

May 26, 2020

## **Globally recognized amongst giants**

### **KINGSTON'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM RANKED IN TOP TEN IN CANADA AND MOVES UP SIX SPOTS GLOBALLY**

Kingston, ON – Startup Blink, with offices in Israel and Europe, ranks Kingston as a top-ten startup ecosystem in Canada, while improving its global ranking moving up six spots to make Kingston a Top 150 Startup Ecosystem in the world.

Kingston moves up six spots globally to the #144 startup ecosystem in the world, and moves up one spot nationally to #9 in Canada, surpassing Victoria, BC. “There are very few cities of Kingston’s smaller population that can make it in the Top 150 global ranking. Many of the top ecosystems are from gigantic populous cities with million-plus inhabitants, such as New York City, Los Angeles, and London. An increase of even a single spot in the ranking is a result of tremendous efforts, as Kingston is a much smaller city,” says Andrew Bacchus, Business Development Officer, Kingston Economic Development.

#### ***Collaboration as a model for success***

Collaborations and partnerships have led to Kingston’s improved ranking. Queen’s University, together with Launch Lab and St. Lawrence College, are regional partners to Invest Ottawa in the delivery of the Scale-up Platform in Eastern Ontario, which provides access to [programs, services](#), and resources to entrepreneurs and companies that are advancing science-based, technology-based and/or software-based solutions. Queen’s has recently launched the [WE-CAN Project](#) to strengthen capacity within the entrepreneurship ecosystem and close gaps in service for women entrepreneurs in Kingston and region. Queen’s is collaborating with the Kingston Economic Development Corporation, the City of Kingston, St. Lawrence College, KEYS Job Centre, and L-SPARK to develop and deliver three distinct programming streams that provide eligible women entrepreneurs with additional training and support services focusing on issues that create barriers to successful business creation and growth.

The Queen’s Partnerships and Innovation team launched a new incubator called the Queen’s Startup Runway, which is located at the new Seaway Coworking facility and includes co-location with the Queen’s team, Launch Lab, St. Lawrence College, and the Southeastern Ontario Angel Network – recently ranked as the #1 new angel network in Canada. More than 25 startups are current members of the Queen’s Startup Runway. The Queen’s Partnerships and Innovation team also launched several new accelerators, including a MVP Accelerator in Fall 2019 for entrepreneurs and early stage startups advancing tech solutions and a Growth Accelerator in Winter 2020 for tech-based startups and SMEs poised to grow, as well as Compass North in Spring 2020 for women entrepreneurs in tech and Kwe-Biz, in collaboration with Okwaho Equal Source, in Spring 2020 for Indigenous women entrepreneurs. The WE-CAN Project is building on the momentum of Kingston’s ranking as the #1 city in Canada for women by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, as well as the emergence of female tech leaders, such as Peng Sang Cau, VP Sales and Emerging Markets at ATS Automation, awarded by CASCON x Evoke as one of Canada’s top 19 most prominent innovative technology leaders.

## ***New Startup Infrastructure***

Startup Blink recognizes the strength of coworking facilities in a startup ecosystem. In the past year, unique community coworking spaces have flourished around Kingston, such as: VentureClub Coworking, Seaway Coworking, Sanctuary Coworking, k.work, and Fractal Workspace. Startups and remote businesses of all scales are active tenants of these coworking spaces, working in areas of: health, digital marketing, construction, real estate, arts, cyber tech, and even Shopify customer service.

## ***New investments***

Kingston Economic Development will leverage the Startup Blink ranking to invest in its startup business community. Complimentary tickets will be offered to Kingston startups to virtually attend the tech conference, Collision from Home, to help them to: access investors, generate leads, hire developers, and grow their community. Complimentary tickets will also be offered for Kingston startups, including youth-led startups participating in Summer Company, to attend Startup Canada's Day on the Hill.

An upcoming Kingston Smart Energy Conference (postponed due to COVID-19) will offer a competition for startups in the energy and cleantech space. This builds on the momentum of the startup Li-Cycle, a top 100 global cleantech company selecting Kingston for a first of its kind facility to recycle lithium ion batteries with a new team of more than 20 employees and commencing operations in June.

With support from the Government of Canada through its investments in the Scale-up Platform and the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy Ecosystem Fund, delivered in the region by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), Queen's University and its partners are investing more than \$7 million into the unique programs and services referenced above. Kingston's ecosystem offers significant support and opportunity to entrepreneurs, startups and SMEs that compares with and perhaps exceeds that available in much larger ecosystems.

"Queen's is delighted to accelerate the growth of startups in Kingston by creating and delivering unique programs and services that provide founders with in-depth mentorship and access to numerous resources. We are grateful for federal investments that have allowed us to provide this leadership," says Kim Woodhouse, Vice-Principal Research.

## ***Pivoting during COVID***

During lockdown, the Fractal Workspace community innovated YGK Cares – a peer-to-peer network that supports mental wellness in the business community. Additionally, the startup Kings Distributed Systems – winner of TechCrunch San Francisco's Disruptor Award – launched the COVID-19 platform to model transmission patterns of the COVID-19 virus. SnapCab pivoted its operations to manufacture a brand new product of a medical pod, which required a scale up strategy similar to a new startup. Feris Build Tech, only a few years in operation, also pivoted its tiny house segment to explore micro clinical facilities. A recent startup into Kingston's ecosystem, Tazwiz, saw its expansion plans disrupted due to COVID-19, but generously allocated \$62,500 of its recent fundraiser to support 125 Kingston companies to access student-talent to work on task-based projects common in the scale-up activities of startups.

### ***Continued Support for Startups of all Sizes***

To ensure comprehensive business support, staff at Kingston Economic Development launched new programming with Smith School of Business at Queen's to help startups and businesses navigate the new challenges with the [Kingston Region Business Support Network](#). Kingston Economic Development also altered its funding criteria to assist startup and existing companies with increased access to provincial funding in the Starter Company program.

"The Startup Blink ranking provides inspiration and positively acknowledges Kingston during COVID19. Ensuring Kingston startups are connected to global audiences is important. The Kingston Economic Development Corporation has pursued formal relationships with global and national startup partners including: Startup Canada, NRI Startup India, LatAm Startups, Kingston-Syracuse Pathway and the local sustainable chemical commercialization catalyst FUSE," says Donna Gillespie, CEO, Kingston Economic Development Corporation.

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#### **About Startup Blink**

StartupBlink is the world's most comprehensive startup ecosystem map and research center with a goal to promote startup ecosystem growth around the world by featuring smaller ecosystems that are usually not covered by the press and other research organizations. Once a year, Startup Blink releases the world's most comprehensive Startup Ecosystem Rankings Report with over 1,000 cities and 100 countries ranked by data points in an index ranking. The reports have been downloaded by tens of thousands of decision-makers around the world and receives hundreds of mentions in the global and national press.

## About Kingston Economic Development

[Kingston Economic Development Corporation](#) is focused on building a strong community and supporting Kingston's thriving economy. Its mission is to provide dynamic and collaborative leadership by leveraging Kingston's unique assets to create jobs and investments in order to sustain, grow, and transform Kingston's economy to meet the needs of the 21st century.

## About Queen's University

[Queen's University](#) is one of Canada's leading research institutions, with a history of discovery and innovation. For more than 175 years, Queen's has shaped knowledge and helped address some of the world's most pressing questions. Queen's researchers lead the way in numerous fields, making notable advances recently in particle astrophysics, cancer research, ecological history and environmental change, as well as clean energy technology. Students are an integral part of the vibrant research community, and Queen's research-intensive environment and interdisciplinary program offerings provide students with the comprehensive and nimble skills required in today's competitive and evolving workforce.

The [Queen's University Partnerships and Innovation](#) team develops and facilitates partnerships with industry, governments, not-for-profit organizations, and other academic institutions to advance the research enterprise at Queen's and the commercialization of inventions, and to strengthen the regional innovation ecosystem in Kingston and Eastern Ontario. With support from external funding, the QPI team offers numerous services, resources and programs to support entrepreneurs, including those from Queen's, and to accelerate the growth of startups and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within Kingston and Eastern Ontario.

## About FedDev Ontario

For more than 10 years, [FedDev Ontario](#) has actively worked to advance and diversify the southern Ontario economy through funding opportunities and business services that support innovation and growth in Canada's most populous region. The Agency has delivered impressive results, which can be seen in southern Ontario businesses that are creating innovative technologies, improving their productivity, growing their revenues, and in the economic advancement of communities across the region. Learn more about the impacts the Agency is having in southern Ontario by exploring our [Pivotal Projects](#).