



Media Release

First-of-its-kind web portal showcases creative economy in Ontario East

For immediate release

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Ontario East has launched a first-of-its-kind collaborative regional web portal that will use social media to reveal ongoing innovative initiatives in its communities and illustrate to the world that Eastern Ontario is Canada's most creative corner.

"The website is a way to showcase, in one place, all the activity that is happening in Eastern Ontario towards building a creative economy," Stephen Paul, president of the Ontario East Economic Development Commission (Ontario East), says of www.creativeontarioeast.ca.

Ontario East is focused on developing a creative economy out of the realization that rural regions like this one, which comprise smaller towns and cities, are less likely to benefit from corporate head office or major manufacturing expansions.

"The real economic growth in these areas is going to come from entrepreneurs and small businesses employed in the creative economy; those individuals who are paid to solve problems, use their intellectual capacity and collaborate," says Paul.

The new portal will display social media posts from as many as 20 communities, detailing their hottest creative economy activities in real time. It also provides links to each community's website.

The portal's design is based on the concept that continuously updated, fresh content will boost the site's Google ranking and Internet presence. This will make it easier to find Ontario East online and raise the profile of the myriad of activities occurring in the region that are contributing to the creative economy. This higher profile should help attract and retain more creative economy entrepreneurs.

Creative economies are defined as ones in which people are paid to think using ideas, analytical skills, innovation, knowledge, and collaboration, and in which the nature of work moves from routine-oriented jobs to creativity-oriented jobs. In Ontario, the creative economy employs 35 percent of the workforce yet pays 51 percent of wages. Jobs in the creative economy tend to pay twice that of the next wage category.

There are many advantages to developing a creative economy: creative economies cross all sectors, there are low barriers to entry, and there are high growth trends. They are also human capital intensive, which works well for Ontario East and its highly educated and skilled workforce.

"When people think of the word 'creative,' they tend to think it's about artists and musicians. It's much broader than that. It's about architects just as much as it's about programmers and artists and potters. It's beyond bohemians and includes real estate, insurance, brokers, stocks, and more," says Dan Taylor, Ontario East's Creative Economy Sector Team Lead.

"A creative economy asks us to look at the economy a little differently. We usually think about sectors in economics. Creative economy doesn't address sectors; it focuses on people, creative workers—people who are paid to think. Their job is to solve problems and come up with creative solutions," Taylor says.

Creative industries can include advertising, business consulting, design, education, engineering, film, gaming, healthcare, heritage, marketing, fine arts, public relations, and software development, among other industries.

The Ontario East Economic Development Commission, also known as Ontario East, was one of Canada's first regionally-based economic development commissions when it formed in 1988. Its new site is an example of the collaborative nature of its communities to pull together toward a common vision. Ontario East comprises 124 regional economic development professionals and business leaders who work together to promote the region as a premier business location. The organization represents more than 200 communities, thousands of businesses, and nearly two million residents.

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