Small Business Month. The report will be available online in mid-November at www.ontario-canada.com.

“A powerful strategy for any company to improve competitiveness and productivity is sharing and adopting the effective management practices of successful growth firms.”

– Jim Flaherty, Minister

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Internet sites a **key source**

Another Web site, www.mywebca.com, is a privately run site that has been carefully designed to help the Ontario entrepreneur start, grow and efficiently operate a business. Established three years ago by David Trahair, a chartered accountant with 17 years of experience dealing with Canadian businesses, the site offers advice that is practical and easy to read. “I write the content of the site from the point of view of an accountant,” says Trahair. “But I also write it from the perspective of someone who has gone through the process of setting up a business. I know the type of information that people are looking for.”

When he first consolidated the data and established the site, Trahair did so with the intention of making it saleable in the dot-com world. Today, it serves as the marketing arm of his Toronto accounting firm. The site includes a small business start-up tool kit, a resource centre and an information library, as well as a newsletter written by Trahair.

“Anyone can set up a business,” says Trahair, “but people must remember that solid bookkeeping and accounting are key to its continuing success.”

Young entrepreneurs foster

Young people are among Ontario's most energetic, innovative and promising entrepreneurs. Their skills and determination help create jobs. Yet they have often faced a number of barriers; chief among these barriers has been the lack of access to business programs, services and financing.

The government's Young Entrepreneurs Strategy is a comprehensive plan aimed at removing this barrier by giving young people access to the support, services and business financing they need to start a business.

My Company, one program in the Young Entrepreneurs Strategy, helps young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 29 create their own businesses by providing hands-on business training and low-interest loans of up to \$15,000.

To be eligible for My Company, young entrepreneurs must have a viable idea for a business and submit a

The Stamp Studio – Unique stamps and paper crafts



Julie Masse likes elephants. Any size, any material. A rubber stamp of the giant pachyderm prompted her business idea. That, an interest in art and in all things creative, and the sight of two stamp stores operating successfully in a small market – something she observed while she was in Hawaii on her honeymoon.

After toying for several years with the idea of opening a store, Julie went forward. Drawing on her experience in sales, security and banking, and with a casino job as backup, she followed her passion and opened The Stamp Studio in December 2001 at the age of 27. Located in Windsor, the specialty store offers everything from scrapbooks to paper quilling, distinctive specialty papers and one-of-a-kind rubber stamps. The products are unique to Windsor and Essex County.

Julie had researched My Company several years earlier. When funding

became necessary, the program came to mind. She applied to it after completing the required workshop training and preparing a business plan. My Company's low-interest loan helped her stock her shelves with exclusive inventory, nearly 60 per cent of which is imported from the U.S. The balance comes from Canadian suppliers.

Using the theme Explore Your Creativity, Julie promotes the store to shoppers who may think they are not creatively inclined. She offers classes that, for example, help the creatively challenged develop more-exciting scrapbooks and learn multiple uses for vellum (a fine parchment paper) and let kids explore their artistic side using glitter and other materials.

Julie's research and perseverance have paid off. The Stamp Studio quadrupled its projection for the first year in just six months. This has Julie planning for expansion by 2003, including a presence in the U.S. market.

She now manages a staff of five part-time employees and recently hired a wedding co-ordinator to help brides-to-be choose their custom wedding invitations.

Ontario's economic growth

detailed business plan that supports their goals. In addition, they must complete 12 hours of business training through the province's Small Business Enterprise Centres and Business Self-Help Offices or complete similar online courses sponsored by these offices.

Entrepreneurs are required to contribute 35 per cent of the loan amount. For Aboriginals and businesses located in Northern and Eastern Ontario, a 20 per cent contribution is required. Applications, business plans and certificates of completed workshop training are submitted to any branch of the Royal Bank, a My Company partner.

Other Young Entrepreneurs programs include Future Entrepreneurs, which promotes entrepreneurship as a positive career option in schools, beginning in grades 7 and 8; and Summer Company, which offers hands-on business training and mentoring to students, along with awards of up to \$3,000.

In addition to the Young Entrepreneurs Strategy, the government of Ontario supports the spirit of innovation. Visit www.youthjobs.gov.on.ca for more information.

Customers find value and more at Village Value Centre

When Lee-Ann Nygard got tired of the 20-minute drive from her home in Kakabeka Falls to Thunder Bay for everything from sundries to hardware, she decided to take matters into her own hands.

The fact that the local hardware store owners were retiring presented a wider opportunity. Her business idea became Village Value Centre. Items in the 1,400-sq.-ft. store range from the dollar-store variety to higher-priced gifts and hardware items.

The move from her in-home day-care job to retailer was smooth. She had completed an entrepreneurial program several years earlier and was familiar with business plans. Using the Internet, she learned about the My Company program. She applied for the program on Halloween 2001 and opened her own store on February 2, 2002. Lee-Ann's experience with My Company was straightforward and simple. So, too, was her relationship with the Royal Bank. She used most of the loan from the bank to buy inventory.

Lee-Ann scouted locations and found one that was ideal right on the main thoroughfare of Kakabeka Falls. "I was expecting to meet some naysayers," she says. "But I never met one. And customer response has been equally positive. They're telling me it's just what we always needed."

To date, Lee-Ann's projections have been bang on. However, her long-term focus is changing as she learns her market. "My toy section has grown, and our location across from a school has also increased demand for helium balloons," she says.

Lee-Ann at some point hopes to tap into the area's large tourist market with services, including one-hour photo developing.



More women than ever are taking charge of their own destiny



Business has never been better for Elaine Minacs, founder/CEO of Markham-based Minacs Worldwide. Her company began as a small staffing firm in 1981. Now it's the largest customer relationship management firm in Canada, providing international corporations with customer service support, including telephone, e-mail and Internet access. Last year the company posted sales of close to \$200 million. "I want to be a \$500-million company within two years and a billion-dollar company within the next six years," says Minacs.

There are thousands of successful women business owners like Minacs in Ontario – women who aren't afraid to take risks and take charge.

Some, like Minacs, choose to establish their companies on their own. Still others take over family businesses.

Women now own one out of every three small- and medium-sized businesses in Ontario and head one of every two new companies.

There are more women entrepreneurs because women have more education and confidence than ever before, and they're looking for the success found in self-employment, according to Andrea Nixon, vice-president of customer management at the Royal Bank. It's also a way to balance work and personal life.

Increasingly, women are blazing trails in new industries and those not traditionally associated with women.

What does it take for a woman to be successful in her own business? Not surprisingly, the same qualities successful male entrepreneurs possess: vision, confidence, focus, persistence and hard work.

Women are also motivated for the same reasons as men. These include a strong desire for independence and a market opportunity that's too good to pass up.

Research shows that women entrepreneurs differ from their male counterparts in some ways. On the plus side, women generally do their homework more thoroughly than men. They also tend to be "input seekers" and better multi-taskers and networkers. On the down side, they tend to have less management-related experience than men and they're less inclined to expand their businesses.

Still, more and more women in Ontario are starting up and running their own ventures. Jennie Bosnali is a good example. Two years ago Jennie was waiting tables at Casino Windsor. She decided she didn't want to work for someone else anymore; she wanted her own business and wanted to run it from home. The idea for an online office-in-a-box business came to her and, after six months of research and some help from her local Small Business Enterprise Centre, Jennie launched www.thisfurniture.com. That was 18 months ago, and the business has been growing steadily ever since.

"It was a lot of work, and it still is," she says, "but I'm so glad I did it."

It's a sentiment echoed by Minacs. "When I started out in business more than 20 years ago it was harder for women than it is today in many respects," she says. "But now, as then, entrepreneurship demands the ability to overcome all obstacles, and we're seeing that women are every bit as capable of doing that as men."

Four years ago Beverley Mitchell was working with her husband in his Toronto real estate development business. A wedding anniversary gift was the catalyst for the unique gardening tools business she runs.

*Company: Gardenscape Tools
Location: Toronto
Sector: Retail
Contact: www.gardenscape.on.ca*

This growing business is taking root

“My husband gave me a modem for my computer,” says Mitchell, “and as soon as I was online, I saw the potential for supplying new products via online sales. I’m also an active gardener, so it was a perfect fit.”

And so Gardenscape was born. Mitchell built her own Web site and set up shop in her home. After two years of steadily growing sales, she rented a storefront in the Beaches area of Toronto. Offering garden tools and accessories, such as aprons, hand tools and watering cans, Gardenscape also stocks a line of “enabling” tools that includes ergonomic hand tools, knee pads, back supports, add-on ergonomic handles and telescopic tools that take the pain and inconvenience out of gardening.

“Everyone should be able to experience the joy of gardening, regardless of their age or ability,” says Mitchell. “At first I had to hunt for tools in this area, but now that we’re quite well-known, the manufacturers come to us.”

Gardenscape is aimed squarely at the higher end of the gardening market. “Our goal is to provide quality garden items that are functional, unique and well-priced,” says Mitchell. “We’re not interested in the mass market.”

Unlike many e-businesses – many of which are no longer with us – Gardenscape was established on a solid mail order and retail business model. The company stocks only products that are not widely available, provides a print catalogue and carefully selects its suppliers in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. A physical presence with the storefront has proved to be beneficial in attracting and keeping the often-wary online shopper.

With careful control of orders and deliveries, Gardenscape has avoided the shipping problems that have crippled many retail Web sites. Since more than 70 per cent of the company’s Web site sales go to U.S. customers, shipping efficiency is crucial.

“We resisted the urge to grow quickly during the online sales boom,” says Mitchell. “We’re careful to keep our product line ‘shippable’ by size, and our largest product is a shovel. We use Canada Post for all our shipping to the U.S. and Canada. They have a daily pickup for us, and our customers can track the progress of the shipment on the Internet with a tracking code.”

Mitchell is temporarily back in the real estate business with her husband, who’s developing an infill property a few blocks away from her current retail location. The development’s prime retail tenant will be Gardenscape, and the next store will be larger.

“It will let us serve an expanding market that can only get larger in the next few years as the demographics change,” says Mitchell. “At some point, we may consider franchising Gardenscape.”



A long record of innovation

The Ontario Centres of Excellence have been building partnerships between industry and the research community since 1987. Four centres serving specific technology sectors work under the Ontario Centres of Excellence banner: Communications and Information Technology Ontario, the Centre for Research in Earth and Space Technology, Materials and Manufacturing Ontario and Photonics Research Ontario.

Funded in part by the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, the centres take the results of industry and university research partnerships from the laboratory to the marketplace. More than 18,000 companies and researchers form the centres' unique knowledge network. Researchers at the centres have produced more than 120 patents and licences, and more than 5,000 graduate students have been supported by the centres since their inception. The Ontario government recently renewed its funding of the centres, with an investment of \$161 million over five years.

Ontario Centres of Excellence and CITO Internships/Heidi Scott



An internship is a win-win combination for all parties – the students get hands-on experience in the field and are paid for their time, and the company gains fresh insights and up-to-date expertise.

Such was the case for Heidi Scott, a Queen's University graduate

student who was placed at the IBM Centre for Advanced Studies through Communications and Information Technology Ontario (CITO) and its internship program.

Working in collaboration with a partner in the industry – in this case, IBM – the CITO internship program makes it possible for graduate students to conduct their thesis research in a relevant industry environment.

Scott's thesis research explored methods of allowing IBM's DB2 database software to obtain direct access to a storage subsystem without having to go through the operating system (OS). Because of her thesis research, Scott was invited in August 2000 to participate in an industry group of 85 companies that was formed to create a standard way to access files that could "skip" the operating system.

"The IBM CAS Fellowship and CITO internship helped me a great deal," says Scott, who went on to defend her thesis and joined IBM as a software developer. The internship gave her sufficient financial security to concentrate on her research and also provided her with a window into how research relates to her chosen industry.

New research & development centre for water opens in Ontario



The Canadian Water Network/Réseau canadien de l'eau (CWN/RCE) is a new federally funded Network of Centres of Excellence (NCE). CWN was formed in November 2001 to identify and address critical issues facing our nation related to managing and sustaining our water resources.

It will also provide the foundation for development of a national vision for Canada's water, with multidisciplinary research leading to the development of innovative clean-water technologies.

The Centre for Research in Earth and Space Technology – a program of the Ontario Centres of Excellence – known as CRESTech for short, was instrumental in developing CWN's vision. CRESTech co-ordinated workshops that helped the network come together.

CWN is comprised of 175 researchers from 32 Canadian and six international universities, 29 industrial affiliates and 40 government agencies; many are CRESTech members. The research program focuses on such issues as the quality, safety and availability of our water resources; the effects of emerging pathogens on human and environmental health; and the potential impacts of climate change and bulk water exports. CWN is based at the University of Waterloo.

The initial four-year NCE investment of nearly \$15 million is accompanied by \$11.7 million in cash and in-kind support from industrial and institutional partners.

For more information, visit www.cwn-rce.net or www.crestech.ca.

National association brings young entrepreneurs together

Entrepreneurship can be a solitary pursuit. The Young Entrepreneurs Association is one organization that offers understanding, peer mentorship and support.

Established in 1991, this Canadian non-profit organization is aimed at people 35 years of age or younger who own their own business. “The Young Entrepreneurs Association (YEA) creates a supportive environment where entrepreneurs can talk with their peers about the challenges they face as they develop their business. They can bounce their ideas off people who have different experiences and different expertise,” explains Jason Guille, president of the association. “It lets young businesspeople know they are not alone, they are part of something much bigger – and that is entrepreneurship.”

The association currently has almost 600 members in six active chapters across Canada. In Ontario, this includes Peel Region (the Mississauga chapter) and Toronto, and a London branch will be launched in January.

Each chapter is run by a volunteer committee and offers a variety of programs and events, including professional development workshops, speakers, roundtable brainstorming sessions and peer advisory groups.

Simmone Wishart owns Eventcraze, a full-service event planning company and is chair of the Peel association. “As an entrepreneur, I like being part of an organization that is positive and constructive, and I gain a lot from my local network of YEA members,” she says.

A 1999 study of business start-ups in Toronto indicated that owners who were active members in organizations related to their business or occupation earned an average of 41 per cent more than those who did not belong to organizations. “The Young Entrepreneurs Association can make a significant contribution to business

success,” says Guille. There are ambitious growth plans in place. “We’d like to grow to 20 chapters within five years,” says Guille. “Any community with at least 150,000 people and a history of entrepreneurship is where we want to be.”

“It helps,” says Wishart, “to have like-minded people to keep you upbeat and on track.”

For more information, visit www.yea.ca or call 1-888-639-3222.



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How to succeed in small business

OBR: Do knowledge-based industries still offer growth potential?

JH: They sure do. Don't forget, that sector covers information technology, life sciences and health care, plus media and entertainment. They all have great potential, but they need a special approach. It's too detailed to go into here, but we recommend a unique four-step approach to develop those types of businesses: specialize, customize, innovate and collaborate through networks.

OBR: What's your short-term prediction for small business in general?

JH: Well, right now [mid-August 2002] the numbers are positive; employment is up, interest rates and tax rates are down. It's a good time for small business, and there is enough good news to keep it happening as long as consumer confidence remains high.

Hollywood North is home to movie-making magic

The director shouts, “Cut! And – print it! That’s a wrap, everybody!”

The spotlights are shut off and everyone starts shaking hands.

The filming is over. Another TV show or movie is in the can.

Company: Imarion
Sector: Entertainment industry
Location: Toronto
Contact: www.imarion.com

Alex Olegnowicz,
president, Imarion,
“Toronto’s leading
post-production
facility”



But the work isn’t done because the behind-the-scenes work – looking at footage, creating special effects or animation, adding music and editing – is about to begin.

Increasingly, directors and producers are turning to Imarion, a seven-year-old company that is becoming Toronto’s leading post-production facility. The company, led by Alex Olegnowicz, provides three-dimensional animation, compositing, special visual effects and online editing for films and television from its headquarters on Portland Street.

“Ontario has become one of the top provinces to embrace the entertainment industry,” says Olegnowicz, who left Mexico City to start up the company (originally named Digital Post) with the help of the Business Immigration Section within the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. “Ontario is very aware of the amount of production that goes on here, and there has been huge support for film and television. The province supports the industry by providing tax

credits, contacts in the industry – there’s a lot of help from different government entities.”

Olegnowicz and his wife, Debbie, came to Canada and started the business in 1995 from their one-bedroom apartment. Now they operate from a 2,000-square-foot studio with sophisticated editing suites and plan to expand to almost triple that size. “We’ve been growing at a rate of more than 100 per cent a year, and I think the next couple of years are going to be even larger.”

Toronto is the number-three site in North America for TV and film production, “and Ontario is definitely the centre of the post-production business in Canada,” says Olegnowicz.

He’s proud of the fact that his young company was nominated for an Emmy Award for its visual effects work on a Discovery Channel production, *Planet Storm*. Imarion has worked on such TV series as Life Network’s *Skin Deep* and Discovery Health Network’s *The Surgeons*; its film work includes *Quest for the Lost Tribes* for AME.

And he’s appreciative of the assistance provided by the Business Immigration Section. “We got the paperwork completed in about three months, which is fairly unusual; for some people it takes much longer. And they [staff at Business Immigration] still call every so often just to see how we’re doing.”

His advice to others considering a move to Ontario to set up a business is to “do a lot of research. It’s very important that the new business immigrant take the right time to research the industry he’s moving into. It’s very important to know exactly how the industry he’s looking into operates in Canada and specifically in Ontario. Take the time and resources to investigate the industry.”

Living in Ontario has many personal rewards. “I love living here; the security that I feel, I haven’t felt in any other place. It’s a great environment to live and to work.”

Uncompromising **quality** and **workmanship:**

Five years ago Richard Graesser took a hobby that he loved in a flourishing new direction.

*Company: The Limberlost Company of Haliburton
Sector: Outdoor leisure furniture manufacturer
Location: Haliburton
Contact: www.limberlost.on.ca*

“**W**oodworking was always a hobby,” says Graesser. “It was my escape.” After leaving a 21-year computer systems career, he and his wife Carolyn moved from Toronto to their cottage near Minden, where Graesser began building outdoor furniture from his basement.

Today his company, Limberlost Ltd., manufactures high-quality cedar leisure furniture. The product line includes benches, chairs, tables and Ontario’s famous Muskoka chairs. Using its own designs, the company is building a reputation for workmanship and quality.

Even as a hobbyist, Graesser was determined to make quality woodworking. “I was proud of what I built,” says Graesser. When he decided to turn his hobby into a business, it was easy to find a niche with few competitors; most furniture was unfinished, and 90 per cent of it was made of pine that rotted outdoors. “I decided to go in a different direction,” says Graesser.

To that end, Limberlost uses only superior kiln-dried western red cedar with anti-rot properties. The attention to detail includes the use of ceramic-coated fasteners and up to four coats of the highest quality finish available; solid brass hinges are used in the drop-leaf tables.

Limberlost’s Web site showcases its exclusive product line – including its best-selling two-inch dock chair with a tie-down feature for security. Secure e-commerce is being set up to boost online sales. Specialty stores in and around the Toronto market are also a major focus for sales.

The company labels all pieces with its name and phone and fax numbers. During peak season last year, up to 10 employees helped produce a remarkable 1,500 to 2,000 pieces using an inverted router technology that allows wood pieces to be cut from a pattern.

This year Graesser will consolidate four showrooms into a new 6,000-square-foot combined manufacturing facility/showroom on Highway 35 in Minden, where local artists will be invited to showcase their work.

The Haliburton area is renowned for its resorts, and Limberlost sees the area’s conference centres and resort facilities as the perfect home for its high-end furniture. It counts the prestigious Windermere House and Cleveland House among its clientele. Graesser believes Ontario’s flourishing resort and cottage industry will help his business thrive.

Graesser thought the business would be a little wood-working shop to keep him “busy” in retirement. Instead, he’s hiring a marketing vice-president and a finance person. “It just got too big for me to wear all the hats,” he says. And, with a targeted marketing effort, Limberlost expects to quadruple sales this year.



Limberlost table

Haileybury and the Tri-Town

Celebrating business opportunities
in Ontario's municipalities

www.town.haileybury.on.ca

As far back as 1850, lumberjacks and fur traders frequented Haileybury, but the town's real growth began in 1903. That's the year silver was discovered in nearby Cobalt, and miners, prospectors, engineers and promoters flocked to the area. Since provincial laws forbade alcohol consumption within five miles of operating mines, many of these newcomers took up residence in Haileybury.

Today the town, which is located on the shores of Lake Timiskaming, is a magnet for four-season tourism. It is a destination for boaters on the Temiskawa Waterway in the summer months, and offers downhill and cross-country skiing and snowmobiling during the winter. Haileybury also has several diverse industries and is gaining a reputation as a northern retirement resort community.

Haileybury is one of four communities in a Tri-Town (small communities that form an alliance to promote growth). It works closely with New Liskeard, Cobalt and Dymond to attract industry and tourism to the area. "Each Tri-Town community conducts its own economic development or promotion to a degree, but we are increasingly combining efforts to promote the region as a whole," says James Smyth, CAO and clerk for the town of Haileybury. "We are setting up a joint strategic planning office, which will develop a plan for economic development in partnership with the Tri-Town Chamber of Commerce. We are also working together on a restructuring study, which will explore the possibility of municipal amalgamation."

The communities are located within 17 kilometres of each other along Highway 11 and about 500 kilometres north of Toronto. They are served by Ontario Northland Railways and the nearby Earleton/Timiskaming airport.

"Each community has its own special attraction, which makes us very strong as a whole," says Smyth. He explains that Dymond (population 1,200) is the retail and commercial stronghold and also has a large agricultural component. New Liskeard (pop. 4,900) has an even mix of



industry, commerce and institutional services, including the district hospital and high school. It is also the venue for the Tri-Club Monster Poker Run, an annual gathering of about 2,000 snowmobilers from across North America. Cobalt (pop. 1,200) actively promotes its heritage as a mining town and is a popular tourism destination.

Haileybury's population of 4,600 has a significant number of retirees. "We are actively enhancing our waterfront with recreational retirement-living projects," said Smyth. "Our goal is to make Haileybury Ontario's premier retirement resort community." Plans for the retirement community include a waterfront boardwalk and clubhouse, an extensive trail system and a championship 18-hole golf course.

Smyth explains that, individually and collectively, the Tri-Town communities are working to make the area more vibrant and attractive for development. "We believe that the beauty and natural attributes of the region will attract retirees and businesspeople who like the lifestyle and recognize the significant opportunities that are available," says Smyth. "We see our downtown, industrial, commercial and residential sectors only growing stronger."

For more information visit www.town.haileybury.on.ca or call 1 (705) 672-3363.



Communities around the province celebrate small business month

Wherever you live, small- and medium-sized businesses contribute significantly to your local economy and quality of life. They provide jobs and contribute to the municipal tax base; they purchase products, expertise and services; they support local charities and causes.

The fact is, small business drives the Ontario economy. It's the province's biggest employer and is the largest contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

To celebrate entrepreneurship – and encourage more people to consider it as an employment option – the government has designated October as Small Business Month.

So, what events are making up this year's celebration and what can communities do for Small Business Month?

In London, "we're holding special seminars and workshops devoted to encouraging and informing entrepreneurs," says Al Sim, business advisor with the London Small Business Centre. The highlight is a "Bridges To Better Business" event.

Developed by the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation in partnership with the Business Development Bank of Canada and Bell Canada, Bridges to Better Business is a one-day learning and networking opportunity packed with great ideas to help entrepreneurs succeed. It includes roundtable discussions on various topics of interest, a trade fair at which entrepre-

neurs can showcase their businesses and a keynote address by a successful entrepreneur.

This year London's speaker will be Steve Check, owner of Nature's Image, a residential landscape and design business that was ranked 63rd on *PROFIT Magazine's* list of the 100 fastest-growing companies.

"Steve is a graduate of the Small Business Centre's Self Employment Program and a recipient of the Distinctive Achievement Award, both of which make him a great choice," says Sim.

The Small Business Centre in Nipissing Parry Sound is also planning a Bridges to Better Business event, as well as a Success Stories luncheon/awards ceremony, a Business After Hours networking party and a number of information sessions on topics ranging from stress management to employment standards.

"But we're kicking off Small Business Month with the Northern Ontario Business Awards," says Erin Richmond, a consultant at the centre. An annual event that includes a conference, trade show and awards gala, it's held in different locations each year to recognize and celebrate the efforts of business people in northern Ontario. This year it's North Bay's turn to host.

"In addition to promoting entrepreneurship, Small Business Month is a great opportunity for us to promote our office and the services we provide," says Richmond, who has noticed a definite increase in the centre's inquiries and consultation requests every November since Small Business month was launched.

As Colleen Sadler, a consultant with Enterprise Renfrew County, another small business centre, says, "Small business is big business, so it's important to recognize its enormous contribution to our economic well-being."



How to succeed in small business

Ontario's small business sector is in good shape and is ready to capitalize on emerging opportunities. But as experienced businesspeople also know, not everyone suffers in a recession, and not everyone succeeds during extended periods of growth. What are the secrets to continued small business success in a healthy economy? To find out, *The Ontario Business Report* interviewed Jim Hamilton, vice-president of Small Business and Agriculture with RBC Royal Bank in Toronto.

ONTARIO BUSINESS REPORT: How is the small business sector performing from your point of view?

JIM HAMILTON: There has been huge growth in small business, and it's the biggest trend we have been seeing for several years now. There are several exceptionally high-growth areas, including service industries, consulting and self-employment. Retail has been growing, and franchises are a significant proportion, about seven to 10 per cent of our small business base.

OBR: Suppose I have a great idea for a new small business. What's my first step?

JH: It starts with a proper business plan. And that plan has to cover a lot more than just finances. It has to take a hard look at your market, your potential customers. When you visit a financial institution armed with a solid business plan, you will get a very quick turnaround. You're also ensuring that your bright idea has the best chance of growing into a profitable venture.

OBR: What if I already have a small business? What should I do so it continues to grow? And so I'm ready for a downturn?

JH: You should... consider whether your product or service is exportable. Or perhaps look at e-commerce as an addition to your sales plan. You should also look at newer services, such as electronic cash flow management. It's your access to knowledge that will keep you successful, not just access to capital.

OBR: Should a small business always think about growth?

JH: Definitely. It may not happen otherwise. You always need a growth strategy. There are several broad areas you should look at: your competitive advantage, your definition of success. Are you collecting customer feedback, identifying your best customers? Management skills are crucial to establishing a successful small business and in taking it to the next step.

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OBR THE Ontario BUSINESS REPORT

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Electronic versions of *The Ontario Business Report* can be found on the ministry's Web site www.ontario-canada.com.

The focus of this newsletter is on business – successes, news, trends, opportunities, challenges and issues affecting Ontario's business climate. Information is drawn from ministries and agencies across government and from other public sources believed to be reliable. All efforts are made to ensure timeliness and accuracy.

La version française du *Ontario Business Report* est disponible sous le titre *Cahier des affaires de l'Ontario*.

We want to hear from you.

Comments and contributions are welcomed.
Please write to us by mail, fax or e-mail.



Ontario Programs and Services

Help Small Business

Entrepreneurs and small business play a crucial role in creating and maintaining a dynamic and innovative economy. The government of Ontario assists these companies and individuals to improve their chances of success from the outset.

The **Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation's** strategy, based on research, is to focus on helping entrepreneurs build their capacity both in the short- and long-term.

The short-term concentrates on viable business start-ups. The ministry assists business operators using a self-help concept, resulting in a focused business plan.

The ministry helps small businesses build their capacity through:

Business Self-Help Offices

In partnership with local municipalities, the Ontario government operates Business Self-Help Offices in communities across Ontario. Each office has a general business consultant on staff as well as publications on a range of topics that address small business concerns.

Phone: (416) 775-3456 or (800) 567-2345 Fax: (416) 954-8597

Web site: www.ontario-canada.com

Small Business Enterprise Centres

In partnership with local municipalities, these centres take the self-help concept a step further with an emphasis on mentoring and giving small business operators and entrepreneurs the management tools they need to achieve success beyond start-up, through the critical first five years of operation.

Phone: (416) 775-3456 or (800) 567-2345

Web site: www.ontario-canada.com

Field Services

The **Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation's** 11 regional offices provide business development consulting services to innovative growth firms, as well as consulting services to associations and municipalities.

Our business development consultants work with thousands of companies across Ontario to assess their situations, support development of future plans and provide options for achieving their goals. They link firms with the right people, information and business resources to enhance competitiveness and profitability.

Consultants also assist with export marketing strategies, provide access to programs in research and development and new technology, and develop opportunities for strategic alliances and partnerships.

Central Region: Phone: (416) 235-4278 Fax: (416) 235-4338

Eastern Region: Phone: (613) 241-3841 Fax: (613) 241-2545

Southwestern Region: Phone: (800) 265-2428 Fax: (519) 571-6104

Web site: www.ontario-canada.com

Field Services in Northern Ontario

Field Services in Northern Ontario are delivered by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM). Please refer to the blue pages of your local telephone directory or visit the MNDM Web site at www.mndm.gov.on.ca

In addition, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines operates a network of area teams, which are strategically located across the region. These provide a focal point for economic development in each area. Working together, the teams deliver the province's economic and social development programs and services in the North. Area teams also promote and provide access to trade and investment marketing opportunities.

With expertise in key economic sectors, including tourism, mining, forest products, business and industry and aboriginal economic development, as well as representatives in specific communities, area teams support a healthy, competitive and sustainable northern economy that includes businesses of all sizes and types.

Kenora Area Team: (807) 468-2937

Thunder Bay Area Team: (807) 475-1648

Sault Ste. Marie Area Team: (705) 945-5914

Timmins Area Team: (705) 235-1664

Sudbury Area Team: (705) 564-7517

North Bay Area Team: (705) 494-4045

Web site: www.mndm.gov.on.ca

Business Immigration Services (BIS)

BIS engages in marketing programs designed to maximize Ontario's share of business immigrants (entrepreneurs, investors and the self-employed) admitted to Canada and works with the federal government to develop programs that can address skill shortages. BIS also provides services to business immigrants to assist them with their investment and business establishment decisions.

BIS also has a consulting and advocacy role with multinational corporations to assist with the temporary transfer of senior management or key personnel/technical staff into Ontario.

Phone: (416) 325-6777 Fax: (416) 325-6653

Web site: www.2ontario.com/bi/home.asp

Immigrant Investor Program

The Immigrant Investor Program allows qualified businesspeople to make a passive investment in a government fund and become landed immigrants.

Contact the Business Immigration Section.

Phone: (416) 325-6777 Fax: (416) 325-6653

Web site: www.2ontario.com/bi/bi_immigration_fedprogram.asp

The **Aboriginal Business Service Network (ABSN)** provides improved access to general business information, pathfinding, counselling services and business tools for Aboriginal businesses across Canada. In Ontario, ABSN is a partnership between:

- FedNor (Federal Economic Development Initiative in Northern Ontario);
- The Canada Ontario Business Service Centre (COBSC); and
- Aboriginal Business Canada.

Phone: (877) 699-5559

Fax GTA: (416) 954-8555

Fax outside GTA: (800) 240-4192

Web site: www.cbcs.org/ontario/ABSN E-mail: info@cbcs.org

Innovators Alliance

The Innovators Alliance is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to fostering superior business results through wisdom and knowledge-sharing among CEOs of Ontario's leading growth firms.

Phone: (905) 332-0340 or (877) 799-5001 Fax: (905) 332-4768

E-mail: info@innovators.org

Wisdom Exchange

The Wisdom Exchange is an annual event that brings CEOs of leading growth firms together in a peer-to-peer forum to share knowledge and experiences, and discuss the common challenges they face in managing Ontario's fastest-growing firms.

Phone: (416) 325-6740 Fax: (416) 325-6757

Web site: www.ontario-canada.com/wisdomexchange

Ontario Exports Inc.

Ontario Exports Inc. (OEI), the province's lead trade agency, helps small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) grow export sales and compete in world markets, and assists foreign buyers in finding Ontario suppliers for their purchasing requirements.

OEI provides a variety of services for SMEs, including export education, consulting, market intelligence and advocacy support services. It partners with export-related public- and private-sector agencies and organizations, showcases Ontario's products and services at home and abroad, and celebrates Ontario's export success. The agency participates in international trade missions and trade shows, and organizes virtual trade missions. It holds 100 seminars a year relevant to SMEs, including its two-day New Exporters to Border States program. To complement its in-house expertise, OEI has retained the services of locally engaged in-market consultants in Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Germany who make corporate sales calls and provide market intelligence. The OEI Web site offers products, including country profiles, the *Getting Ready to Export Guide*, the *Ontario E-Commerce Export Guide* and a calendar of OEI events and activities (under the heading Preparing to Export, click on Trade Activities).

Phone: (416) 314-8200 or toll-free (877) 46TRADE (8-7233) Fax: (416) 314-8222

Web site: www.ontarioexportsinc.com

Ontario Global Traders Awards

The Ontario Global Traders Awards (OGTA) celebrate Ontario's export success in all regions of the province and raise awareness about the potential of exporting to enhance a company's success and job creation. This awards program recognizes the important contributions exporters make to Ontario's economy. Winners are announced at four regional ceremonies across Ontario and a provincial ceremony each spring. Communities provincewide are an integral part of the nomination process.

The nominations deadline for the 2002 awards is November 1, 2002.

Nomination Guide and forms are available online from the OGTA Web site at www.ontarioexportsinc.com

Phone: (416) 314-8200 or (877) 46TRADE (8-7233)

Fax: (416) 314-8222

Strategic Skills Investment Program (SSI)

The Strategic Skills Investment program is a multiyear initiative that supports projects that best accelerate skills-development efforts between business and training providers. SSI focuses on projects that create strategic skills essential for building business competitiveness and increasing the responsiveness of Ontario's training institutions and business needs.

Phone: (416) 325-6867 Fax: (416) 314-7014

E-mail: strategic.skills@edt.gov.on.ca

Web site: www.ontario-canada.com

Summer Company

The Summer Company program provides hands-on business training and mentoring, and up to \$3,000 to help students aged 15 to 29 to start up and run their own summer businesses.

Phone: (416) 775-3456 or (416) 325-6541 or (800) 567-2345

Fax: (416) 954-8555

Web site: www.youthjobs.gov.on.ca

My Company

This program is designed to provide business training and low-interest loans of up to \$15,000 to help young people – aged 18 to 29 – create their own businesses.

Phone: (416) 775-3456 or (416) 325-6541 or (800) 567-2345

Fax: (416) 954-8555

Web sites: www.ontario-canada.com; www.youthjobs.gov.on.ca

Future Entrepreneurs

This is a program for teachers that introduces an entrepreneurial mind-set and skills to students in grades 7 and 8. Students learn about entrepreneurship as a viable career option and develop entrepreneurship skills.

Phone: (416) 775-3456 or (416) 325-6541 or (800) 567-2345 Fax: (416) 954-8555

Web sites: www.ontario-canada.com; www.youthjobs.gov.on.ca

Ontario Centres of Excellence

The Ontario Centres of Excellence have been building partnerships between industry and the research community since 1987. Four centres serving specific technology sectors work under the Ontario Centres of Excellence banner: Communications and Information Technology Ontario, the Centre for Research in Earth and Space Technology, Materials and Manufacturing Ontario and Photonics Research Ontario.

Funded in part by the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, the centres take the results of industry/university research partnerships from the laboratory to the marketplace. More than 18,000 companies and researchers are part of the centres' unique "knowledge network." Ontario Centres of Excellence researchers have produced more than 120 patents and licences, and more than 5,000 graduate students have been supported by the centres since their inception. The centres were recently renewed by the Ontario government, with an investment of \$161 million over five years.

Phone: (905) 823-2020 Fax: (905) 823-4141

Web sites: www.2.ontario-canada.com/English/sci_tech/centresofexcellence.htm;

www.oce-ontario.org

Biotechnology Commercialization Centre Fund (BCCF)

Commercialization centres in London, Ottawa and Toronto will help new companies emerging from Ontario's research institutes. The centres will aid the development of start-up biotechnology companies by providing access to equipment, shared space and shared services (legal, financial, administrative and educational). The first of two centres in Ottawa is open, with the second expected in the summer of 2003. The London centre opens in September 2002, and Toronto will come on stream in 2004.

Ottawa Biotechnology Incubation Centre

Phone: (613) 224-3005 Fax: (613) 224-0557 Web site: www.obic.ca

London Biotechnology Commercialization Centre

Phone: (519) 858-5050 Fax: (519) 858-5142 Web site: www.lbcc.on.ca

Toronto Biotechnology Commercialization Centre

Phone: (416) 236-1054 ext. 26 Fax: (416) 236-2801

Connect Ontario

Connect Ontario is a SuperBuild initiative to develop a high-tech network of 50 connected or "smart" communities across Ontario by 2005. Through innovative partnerships among community institutions and organizations, governments, local businesses and other private-sector interests, this initiative will enhance the profile of our communities in the new digital economy. Connect Ontario partnership projects are currently under development across Ontario. They will help to facilitate the participation of local communities and businesses in the global economy.

Phone: Dick Ko (416) 326-9604 Fax: (416) 326-9654

Interactive Digital Media (IDM) Growth Fund

The Interactive Digital Media Small Business Growth Fund invests in activities that spur growth and increase the number of jobs in small IDM firms in Ontario. Projects must have the involvement of Ontario-based firms. IDM companies include online digital-media services, Internet Web site developers, entertainment software and CD-ROM developers, online digital media services, publishers, and film and video producers.

Phone: Dick Ko (416) 326-9604 Fax: (416) 326-9654

Ontario Research & Development Challenge Fund (ORDCF)

The Ontario Research & Development Challenge Fund (ORDCF) encourages leading companies, large and small, to collaborate with the finest universities, hospitals and other research institutions to build the knowledge necessary to compete in world markets and create jobs.

Phone: 416-977-7020 Fax: 416-977-9460

Web site: www.ontariochallengefund.com

Red Tape Commission (RTC)

The RTC is mandated to prevent and eliminate nonessential regulations, procedures, forms and/or licences that do not protect public health, safety or the environment. By removing red-tape barriers, the commission helps improve Ontario's business climate for investment and job creation. The commission addresses major red-tape challenges with ministry partners across government and intervenes on behalf of businesses, institutions and members of the public seeking assistance. The commission reviews proposed policy and regulatory proposals and develops legislation that reduces barriers to business, investment and job creation.

Phone: (416) 314-5621 Fax: (416) 325-3732

E-mail: redtape.gov.on.ca

Web site: www.redtape.gov.on.ca

Other Ontario Government Initiatives

Ministry of Consumer and Business Services (MCBS)

The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services promotes a fair, safe and informed marketplace that supports a competitive economy in Ontario. Its vision is to be a responsive, innovative world leader in customer service and consumer protection by delivering quality products for a fair, safe, dynamic and informed Ontario marketplace.

MCBS provides both businesses and individuals with greater choice in how, when and where they access government services and products. The ministry is both a registrar of public information, such as commercial statistics and births and deaths, and a regulator. Sectors where MCBS plays a regulatory role include alcohol, gaming, the funeral industry, motor vehicles, condominiums, new-home construction, real estate and technical safety, such as elevators and amusement rides.

You can find out more by calling the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services at 1 (800) 267-8097 or by logging on to its Web site at www.cbs.gov.on.ca.

Consumer protection and public safety

The ministry plays a key role in ensuring fairness and safety in Ontario's marketplace and economy by providing a legal framework for commercial activities. It also sets the standards of conduct for business, promotes consumer protection and rights, and investigates questionable business practices.

Business Registration Services

Ontario Business Connects (OBC)

With the help of Ontario Business Connects, you can get your business up and running in no time. You can make applications for core provincial programs, such as the Retail Sales Tax program or Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and you can even get your Master Business Licence (MBL). (The MBL is your business passport – you need this for opening a business bank account, for example, or to demonstrate that you are a legitimate business.)

Through OBC's partnership with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, you can even register for GST, corporate income tax, payroll deduction and import/export accounts. You can do all of this by simply going online to www.cbs.gov.on.ca/obc.

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can visit one of the OBC workstations. There are 140 throughout the province, located in business-related organizations, such as Business Self-Help Offices and Government Information Centres.

Call 1 (800) 565-1921 to find the OBC workstation closest to you or check out the locations at www.cbs.gov.on.ca/obc.

Real Property

The ministry registers and maintains records and provides public access to data on real property, personal property, companies and corporations. The ministry's Real Property Registration Branch manages and operates 54 land registry offices throughout Ontario, which register, store and manage documents, such as deeds, mortgages and plans of survey. To find out more, log on to www.cbs.gov.on.ca and click on Services to find the province's land registry offices.

Electronic Personal Property Security Registration

The Personal Property Registration Branch of the ministry records and reproduces information concerning personal property that is used to secure loans. Businesses large and small rely on this service to maintain records on secured assets other than real estate. Online submissions to the Personal Property Security Registration database are registered and accessible to clients within 24 hours. Internet searches of the database are available at www.cbs.gov.on.ca (click on Online Services).

Phone: (416) 325-8847 or 1 (800) 267-8847 Fax: (416) 325-0487

Companies and Corporations

The ministry's Companies Branch maintains records and provides access to information about companies and corporations, both nonprofit and businesses. Articles of incorporation for business corporations can be done online, as well as corporate information updates and company searches. For further information contact:

OnCorp Direct Inc.

Web site: www.oncorp.com

Phone: (416) 964-2677 or 1 (800) 461-7772

Cyberbahn Inc.

Web site: www.cyberbahn.ca

Phone: (416) 595-9522 or 1 (800) 806-0003

Canada-Ontario Business Service Centres

The Canada-Ontario Business Service Centres (COBSC), a joint project of the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and Industry Canada, provide access to accurate, timely and relevant information on federal and provincial business-related programs, services and regulations. There are 78 business centres throughout the province that provide COBSC services.

In order to serve as a first stop for business information, the COBSC has established co-operative arrangements with all levels of government and its agencies, as well as nongovernment organizations to administer business-related programs and services.

Phone: (416) 775-3456 or (800) 567-2345 Fax: (416) 954-8597

Web site: www.cbosc.org/ontario E-mail: info@cbosc.org

Government Information Centres

A provincewide network of 59 Government Information Centres (GIC) provides general information and referral services through a combination of electronic and over-the-counter service-delivery channels for mainly individuals and also businesses. Ontario Business Connects workstations are available at GIC offices across the province.

To locate a GIC office, you can go online or telephone the following:

Phone: (416) 326-1234 or (800) 267-8097 Fax: (416) 325-3407

Web site: www.gov.on.ca/MBS/english/maps/gic/index.html

E-mail: feedback@gov.on.ca

Ministry of Finance

Community Small Business Investment Funds (CSBIF) program

The Community Small Business Investment Funds (CSBIF) program was established in 1997 to encourage community sponsors to develop partnerships that provide greater access to capital for small, local businesses. By attracting and focusing capital, CSBIFs encourage communities to work together. Community sponsors may be a municipality, a university, college or research institute; or a First Nations council.

Phone: (800) 263-7466

Web site: www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/scripts/index_esp.asp?action=31&P_ID=9237&N_ID=3&PT_ID=160&U_ID=0

Labour-Sponsored Investment Fund (LSIF) program

In 1991 Ontario established labour-sponsored venture capital corporations, which make Ontario tax credits available to investors. The investment funds managed by these corporations are regulated by the Ministry of Finance LSIF program and must be sponsored by employee organizations, such as trade unions and their associations, federations and worker co-operatives. Venture capital financing under this program is available to both new or early-stage entrepreneurs and existing small- and medium-sized companies.

Phone: (800) 263-7466

Web site: www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/scripts/index_esp.asp?action=31&P_ID=9237&N_ID=3&PT_ID=160&U_ID=0

Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG)

Working Partnerships Program

This is a five-year \$11.8 million program designed to encourage more aboriginal partnerships with the corporate sector. The program is expected to help corporate Ontario understand the opportunities in working with aboriginal businesses and better understand the culture and traditions. The program provides eligible aboriginal organizations with funding to hire staff who will work at the community level to promote partnerships and develop business expertise.

Phone: (416) 326-2364

Fax: (416) 326-4017

Web site: www.nativeaffairs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/baeh.htm

Ministry of Citizenship

Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD)

The OWD promotes the economic independence of women through partnership initiatives with educators and business and community organizations. These partnerships support educational opportunities for girls that will lead to career and life success; promote the participation of women in science- and technology-based training; encourage the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the skilled trades; and support women's entrepreneurial success. The OWD also works with nine other ministries on comprehensive domestic violence measures designed to protect women and their children.

Phone: (416) 314-0300

Fax: (416) 314-0247

Web site: www.gov.on.ca/MCZCR/owd/index.html

Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF)

Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)

– Taking Care of Business in Rural Ontario

Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) is a community-based, volunteer-driven economic development tool to encourage the growth and stability of local business. BR+E works to improve the competitiveness of local businesses by evaluating and addressing their needs and concerns.

Phone: (888) 466-2372

Web site: www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/rural/BRandE/BRandE.htm

E-mail: BRandE@omafra.gov.on.ca

Research and Technology Transfer

By developing and transferring innovative technologies to industry stakeholders, the ministry is committed to improving the competitiveness of the Ontario agri-food sector. Investment in research is essential to encourage growth and jobs in the sector.

Phone: (888) 466-2372

Fax: (519) 826-4333

Web site: www.gov.on.ca/OMAF

Investment and Market Development

OMAF supports Ontario's goals of economic growth and job creation through an aggressive investment retention and attraction program. The ministry's Food Industry Division serves as a single window to government for the food industry (producers, processors, retailers and food service).

Phone: (888) 466-2372

Fax: (519) 826-4333

Web site: www.gov.on.ca/OMAF

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Rural Economic Development (RED) program – A component of Ontario Small Town and Rural (OSTAR) Development initiative

The five-year, \$200-million program is aimed at removing barriers to economic growth in rural Ontario by promoting a diversified business climate, exploring new products and new markets, creating a climate for long-term job growth and investing in technologies and sectors that contribute to economic development in rural Ontario.

Phone: (888) 588-4111 Fax: (519) 826-4336

Web site: www.gov.on.ca/omaf E-mail: ostar@omaf.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Tourism and Recreation (MTR)

The Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership (OTMP)

The Ontario government established the OTMP in April 1999 to work with the tourism industry on strengthening Ontario's tourism marketing efforts. The partnership aggressively markets Ontario as a year-round world-class tourist destination by undertaking consumer research and developing and delivering tourism advertising campaigns for domestic and international markets.

Phone: (800) 263-7836 (industry inquiries) or (800) ONTARIO (consumer inquiries)

Fax: (416) 314-7563 E-mail: tourism.partnership@edt.gov.on.ca

Investment and Development Office (IDO)

The Investment and Development Office (IDO) supports investment and new-product development for Ontario's tourism, culture and recreation activities.

IDO works with the industry to develop high-quality, innovative products and destinations; improve service quality; establish dynamic gateways and travel information centres; and develop the appropriate tools to support industry growth. IDO is also responsible for administering the SuperBuild Sports, Culture and Tourism Partnerships (SCTP) program.

Phone: (416) 325-5306 Fax: (416) 327-2506

E-mail: IDO.ONT@mczcr.gov.on.ca Web site: www.tourism.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM)

Resource-Based Tourism Diversification Program (RBTDP)

The Resource-Based Tourism Diversification Program (RBTDP) is a \$6.3-million, three-year initiative. It is aimed at assisting the Ontario resource-based tourism sector in identifying and effectively accessing alternative and value-added tourism markets which are based on Crown natural resources in Ontario. The program assists the tourism sector in expanding beyond traditional fishing and hunting outfitting markets to newly emerging markets for ecotourism, adventure tourism and specialty outdoors tourism activities.

The program focuses on providing practical assistance to:

- identify tourism diversification opportunities;
- develop commercially viable business plans; and
- access capital for necessary improvements to buildings, equipment and other infrastructure.

Phone: (866) 326-7526 Fax: (705) 564-7583

E-mail: glenn.warren@ndm.gov.on.ca

Summer Jobs Service

The Ontario government's Summer Jobs Service affords students additional opportunities to find a summer job with businesses, including farm businesses, nonprofit and community organizations. This program provides \$2.00/hour wage subsidies for businesses and community organizations that employ students over the summer period.

For Northern Ontario:

Phone: (807) 475-1520 Fax: (807) 475-1589

Web site: www.mndm.gov.on.ca

E-mail: irene.milne@ndm.gov.on.ca