

# Realizing Our Potential

2023 – 2028

## An Economic Development and Venture13 Strategy and Action Plan



# FINAL DRAFT

June 2023

Town of Cobourg Economic Development and Venture13  
Department  
econdev@cobourg.ca



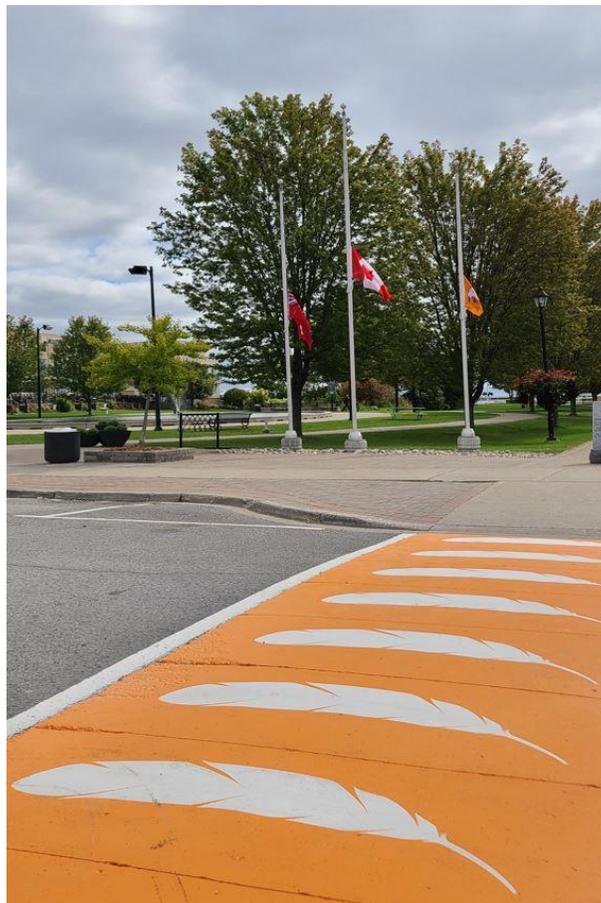
## Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we are located in the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig (Mississauga) and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations which include Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil and Georgina Island First Nations,”

We respectfully acknowledge that the Williams Treaties First Nations have been stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters, and that today remain vigilant over their health and integrity for generations to come.

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, we acknowledge that these treaties have not always been honoured, and often they’ve been broken. We also acknowledge that we are all a part of building good relations.

We are all a Treaty people.



## **Acknowledgements**

### **Members of Council**

Mayor Lucas Cleveland

Deputy Mayor Nicole Beatty

Councillor Randy Barber

Councillor Aaron Burchat

Councillor Adam Bureau

Councillor Brian Darling

Councillor Miriam Mutton

### **Town Staff**

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer

Anne Taylor Scott, Director of Planning and Development

Daniel Van Kampen, Manager of Economic Development

Melissa Graham, Economic Development Coordinator

Ryan Warner, V13 Programs and Operations Coordinator

Lauren Brouwers, V13 Programs and Operations Assistant

### **Project Steering Committee**

Jackie Chapman-Davis, Town of Cobourg, Community Services Department

TJ Flynn, Northumberland County, Economic Development and Tourism Department

Chris Gillis, Durham College, Office of Research Services, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Carleigh Hunter, Downtown Cobourg Business Improvement Area

Matt James, Dalren Limited

Bryan MacKinnon, Millard Towers

Ann Newell, Watton Employment Services Inc.

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Appendix A: Community Consultation Summary Report

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## Executive Summary

The Town of Cobourg is pleased to present a 2023 to 2028 Economic Development and Venture13 Strategy and Action Plan. This strategy is a result of over six months of extensive research and community consultation.

### **Our Vision:**

The Town of Cobourg economic development and Venture13 team will be progressive and forward-thinking with a clear and focused vision to move its economy into the future. It will have a strong understanding of the business community and the quality of life that attracts and retains a younger demographic to support local businesses. It will embrace its historical downtown and small-town feel. It will have expanded its industry sectors to ensure that it has a resilient economy.

### **Our Mission/Aspirations:**

The Town of Cobourg economic development office aspires to ...

- Have a clear, focused vision for the future.
- Communicate the strengths of Cobourg and what it has to offer.
- Communicate that Venture13 is a great start to something that can be an economic driver in the community.
- Foster a stronger partnership between the Town and the BIA to build a downtown better connected to the waterfront.
- Improve Town marketing in terms of economic development and Venture13 opportunities and the quality of life offered in Cobourg.
- Attract a young population and workforce for in-demand employment opportunities.
- Have excellent broadband to support business across the Town to be ready for today and into the future.

### **Strategic Goals:**

1. Downtown - to have a downtown that supports not only the local businesses but celebrates our history and culture

*Objective 1:* Enhance the downtown Cobourg experience.

*Objective 2:* Strengthen partnerships to support business downtown programming.

2. Existing Businesses - to build a more resilient economy ensuring that the future of Cobourg will be able to withstand any economic downturn.

*Objective 1:* Understand the business community and offer future-focussed business support programming.

*Objective 2:* Have all the elements in place to retain businesses and showcase their successes.

3. Workforce – to have a strong skilled workforce to support local business will enable them to succeed and will improve youth and workforce engagement.

*Objective 1:* Invest in amenities and services (i.e. restaurants, recreational facilities, daycare) that will enhance the quality of life for young families and adults.

*Objective 2:* Attract a workforce required by local business.

4. Investment Readiness - to be the first point of contact for non-residential development projects and business requirements from the Town will ensure a timely and efficient response.

*Objective 1:* Be client-focused, forward-thinking and ready for investment.

*Objective 2:* Be progressive and future focused for development projects that will improve client experiences.

5. Entrepreneurship and small business innovators – to build the presence of Venture13 and tell the story as an integral part of the community will establish it as an economic development and innovation centre.

*Objective 1:* Make Venture13 'the place' for entrepreneurs and innovators in Eastern Ontario.

*Objective 2:* Increase the visibility and value offering of Venture13's VentureZone through marketing and communications.

## Strategy Process

Our process for developing this strategy included five phases, which included establishing project leadership, conducting background research and consulting with the Cobourg business community.

### 1. Project Steering Committee

A Project Steering committee was formed with representatives from:

- Downtown Business Improvement Area
- Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce
- Local businesses
- Post-secondary education
- County economic development
- Arts and culture

### 2. Situational Analysis

An analysis of demographic trends, labour force and employment conditions, business sizes in Cobourg relative to Northumberland County, the Ontario East region and the Province of Ontario.

### 3. Comparator Analysis

An analysis of economic development functions for similar sized municipalities including:

- Grimsby
- Port Colborne
- Collingwood
- Owen Sound
- Midland
- Brockville
- Port Hope

### 4. Literature Review

A review of key Northumberland planning and economic development documents and Cobourg internal plans, including:

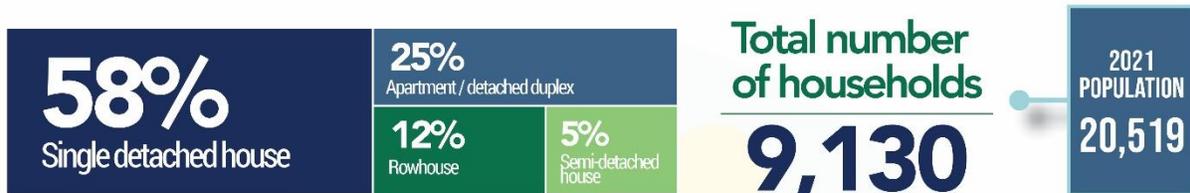
- Northumberland County Official Plan
- Northumberland Economic Development Master Plan
- Town of Cobourg Official Plan
- Town of Cobourg Heritage Master Plan
- Downtown Cobourg Revitalization Plan
- Town of Cobourg Culture Master Plan
- Town of Cobourg Waterfront Master Plan

Economic development strategies from the comparable municipalities were also reviewed.

# Town of Cobourg Economic SNAPSHOT



## 2021 Household and Earnings



Average Dwelling Value 2016 **\$342,139**

Average Dwelling Value 2021 **\$616,500**

An increase of  
**\$274,361 (80.2%)**



Median Household Income

**\$77,000**

ONTARIO MEDIAN  
**\$91,000**

Average Household Income

**\$95,800**

ONTARIO AVERAGE  
**\$116,000**



Local Labour Force

**8,765**

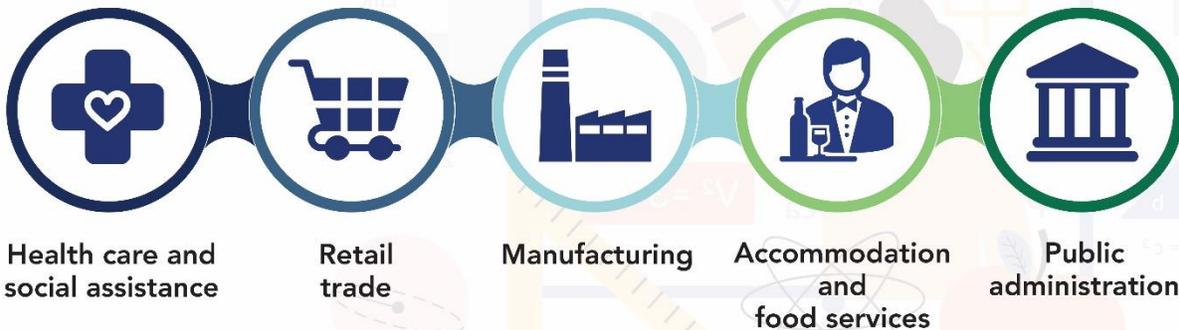
Over  
**740**  
employers

Data Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census.

# Town of Cobourg Economic SNAPSHOT



## Top 5 Sectors by Jobs 2021



## Top 5 Occupations by Jobs 2021



Data Source: Lightcast Analyst, 2021.

## 5. Stakeholder Consultation

Feedback is an essential part of the economic development strategy process. A public consultation process included one-on-one interviews, virtual focus groups and an online community survey. We gathered feedback from:

**17 key stakeholder interviews**  
**2 virtual focus groups from 10 additional stakeholders**  
**85 submissions via EngageCobourg's online survey.**

Five key themes emerged from the feedback.

### **Building up Cobourg: Revitalizing Downtown**

Vibrant and successful downtowns are economic drivers. Downtowns are the historic core and heart of the community. They are the centres for business, culture, heritage, tourism, and government services. The success of a downtown depends on the cooperation and planning between Town Hall, individuals, developers, employers, and institutions.

### **Making Business Boom: Retaining and Showcasing Businesses**

Local business is integral to the strength and resilience of a community. It generates revenue that converts to local taxes, creates jobs for residents, and forms and shapes the community's identity.

### **Growing Up Local: Retention and Attraction of Workforce and Young Families and Adults**

Without the workforce, businesses cannot survive. Having the right services and infrastructure in place will attract the right workforce and young families to Cobourg.

### **Laying the Groundwork: Investment Readiness**

By being investment ready, a community is more prepared to respond in a timely and efficient manner to those types of development opportunities and instills investor confidence in the community.

## **The Next Generation: Support for Entrepreneurs and Business Innovators (Venture13)**

Entrepreneurs and business innovators don't just build businesses and grow their personal wealth, they also impact the economy by creating new jobs and opportunities, driving innovation, and developing new markets, products, and services.

For further details about the Community Consultation Summary Report, refer to Appendix A.

## 2023 to 2028 Action Plan

The following five sections highlight the Action Plan for the Town of Cobourg's Economic Development and Venture13 Strategy and are organized by Strategic Goal. A more comprehensive action plan is included as Appendix B.

### **Our Vision:**

The Town of Cobourg economic development and Venture13 team will be progressive and forward-thinking with a clear and focused vision to move its economy into the future. It will have a strong understanding of the business community and the quality of life that attracts and retains a younger demographic to support local businesses. It will embrace its historical downtown and small-town feel. It will have expanded its industry sectors to ensure that it has a resilient economy.

### **Our Mission/Aspirations:**

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- Improve Town marketing in terms of economic development and Venture13 opportunities and the quality of life offered in Cobourg.
- Attract a young population and workforce for in-demand employment opportunities.
- Have excellent broadband to support business across the Town to be ready for today and into the future.

Goal One: Downtown - to have a downtown that supports not only the local businesses but celebrates our history and culture.

*Objective 1:* Enhance the downtown Cobourg experience.

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate the history and culture of Cobourg through various options including local history events, public art and history displays, and technology focused scavenger hunts.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and Ongoing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit a Public Art Policy ensuring standardized processes to support art projects.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024-2025
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Downtown Streetscaping to be more accessible and pedestrian friendly by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creating a downtown streetscape plan.</li> <li>○ Improving downtown gateway signage and expanding the existing wayfinding signage.</li> <li>○ Repurposing and animating public spaces.</li> <li>○ Animating vacant storefronts to improve their appearance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024-2028
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better connect the Downtown, beach, and the waterfront by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collaborating with an existing company that can provide a bicycle and/or scooter share program</li> <li>○ Establishing locations for kiosks and business opportunities between the downtown and the waterfront.</li> <li>○ Developing a coordinated communications plan for the downtown and beach area parking.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and Ongoing
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a digital downtown business directory using QR codes, app and/or feature the directory on the Town and BIA website.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024-2028
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit the downtown Community Improvement Plan that is specific to funding programs that enable greater residential density and heritage preservation</li> </ul>	Lead	2025-2026

Objective 2: Strengthen partnerships to support business downtown programming.

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the BIA and Town of Cobourg that formalizes roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish regular 'downtown meetups' that focus on hot topics and build community within the BIA businesses.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	Ongoing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Communication Plan (Town and the BIA) to improve communication between all the parties involved in events, programs, and other collaborations to ensure everyone is aware of what is happening in the downtown.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a formal Downtown Working Group with defined goals and objectives in place to plan and implement ideas that bring people to the downtown. This Working Group could include representation from the chamber, tourism, BIA, waterfront and the Town.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024



Goal Two: Existing Businesses - to build a more resilient economy ensuring that the future of Cobourg will be able to withstand any economic downturn.

*Objective 1: Understand the business community and offer future-focussed business support programming.*

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create and distribute monthly e-newsletters that provide current funding programs, showcase local businesses, and provide other pertinent business information.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and ongoing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and track a formal Cobourg-wide Business Calling Program and follow up with business needs in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024 and ongoing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate programming/talks/ events that are business and community oriented and focused on green technology, sustainability, heritage and innovation. (i.e., electric vehicles, solar panels, food waste, sustainable building practices)</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	Ongoing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Town of Cobourg Business directory on an annual basis and present this data in innovative ways.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024 and ongoing

*Objective 2: Have all the elements in place to retain businesses and showcase their successes.*

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop opportunities for businesses to network by               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a Speaker Series event focusing on current and future topics.</li> <li>Creating signature economic development and real estate events.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and ongoing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Showcase successful local businesses, through social media presence and other milestone events.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and ongoing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the feasibility of a district energy facility on vacant land in the Northam Industrial Park.</li> </ul>	Lead	2025

Goal Three: Workforce – to have a strong skilled workforce to support local business will enable them to succeed and will improve youth and workforce engagement.

*Objective 1:* Invest in amenities and services (i.e. restaurants, recreational facilities, daycare) that will enhance the quality of life for young families and adults.

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities to attract affordable housing for the local workforce and families to help with workforce attraction.</li> </ul>	Partner	2023 and ongoing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a New Residents Welcome package and provide this material to representatives from real estate and law firms that work with new residents moving into Cobourg.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable ride share companies (i.e., Uber or Lyft) to expand in Cobourg.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey the youth population about the key community assets that would help to attract youth back to Cobourg after they have completed their post-secondary education.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024

*Objective 2:* Attract a workforce required by local business.

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create materials to promote Venture13's Innovations Commons as a facility for company employees' training and upskilling.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) focused youth programming at Venture13.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and ongoing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a high school co-op experience and paid summer internship program that exposes students to innovation, innovative companies and Venture13 programming.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024 and ongoing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an event to celebrate Canada Summer Job program recipients and their job experiences at local businesses</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and ongoing
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create and support programs that encourage youth to consider opportunities in skilled trades, manufacturing and entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and ongoing

Goal Four: Investment Readiness - to be the first point of contact for non-residential development projects and business requirements from the Town will ensure a timely and efficient response.

*Objective 1: Be client-focused, forward-thinking and ready for investment.*

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software program that works best for the Town of Cobourg’s Economic Development and Venture13 team.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the Invest Cobourg brand and update marketing materials (i.e. community profile, pull up banners, sector profiles, standard investment documents, new Business Welcome Package).</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and 2024
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit the Invest Cobourg website and ensure that the information on the website is current, relevant and implement any changes.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a social media plan that broadcasts on a regular basis current economic development research about the local economy.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing



*Objective 2:* Be progressive and future focused for development projects that will improve client experiences.

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a marketing campaign using search engine optimization (SEO) to indicate the first point of contact for non-residential projects.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a user-friendly flow chart or graphic that directs investors through the steps (i.e., approval process, timelines, etc.) to help them start a business, and/or relocate to Cobourg.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be proactive with investors of non-residential projects to ensure that their projects get completed. Track these non-residential projects.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Review processes and ensure sufficient land allocation and servicing for industrial and business park uses</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024 and 2025
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a systematic service for inbound investment inquiries and regularly follow-up on scheduled increments (i.e. three, six and 12 months).</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve branding and entrance gateway signage for Lucas Point Industrial Park and Northam Industrial Park.</li> </ul>	Lead	2025
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate non-residential property landlords regarding the policies to make it easier to lease their properties.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing

Goal Five: Entrepreneurship and small business innovators – to build the presence of Venture13 and tell the story as an integral part of the community will establish it as an economic development and innovation centre.

*Objective 1: Make Venture13 ‘the place’ for entrepreneurs and innovators in Eastern Ontario.*

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an innovation-based ‘meet up’ for Cobourg businesses at Venture13.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a Cobourg work-from-home newcomers club.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024 and ongoing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Podcast series for Venture13.</li> </ul>	Lead	2024 and ongoing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve Venture13’s exterior signage, interior building aesthetics and infrastructure to create a greater sense of facility pride.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elevate and amplify the founding partners programming to have greater impact in the Cobourg community (i.e. Policetech Accelerator, thriveFORWARD and DELIA Microloan Fund). Celebrate these program successes.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023 and Ongoing
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate Cobourg as a Centre for Policetech</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2025
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit and improve the Venture13 website flow and messaging.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop social media campaigns to improve awareness of Venture13, programs sponsorship opportunities and partners.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024 and ongoing
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-plan the subsequent year for recurring innovation-based programming</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2023-2027

*Objective 2: Increase the visibility and value offering of Venture13's VentureZone through marketing and communications.*

No.	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve program awareness of Venture13's value added service offering.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a standardized, branded Venture13 overview presentation for prospects.</li> </ul>	Lead	2023 and Ongoing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract a greater diversity of VentureZone members.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dedicate a percentage of Venture13's office desks for underrepresented (i.e., BIPOC and female) businesses owners and employees.</li> <li>○ Provide programing for underrepresented (i.e., BIPOC and female) businesses owners and employees.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024 and Ongoing
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broker connections for VentureZone tenants in their final year of residency to land in another larger facility in Cobourg.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024 and Ongoing
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an Entrepreneur-in-Residence Program that will help VentureZone's entrepreneurial businesses scale.</li> </ul>	Lead and Partner	2024

