



THE 2025 STARTUP CANADA TOUR:  
YEAR IN REVIEW

# FUELING CANADA'S FOUNDERS

Presented by



# Table of Contents

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Executive Summary	3
A Message from the Interim CEO	4
Startup Stories: What We Heard on Tour	5
Overall Themes Across the 2025 Tour	12
Programming & Engagement Highlights	13
Success Metrics: 2025 Tour Performance	16
Attendee Feedback	17
Key Recommendations for 2026	18
Looking Ahead: Building on 2025 Momentum	19
2025 Partners & Sponsors	20
Tour Exhibitors	22
Stay Connected	23
Ecosystem Resources & Support Organizations	24
How to Access Support	27
Acknowledgments	27

# Executive Summary

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The 2025 Startup Canada Tour marked another pivotal year in supporting Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem, bringing together over 2,700 entrepreneurs, ecosystem leaders, and investors across two dynamic Canadian cities. With stops in Calgary, Alberta (April 29) and Mississauga, Ontario (October 21), the Tour delivered high-impact programming focused on resilience, funding strategies, mental health, emerging technologies, and inclusive entrepreneurship.



## 2025 Startup Canada Tour at a Glance:

- Total In-Person Registrants: 2,041  
(Calgary: 1,034 | Mississauga: 1,007)
- Total In-Person Attendees: 1511  
(Calgary: 748 | Mississauga: 763)
- Virtual Attendees: 724.  
(Mississauga livestream)
- Total Reach: 2,765 entrepreneurs
- Speakers: 45 across both stops
- Expert Mentors: 79 providing one-on-one guidance
- Partners & Exhibitors: 164 supporting the ecosystem
- Volunteers: 46 dedicated community members
- Startup Global Pitch Competition Prize Pool: \$70,000

The Tour successfully fostered meaningful connections for entrepreneurs, delivered actionable insights, and reinforced the importance of community in navigating the challenges and opportunities facing Canadian entrepreneurs today.

# A Message from the Interim CEO

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As we close out 2025, I'm reflecting on a year marked by both continued challenges and remarkable resilience within Canada's entrepreneurial community. Entrepreneurs across the country navigated persistent funding constraints, shifting tariff regulations, rapidly evolving technologies, economic uncertainty, and the ongoing mental health challenges that come with building a business. Yet what consistently stood out was the strength of our community and the power of coming together in person to share knowledge, build relationships, and support one another.

The 2025 Startup Canada Tour brought us to Calgary and Mississauga, where over 2000 entrepreneurs gathered in person and virtually to tackle the real issues facing founders today. The conversations were honest and necessary, from addressing the funding gaps that disproportionately affect women and equity-deserving entrepreneurs, to acknowledging the mental health toll of entrepreneurship, and exploring how emerging technologies like AI can level the playing field for small businesses. These are the discussions that matter, and I was inspired by the openness and vulnerability entrepreneurs showed in sharing their challenges and solutions.

A highlight of this year's Tour was the Startup Global Pitch Competitions, where we had the privilege of supporting Canada's export-ready businesses with over \$70,000 in cash prizes. Watching ten finalists from across the country compete at the Grand Finale in Mississauga reinforced something I see every day: Canadian entrepreneurs are building innovative, globally competitive businesses, and they deserve our unwavering support.

Throughout the year, gaps in support for underrepresented founders remained a central concern. Women, newcomers, Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs continue to face systemic barriers to accessing capital and networks. This isn't just an equity issue; it's an economic issue. When we fail to support diverse founders, tremendous innovation and economic growth is unrealized. The 2025 Startup Canada Tour was designed to address these gaps, bringing together diverse partners, ecosystem supporters, keynote speakers, and mentors who each shared their own inspiring stories, practical solutions, and tangible support for underrepresented founders.

As we look toward 2026, we remain committed to building a more inclusive, connected, and supportive ecosystem for all Canadian entrepreneurs. Together, through authentic relationships, practical resources, and sustained advocacy, we can ensure that every Canadian founder, regardless of background or location, has the opportunity to build, scale, and thrive.



**Jenn Juby,**  
Interim CEO,  
Startup Canada

# Startup Stories: What We Heard on Tour

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## Calgary, Alberta

On April 29th, over 740 entrepreneurs from across Alberta and Western Canada came together at the BMO Centre for the Calgary stop of the 2025 Startup Canada Tour, creating an inspirational hub buzzing with ideas, energy, and the collective wisdom of both seasoned leaders and first-time founders. The day unfolded as a powerful catalyst for connection and learning, offering a deep dive into the critical challenges and exhilarating triumphs of building a business in today's dynamic landscape.

Startup Canada's CEO, Kayla Isabelle, kicked off the day by underlining the value of in-person connection. "This isn't just another event. This is where you meet the people who are going to shape your journey." The message was clear: entrepreneurs thrive in community, not in isolation. Representatives from the Hunter Family Foundation, the University of Calgary, and Platform Calgary echoed this sentiment, celebrating the strength of Calgary's entrepreneurial ecosystem and the importance of funding, mentorship, and collaboration.

A highlight of the Calgary stop was Brett Colvin's keynote, "Burning Boats & Building Empires." The Co-founder of Goodlawyer ignited the audience with powerful anecdotes and a call to embrace discomfort. Drawing parallels to figures like Oprah and Walt Disney, who faced setbacks before achieving legendary success, Colvin emphasized that "If you wanna take the island, burn the boat," highlighting the necessity of unwavering commitment. He challenged the notion of comfort-driven founders, stating, "Great founders aren't driven by comfort... they're driven by the discomfort of doubt." With vivid imagery, he described startups as "pirate ships, scrappy, risky, underfunded," where survival and a shared belief in a world-changing vision are the driving forces.



The day featured dynamic panel discussions on emerging technologies, where experts from PwC, Ammolite Security, and Constant Contact explored the transformative power of AI while cautioning about data privacy. "If you aren't paying for something, you are the product," Danielle Gifford from PwC reminded attendees, emphasizing the importance of protecting intellectual property from day one. A powerful fireside chat on mental health brought Bobbie Racette of Virtual Gurus and Dr. Ryan Todd of Headversity to the stage, where they bravely addressed the isolation and pressure entrepreneurs face. "I didn't come this far just to come this far," Racette shared, while Dr. Todd emphasized proactive mental health skills and consciously choosing your sacrifices.

Calgary also hosted a Startup Global Pop-up Pitch Competition, where finalists competed live on the mainstage for a \$3,000 cash prize and a coveted spot in the Grand Finale in Mississauga. Braden Haley, of Summit Dogwear, secured first place, while Valeria del Valle, founder of RIZADO, won the People's Choice Award.

"This isn't just another event. This is where you meet the people who are going to shape your journey."  
- Kayla Isabelle, CEO of Startup Canada

## What We Heard in Calgary

Calgary's entrepreneurial community demonstrated exceptional energy and openness throughout the day, creating space for honest conversations about the realities of building a business in today's landscape. Several powerful themes emerged that resonated deeply with attendees and shaped the discussions both on the mainstage and in networking sessions. The seven main themes discovered were:

### 1. Commitment and Resilience Define Success

The message of unwavering commitment echoed throughout the day. From Brett Colvin's "burn the boats" metaphor to Bobbie Racette's declaration that she didn't "come this far just to come this far," entrepreneurs were reminded that building something meaningful requires total commitment and the willingness to embrace discomfort. The path isn't linear, setbacks are inevitable, and comfort isn't the goal; impact is. Participants left with renewed understanding that resilience isn't just about bouncing back; it's about maintaining belief in your vision even when the way forward isn't clear.

## 2. Mental Health Must Be Part of the Conversation

The fireside chat on mental health drew significant engagement and created a rare moment of vulnerability in a typically "hustle-focused" environment. Entrepreneurs opened up about isolation, the pressure to project success on social media, and the toll of the "always-on" founder lifestyle. Dr. Ryan Todd's advice to consciously "choose your sacrifice" and identify your support network resonated strongly. As Paul Gaspar framed it: "Mental health and entrepreneurship need to be part of the same conversation. We celebrate grit and growth, but we also need to support the people doing the growing." Attendees left with a renewed understanding that seeking help isn't a weakness, but instead an essential component for sustainable entrepreneurship.

## 3. Technology Offers Opportunity, But Privacy and Security Must Come First

While AI and emerging technologies offer tremendous potential for small businesses, Calgary panellists emphasized the importance of starting with the problem, not the tool. Cara Wolf's reminder that "your IP, your communications, your ideas, those are all worth protecting from day one" hit home for many early-stage founders who hadn't yet considered cybersecurity. The message was clear: don't be intimidated by new technologies, but be smart about data privacy, understand what you're giving up when using "free" tools, and focus on solving specific challenges rather than accumulating unused software subscriptions.

## 4. DEI Is an Economic Imperative, Not a Checkbox

The session on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion reinforced that inclusive entrepreneurship isn't just the right thing to do; it's essential for economic prosperity and innovation. Dennis Agbegha set the tone by emphasizing that DEI is a fundamental driver of future business success. When we fail to support underrepresented founders, we leave tremendous innovation and economic potential on the table. Calgary's ecosystem showed a strong commitment to moving beyond performative allyship to creating tangible, equitable opportunities.

## 5. You Don't Need a Big Budget to Prove Your Market

Nathan Yeung's session on marketing without a budget was a standout, offering practical relief to bootstrapped founders. His message that "no money is not an excuse" and his emphasis on momentum over budget ("momentum is the compound interest of grinding") gave entrepreneurs permission to start where they are. The focus shifted from what founders lack to what they can control: creativity, focus, customer conversations, and consistent effort. Attendees left with renewed confidence that they can validate their market even when resources are limited.



## 6. Authentic Relationships Are the Real Currency

From Jeff Mitchell's advice to "spend more time talking to your customers than to your competition," to April Hicke's emphasis that "relationships are everything. Nothing is transactional," the value of authentic connection was woven throughout the day. In the Ask the Expert Lounge, during the Women's Breakfast Networking session, and in hallway conversations, entrepreneurs built genuine relationships rooted in shared challenges and mutual support. Calgary demonstrated that the strongest ecosystems aren't built on transactional networking; they're built on real relationships.

## 7. Know Your Numbers and Your Value

The financing strategies panel drove home the importance of financial literacy for new entrepreneurs. Before seeking funding, founders must honestly ask themselves: "Is this a business or just an expensive hobby?" They need to understand their value proposition, be prepared to articulate their vision clearly, and "be shameless" about building relationships with potential lenders and investors. The panel emphasized that funding isn't just about having a great idea; it's about demonstrating that you understand the business fundamentals and have done your homework thoroughly.

Participants left Calgary feeling energized and equipped with actionable strategies. One attendee reflected, "The energy in the room was incredible. Hearing real stories from founders who've been where I am, the failures, the pivots, the mental health struggles, it all gave me the confidence to keep going. I'm not alone in this."

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## Mississauga, Ontario

The 2025 Startup Canada Tour made its final destination stop in Mississauga on October 21st, bringing together over 750 in-person attendees at the Living Arts Centre and over 700 virtual participants from across Canada. This hybrid event created a powerhouse gathering of founders, investors, and ecosystem leaders, sparking conversation, connection, and candid discussion about what it takes to scale a business in Canada. The day was packed with lessons, from the gritty reality of early-stage funding to embracing failure as a critical component of success.



Michele Romanow, Dragon on CBC's Dragon's Den and Co-Founder of Clearco, kicked off the day with an inspiring keynote, "From Idea to Impact: My Journey Building a Business." She reminded the audience that entrepreneurship is messy and that "all the planning can't prevent failure." Drawing on her early venture, a luxury caviar farm, she shared her journey from pitching investors to realizing the massive capital requirements, highlighting how even unsuccessful ventures teach essential resilience and leadership. "There isn't one great idea; there are hundreds of iterations from where you started," Romanow shared, emphasizing the importance of getting scrappy and embracing the messiness of entrepreneurship.

The day featured powerful panel discussions on emerging technologies, with Kate Karn from Mastercard Canada moderating a conversation with Amanda Parker of Constant Contact and Ali Taiyeb of Vector Institute and the Chair of Startup Canada's Board. The panel reassured founders that it has "never been easier to start a business" thanks to accessible AI technology. Ali noted, "Never been a better time to build a business," highlighting the potential to research, automate mundane tasks, and scale globally from a laptop. The panellists encouraged entrepreneurs to start small, experiment with tools, and remember: "Ask Chat GPT how to use it. Give it a problem and ask for a solution."

A fireside chat on mental health brought Rachel Wong of Monday Girl and Sanjay Singhal of Audiobooks.com to the stage, moderated by Paul Gaspar of UPS Canada. They delivered essential perspectives on the mental load of entrepreneurship, introducing the "95% Rule," roughly 95% of what you try will fail, but the 5% that succeeds builds your company. The conversation emphasized breaking isolation, seeking support, and remembering that the entrepreneurial journey isn't as glamorous as social media often suggests.

"Clearing the Path: Entrepreneurs on Overcoming Obstacles" brought together Bilqees Grant of Helius Originals, Eddy Bucardo of Unchained Athletics, and Nicole Teschl of SowSweet Greetings for an unfiltered conversation about the barriers they've faced, from accessing capital to building essential networks. Moderated by Priya Tshering Kabo of Pizza Hut Canada, the panel addressed what strategies actually worked, what didn't, and how the broader ecosystem can better uplift and sustain entrepreneurs starting and growing businesses.

"Leadership is not a birthright."  
- Wes Hall



Wes Hall, CEO of Kingsdale Advisors and Founder of The BlackNorth Initiative, delivered a deeply personal keynote, "The Power of Starting with Nothing." He shared how his grandmother's resourcefulness, raising 10 children on a plantation worker's salary, taught him core entrepreneurial truths about maximizing value and quality. Hall challenged the audience to redefine success, nurture confidence in stakeholders, motivate their people, and give back. He concluded with a powerful message: "Leadership is not a birthright."

The day also featured critical sessions on financing strategies, with speakers from Competition Bureau Canada, BDC, FXO Consulting, and IDEA Mississauga providing insights on data readiness, the importance of grants, and the coming impact of Open Banking on SME access to capital. A panel on scaling in Mississauga showcased local innovators from life sciences, cybersecurity, and advanced tech, sharing their journeys from early-stage ideation to M&A exits.

Jenn Harper, Founder and CEO of Cheekbone Beauty, closed the day with an inspiring keynote, "Helping the World See Indigenous Faces." She described turning personal tragedy, the sudden loss of her brother, into powerful advocacy. After a successful pop-up where she interacted with Indigenous children who had never seen themselves represented in beauty campaigns, Harper understood the profound importance of her work. Her brand's focus on Indigenous culture, representation, and sustainability demonstrates how purpose-driven business models create deeper meaning that resonates with customers and drives sustainable success.

Mississauga's Startup Global Pop-up Pitch Competition Finals shone a spotlight on innovative entrepreneurs. Ranah Chavoshi, Co-Founder & CEO of [PhyCo Technologies Inc.](#), was named the first-place winner, taking home \$30,000! [Joeydolls](#), founded by Samantha Ong, earned the second-place prize, winning \$15,000. [GrownStone](#), pitched by Adrian Simone, took third place, collecting \$7,500. Finally, PhyCo Technologies Inc. was also voted the 2025 People's Choice Award winner, securing an additional \$2,500 cash prize!

## What We Heard in Mississauga

Mississauga's stop reinforced many themes from Calgary while adding new dimensions to the conversation, particularly around overcoming systemic obstacles, financial preparedness, and building businesses with purpose. The hybrid format allowed virtual participants from across Canada to engage, extending the impact beyond the GTA. Some of the main themes uncovered in Mississauga were:

### 1. Failure Is Inevitable, And Invaluable

Michele Romanow set the tone from the opening keynote: failure isn't something to fear or avoid; it's an essential teacher. Her caviar farm story resonated because it was real, a venture that didn't succeed but taught her invaluable lessons about capital requirements, pivoting, and scrappy resourcefulness. The "95% Rule" from the mental health panel reinforced this: most of what you try won't work, but those failures create the foundation for the 5% that does. Entrepreneurs are left with permission to fail, learn, and iterate without shame.

### 2. The Mental Health Reality Check

Building on Calgary's mental health conversation, Mississauga dove deeper into the isolation and pressure of entrepreneurship. Founders openly discussed the gap between social media's highlight reel and the daily grind. The message was clear: talking about struggles isn't weakness, it's how we break the isolation that makes entrepreneurship so difficult. One attendee reflected, "Realizing I'm not alone in feeling overwhelmed was powerful. Telling others you're struggling helps others come forward with their own challenges."

### 3. Systemic Barriers Are Real And Must Be Addressed

The "Clearing the Path" panel brought uncomfortable truths to the surface. Women, Black, Indigenous, and other equity-deserving entrepreneurs face compounded barriers: limited access to capital, smaller networks, and bias from investors who perceive them as "riskier" despite evidence showing they often outperform when funded. The discussion didn't just identify problems; it challenged the ecosystem to do better. Founders shared what actually worked for them, and the message to support organizations, investors, and government was clear: we need more than acknowledgment. We need action, accountability, and systemic change.

#### **4. Financial Preparedness Is Non-Negotiable**

Multiple sessions emphasized that founders must deeply understand their numbers before seeking external capital. As one panellist posed an important question for entrepreneurs: "Is this a business or just an expensive hobby?" The financing sessions stressed data readiness, knowing your costs and margins, maintaining cash reserves, separating business and personal accounts, and validating your idea with your target market before approaching lenders. The upcoming Open Banking framework promises to increase competition and give SMEs faster access to customized financial products, but preparedness remains key.

#### **5. Technology Levels the Playing Field**

The emerging technologies panel reinforced that AI and digital tools have dramatically lowered barriers to entry. Founders can now research markets, automate routine tasks, create marketing content, and scale globally from a laptop. The advice was practical: don't be intimidated, start simple, focus on solving specific problems, and ask AI itself how to use it. The message resonated particularly with solo founders and bootstrapped startups who now have access to tools that were once only available to well-funded companies.

#### **6. Purpose and Profit Can, and Should, Coexist**

Jenn Harper's closing keynote on representation and Cheekbone Beauty's mission left a lasting impact. Her story demonstrated that businesses built on authentic values, cultural identity, and clear purpose don't sacrifice profitability; they enhance it. When your "why" is clear and genuine, it creates deeper customer loyalty, attracts aligned team members, and drives meaningful impact alongside financial success. Purpose-driven entrepreneurship isn't a trend; it's a sustainable path forward.

#### **7. Community Is What Carries Us Through**

From the Women's Breakfast Networking to the Ask the Expert Lounge to the Entrepreneur Support Zone, Mississauga reinforced that authentic relationships are essential. Laïla Thériault's quote from the 2024 Moncton stop still rang true: "The best thing about our ecosystem is that everyone is helping everyone! People know who the right person is to help you." Mississauga entrepreneurs embraced this spirit, building connections that extended beyond business cards to genuine mutual support.

#### **8. Regional Ecosystems Have Unique Strengths**

The "Scaling in Sauga" panel, moderated by Donna Heslin, PhD (Manager, Small Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, IDEA Mississauga), highlighted how Mississauga's diverse, sector-rich ecosystem supports high-growth ventures across life sciences, cybersecurity, and advanced tech. Local resources, proximity to Toronto's infrastructure, and a collaborative community create unique advantages for founders at every stage from validation to M&A.

Attendees left Mississauga energized and connected. One participant shared:

"Every presentation was inspiring, transparent, and unique. It was worth my entire day, connecting with great people from different backgrounds and experiences. What an incredible experience attending this event with inspiring people driving innovation and growth!"

# Overall Themes Across the 2025 Tour

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While Calgary and Mississauga each brought their own regional character and focus areas, several powerful key themes emerged consistently across both stops, revealing the core challenges and opportunities facing Canadian entrepreneurs today:

## **Resilience Through Failure**

From Brett Colvin's "burn the boats" to Michele Romanow's caviar farm story to the "95% Rule," both cities reinforced that failure isn't the opposite of success; it's part of the path to success. Entrepreneurs need permission to fail, learn, iterate, and keep going.

## **Mental Health as a Priority**

Both stops featured powerful mental health conversations that broke through the typical "hustle culture" narrative. Founders openly discussed isolation, pressure, and burnout, while experts provided practical tools for building resilience and choosing support networks.

## **Capital Access Gaps Persist**

Funding challenges dominated discussions at both stops, with particular emphasis on the barriers facing women and equity-deserving entrepreneurs. The ecosystem must move beyond acknowledging these gaps to implementing systemic solutions.

## **Technology as an Equalizer**

AI and emerging technologies were celebrated at both events as tools that level the playing field for small businesses, but with important caveats about privacy, security, and choosing the right problems to solve.

## **DEI as Economic Strategy**

Both cities reinforced that inclusive entrepreneurship isn't just about equity; it's about unlocking innovation and economic potential that's currently being left on the table.

## **Authentic Community Matters Most**

Across every session, networking opportunity, and casual conversation, the value of genuine relationships emerged as the thread that ties everything together. Entrepreneurs don't just need resources and knowledge; they need community.

# Programming & Engagement Highlights

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Beyond the mainstage sessions, the 2025 Tour offered multiple touchpoints for entrepreneurs to connect with experts, discover resources, and build relationships that extend beyond the event day.

## Ask the Expert Lounge

The Ask the Expert Lounge returned in 2025 with expanded capacity and specialized tracks, providing entrepreneurs with one-on-one guidance from industry experts. With dedicated time slots throughout both Tour stops, founders could leverage the individual time to focus on their specific challenges and receive tailored, actionable advice.

Topics Covered:

- Marketing & Brand Strategy
- Financial Planning & Bookkeeping
- Legal Structures & Contracts
- Export & International Trade
- Technology Integration & Cybersecurity
- IP Protection & Commercialization
- HR & Team Building
- Pitch Deck Review

77 mentor sessions were conducted across both stops, with entrepreneurs receiving personalized guidance on everything from refining their value proposition to navigating complex legal questions to preparing for investor conversations.



## Women's Breakfast Networking

Powered by the Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC), these dedicated morning networking sessions at both the Calgary and Mississauga tour stops created intentional spaces for women-identifying entrepreneurs to connect, share experiences, and build supportive relationships. Held before the main programming began, these intimate gatherings fostered mentorship connections and peer networks in an environment designed specifically for women founders.

Many attendees cited these sessions as highlights of their Tour experience. The breakfasts provided safe spaces for honest conversations about the unique challenges women entrepreneurs face and created lasting connections that extend beyond the event.

## Entrepreneur Support Zone

Both venues featured dedicated Entrepreneur Support Zones where national, provincial, and local ecosystem organizations showcased their programs, resources, and funding opportunities. This "one-stop hub" allowed entrepreneurs to discover support tailored to their stage, industry, and demographics, from early-stage mentorship programs to industry-specific accelerators to specialized funding for diverse founders.

Participating Organizations: Over 100 exhibitors across both stops, including:

- Accelerators and incubators
- Funding organizations (angels, VCs, grants)
- Government programs (federal, provincial, municipal)
- Industry associations
- Specialized support for women, Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQI+, and newcomer entrepreneurs
- Export and trade organizations
- Legal and accounting services
- Technology and cybersecurity providers

The Support Zones created valuable connections between entrepreneurs and the organizations designed to help them succeed, with many founders discovering resources they didn't know existed and an opportunity to take advantage of exclusive Tour offers made available from some partners and support organizations.



## Workshops

Practical, hands-on workshops provided entrepreneurs with immediately applicable skills and strategies, moving beyond theory to tactical implementation.

### Calgary Workshops:

- Tips to Reduce Shopping Cart Abandonment (Paul Gaspar, UPS Canada) - E-commerce strategies for converting browsers into buyers
- From Dream to Launch: A Roadmap to Go from Idea to Reality (Jeff Mitchell, Lane Two) - Practical frameworks for turning ideas into launched businesses
- Prove Your Market: Marketing without a Budget (Nathan Yeung, Find Your Audience) - Resourceful marketing strategies for bootstrapped founders

### Mississauga Workshops:

- Tips to Reduce Shopping Cart Abandonment (Paul Gaspar, UPS Canada) - E-commerce best practices for maximizing conversions
- Financial readiness and preparation sessions - Understanding your numbers before seeking funding
- Cross-border entrepreneurship and exporting strategies - Navigating U.S. market entry and international growth

These workshops complemented the mainstage programming by giving founders hands-on time to work through specific challenges with expert guidance.



# Success Metrics: 2025 Tour Performance

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## Attendance & Reach

### In-Person Registrants:

- Calgary: 1,034
- Mississauga: 1,007
- Total In-Person Registrants: 2,041

### In-Person Attendance

- Calgary: 748
- Mississauga: 763
- Total In-Person Attendees: 1511

### Virtual Attendance:

- Mississauga Livestream: 724

### Total Reach:

- 2,765 entrepreneurs

## Startup Canada Tour Community Engagement

- Speakers: 47
- Expert Mentors: 77
- Partners & Exhibitors: 164
- Volunteers: 46
- Representation:
  - Calgary: 20 speakers | 70% from equity deserving groups | 11 women
  - Calgary: 38 mentors | 58% from equity deserving groups | 17 women
  - Mississauga: 25 speakers | 84% from equity deserving groups | 15 women
  - Mississauga: 41 mentors | 68% from equity deserving groups | 24 women

## Media & Online Engagement

- Media Mentions: 644
- Social Media Impressions: 1,185, 738
- Website Visits: 46,481



# Attendee Feedback

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The 2025 Tour generated overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, who valued the opportunity to connect with fellow entrepreneurs, access expert guidance, and gain actionable insights for their businesses.

## Calgary Attendee Reflections:

*"It was very well organized. The venue was amazing. The sound system on the main stage was excellent. The catering was amazing. The entire event was done with excellence. Can't wait for next year."*

*"Amazing event. Well organized. Attendees were great. Volunteers are great."*

*"Great event, and great venue. Thank you for the opportunity!"*

*"It is the respect that has been grown and garnered by the Startup Canada team that makes the event shine. Well done!"*

*"EVERYTHING was top-notch - thank you."*

*"Well done! Thanks for all your hard work!"*

*"I absolutely enjoyed the event! Thank you so much!!!"*

*"Absolutely excellent event!!"*

*"Amazing event, thank you. Food was great and event was awesome. Lot of value and encouragement."*



## Mississauga Attendee Reflections:

*"I truly enjoyed the event yesterday and found it very valuable to connect with the right people for my startup journey."*

*"Ever walked into a room and instantly felt the energy of hundreds of dreamers building the future? That's exactly what it felt like at the Startup Canada Tour in Mississauga, where startup founders, company CEOs, and thought leaders gathered to fuel innovation and drive growth."*

*"Hi Startup Canada team, I wanted to send a quick note to say thank you for such an inspiring event this week, especially the Women's Breakfast and the Women's Networking sessions. It was genuinely powerful to be surrounded by so many purpose-driven founders and to witness what I called 'the bright side of capitalism... that folks are rewarded financially for solving problems.' Yesterday, I met entrepreneurs who: made plastic out of seaweed so we stop eating microplastics, created a dog leash that lasts for years, and designed a chewable gum that 'brushes' your teeth. That experience reminded me that 'there is a good side of capitalism, and I got to witness it.' I left feeling hopeful about what's possible when innovation meets integrity."*

*"I was one of the Mississauga finalists, and... it was truly an incredible experience :)"*

*"The tour was amazing, loved the networking part the best... Loved the speaker this year!!"*

*"Keep up the good work."*

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## Key Recommendations for 2026

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Based on attendee feedback, observed engagement patterns, and overall input, we will apply the following attendee recommendations for the 2026 Startup Canada Tour:

- Expand Networking Opportunities - Networking was identified as the most valuable activity by 31.2% of respondents
- Increase Ask the Expert Lounge Capacity - With 22.1% identifying mentorship as most valuable, and high demand observed at both stops
- Maintain High Standards for Speaker and Mentor Diversity
- Leverage Ecosystem Partnerships for Promotion - 19.1% of attendees learned about the Tour through other entrepreneur support organizations
- Continue Mental Health and Wellbeing Focus
- Integrate Technology Thoughtfully
- Optimize Hybrid Delivery at the Final Tour Stop - 724 virtual attendees for Mississauga demonstrated demand for remote access

# Looking Ahead: Building on 2025 Momentum

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The 2025 Startup Canada Tour demonstrated the enduring power of in-person connection and the critical role of community in supporting entrepreneurial success. As we look to 2026, we carry forward several key commitments:

Our Ongoing Commitment:

## **Inclusive Entrepreneurship**

We will continue prioritizing support for women, Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQI+, and newcomer entrepreneurs through dedicated programming, representation, and resources.

## **Capital Access**

We will strengthen connections between entrepreneurs and investors, provide pitch readiness support, and advocate for more equitable funding practices.

## **Practical, Actionable Learning**

We will continue delivering content that entrepreneurs can immediately implement, from workshops on specific skills to candid conversations with founders who've walked the path.

## **Mental Health & Wellbeing**

We will expand conversations and resources around founder mental health, recognizing that sustainable businesses require sustainable founders.

## **Community Building**

We will create more opportunities for authentic, non-transactional relationship building through structured networking, founder circles, and year-round digital community platforms.



# 2025 Partners & Sponsors

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The 2025 Startup Canada Tour was made possible through the generous support of partners committed to Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem. These organizations provided financial support, in-kind resources, expertise, and connections that enabled us to deliver high-impact programming accessible to entrepreneurs across the country.

## **Presenting Partners**

- UPS Canada: As a Presenting Partner, UPS Canada brought expertise in logistics, shipping, and e-commerce to help entrepreneurs scale their operations and reach customers globally.
- Pizza Hut Equal Slice: Showed up this year by supporting inclusive entrepreneurship and community building throughout the Tour, and through the Startup Canada Equal Slice program.

## **Exclusive Mainstage Partner**

- Scotiabank: As Exclusive Mainstage Partner, Scotiabank supported the main programming and provided financial expertise to entrepreneurs at both Calgary and Mississauga tour stops.

## **Event Partners**

- BDC (Business Development Bank of Canada)
- Constant Contact
- Mastercard Canada
- Wagepoint
- Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC)
- Futurpreneur
- RBC (Royal Bank of Canada)
- Dayforce Powerpay (Mississauga)
- Government of Ontario (Mississauga)
- IDEA Mississauga (Mississauga)
- Visit Mississauga (Mississauga)

## **Exclusive Entrepreneur Support Zone Partner**

- RBC (Royal Bank of Canada): Creating a dedicated space for entrepreneur support and providing professional headshot services.

## **Program Partners**

- Competition Bureau Canada
- Hunter Hub (Calgary)
- Lane Two (National - appearing in Calgary materials)
- TD (Mississauga)
- Econsulate (Mississauga)
- University of Calgary (Calgary)

### **Production Partner**

- Encore - Production Partner in Calgary, providing world-class audio-visual and event production services.

### **National Ecosystem Partners (Both Stops)**

- The Peak
- Media Partner extending the Tour's reach through coverage and storytelling.
- League of Innovators
- Supporting youth entrepreneurship and innovation programming at both tour stops.
- CGLCC (Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce)
- Ecosystem Partner championing 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and inclusive business practices at both Calgary and Mississauga.

### **Calgary Ecosystem Partners**

- Platform Calgary - Supporting Calgary's innovation ecosystem
- University of Calgary - Academic and research partner
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) - Post-secondary institution supporting entrepreneurship education
- Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) - Supporting women-led businesses in Alberta
- Startup Grind Calgary - Global community for entrepreneurs with local Calgary presence
- Mammoth Agency - Supporting marketing and brand strategy
- The Grant Sherpa - Providing guidance on funding and grant opportunities
- Supplier Diversity Alliance Canada (SDAC) - Promoting diverse supplier relationships
- Startupfest - Connecting Calgary entrepreneurs to broader startup ecosystem
- Lane Two - Supporting entrepreneurship programming

### **Mississauga Ecosystem Partners**

- Brampton Angels - Angel investment network supporting regional entrepreneurs
- Brampton Innovation District - Fostering innovation in the Brampton-Mississauga corridor
- H&R Block - Providing tax and financial expertise for entrepreneurs
- Immigrant Entrepreneur Canada - Supporting newcomer entrepreneurs
- Ivory Studio Booth - Professional photography and branding services
- Ownr - Business incorporation and legal services platform
- Riipen - Connecting entrepreneurs with post-secondary talent
- Sheridan Edge - Sheridan College's entrepreneurship and innovation hub
- The Conrad School of Entrepreneurship and Business - University of Waterloo's entrepreneurship school
- The Forum - Innovation and entrepreneurship community space
- The John F Wood Centre at the University of Guelph - Supporting entrepreneurship education
- Toronto Metropolitan University - Academic partner supporting entrepreneurship

### **Community Partner**

- Essential HR (Mississauga)- In-kind partner providing human resources expertise and support for Mississauga entrepreneurs.

These partnerships represent a network of organizations committed to supporting entrepreneurs at every stage, from ideation through scaling and international expansion. We are grateful for their collaboration in building a stronger entrepreneurial Canada.

# Tour Exhibitors

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The 2025 Tour featured exhibitors across Calgary and Mississauga, creating vibrant marketplaces where entrepreneurs could connect with service providers, ecosystem organizations, and fellow business owners.

## Calgary Exhibitors

AIIC, Alberta Innovates, Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), ATB Financial, BDC, Bloomin' Bliss & Spa Works, CAIN, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), Calgary Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Women's Chamber of Commerce (CanWCC), Competition Bureau, Constant Contact, e=mc2, Futurpreneur, Greenstead Naturals, Hunter Hub, Maple Scan, MyAreaa, Natura Dura, Nexus Exhibits, Pizza Hut Equal Slice, Platform Calgary, QueerTech, RBC, SAVCA, Scotiabank, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), Startup TNT, Summit Dogwear, Supplier Diversity Alliance Canada (SDAC), Susgrainable, Taste the City, TD Women in Enterprise, TELUS Business, The51, UPS, Virtual Gurus, Wagepoint, WEDO Canada, Women's Enterprise Organization of Canada (WEOC), YWCA Calgary.

## Mississauga Exhibitors

5REDO, Altitude Accelerator, Ami & Jiarra, AnyCognition Inc., BDC, Brampton Angels, Brampton Innovation District, Canadian Small Business Women, Canadian Women's Chamber of Commerce (CanWCC), Competition Bureau, Constant Contact, Dayforce Powerpay, Essential HR, Everbella, FACE, Futurpreneur, Growclass, H&R Block, IDEA Mississauga, Immigrant Entrepreneur Canada, Ivory Studio Booth, Love Lyla Books, Mixing Babies And Business, Now in Rio, Office of the Privacy Commissioner, Ownr, Palette Skills, PARO, PINBOX, Pizza Hut Equal Slice, Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC), RBC, Riipen, Scotiabank, Sheridan Edge, TD, The Conrad School of Entrepreneurship and Business, The Forum, The John F Wood Centre at the University of Guelph, The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Tiger-Nut, Toronto Metropolitan University, UPS, Visit Mississauga, Wagepoint, Women's Enterprise Organization of Canada (WEOC), Zensurance.



# Stay Connected

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The Startup Canada Tour is more than just an event; it's part of a year-round commitment to supporting entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey.

## Join Our Community:

- Subscribe to the Startup Canada mailing list for updates on 2026 Tour dates and programming
- Follow @StartupCanada on social media (Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, X)
- Access free resources through our Startup Women, Startup Global, Startup Gov, Startup Podcast and Startup Canada Equal Slice programs

## Get Involved:

- Become a partner or sponsor, email [partnerships@startupcan.ca](mailto:partnerships@startupcan.ca)
- Volunteer for on-site event support
- Apply to be a mentor, speaker, or expert
- Share your founder story to inspire others
- Spread the word about the Tour in your networks

## For More Information:

- Website: [startupcan.ca](http://startupcan.ca)
- General Inquiries: [hello@startupcan.ca](mailto:hello@startupcan.ca)
- Media Inquiries: [press@startupcan.ca](mailto:press@startupcan.ca)



# Ecosystem Resources & Support Organizations

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The 2025 Startup Canada Tour brought together a diverse network of organizations dedicated to empowering Canadian entrepreneurs. From funding and mentorship to training and ecosystem support, these partners are here to help you navigate the challenges of building and scaling your business.

## Exclusive Startup Canada Resources

- [2SLGBTQIA+ Resource Guide](#)
- [Resources for Indigenous Entrepreneurs](#)
- [Support Organizations Helping Women Entrepreneurs](#)
- [Resources for Black Entrepreneurs](#)
- [10 Organizations to Help You Export Your Business](#)
- [Startup Women Resource Guide](#)
- [Startup Global Resource Guide](#)
- [Startup Gov Resource Guide](#)
- [Cybersecurity Guide for Canadian Small Business Owners](#)

## National Organizations

### Financial Support & Investment

- BDC (Business Development Bank of Canada)
- Futurpreneur Canada
- RBC (Royal Bank of Canada)
- Scotiabank
- TD Bank
- ATB Financial

### Business Services & Tools

- UPS Canada
- Constant Contact
- Wagepoint
- Dayforce Powerpay
- H&R Block
- Ownr
- Riipen
- Essential HR
- Zensurance

### Ecosystem & Community Support

- Competition Bureau Canada
- Pizza Hut Equal Slice Program
- Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC)
- Supplier Diversity Alliance Canada (SDAC)
- Women's Enterprise Organization of Canada (WEOC)
- Canadian Women's Chamber of Commerce (CanWCC)
- Canadian Small Business Women
- League of Innovators
- The Peak
- Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC)
- Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada

## **Technology & Innovation**

- Mastercard Canada
- TELUS Business

## **Exporting & Trade**

- Trade Commissioner Service
- Export Development Canada (EDC)

## **Sector-Specific Support**

- Black Business and Professional Association
- Indigenous Tech Circle
- Diversity Institute
- Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH)

## **Provincial Organizations**

### **Alberta**

- Platform Calgary
- University of Calgary
- Hunter Hub (University of Calgary)
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)
- Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE)
- Alberta Innovates
- Startup Grind Calgary
- Mammoth Agency
- The Grant Sherpa
- Calgary Chamber of Commerce
- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS)
- YWCA Calgary
- Startup TNT
- QueerTech
- The51
- Virtual Gurus
- WEDO Canada
- ATB Financial
- CAIN (Canadian Autism Intervention Network)
- SAVCA

### **Ontario**

- IDEA Mississauga
- Visit Mississauga
- Brampton Angels
- Brampton Innovation District
- Altitude Accelerator
- Immigrant Entrepreneur Canada
- Ivory Studio Booth
- Sheridan Edge (Sheridan College)
- Toronto Metropolitan University
- York Entrepreneurship Development Institute (YEDI)
- 5REDO
- Palette Skills
- The Conrad School of Entrepreneurship and Business (University of Waterloo)
- Communitech

- University of Waterloo
- The Forum
- The John F Wood Centre at the University of Guelph
- Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario)

### **British Columbia**

- Small Business BC
- WeBC (Women's Enterprise Centre of British Columbia)
- New Ventures BC
- Innovate BC
- YWCA Metro Vancouver
- World Trade Centre Vancouver
- Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)
- Black Business Association of BC
- Community Futures South Fraser
- Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce
- Export Navigator

### **Atlantic Canada**

- New Brunswick Innovation Foundation (NBIF)
- Propel
- Opportunities New Brunswick
- Startup Atlantic
- Centre for Women in Business
- Venn Innovation
- University of New Brunswick J Herbert Smith Centre
- Planet Hatch
- Ignite
- ConnexionWorks
- CBDC (Community Business Development Corporation)
- Black Business Initiative
- Southeast Regional Service Commission

### **Manitoba**

- North Forge
- Manitoba Technology Accelerator
- University of Manitoba Stu Clark Centre for Business
- RRC Polytech
- World Trade Centre Winnipeg
- Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
- Prairies Economic Development Canada
- Black Manitobans Chamber of Commerce Inc.
- Bioscience Association of Manitoba (BAM)
- Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC)

# How to Access Support

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## **Many of these organizations offer:**

- Funding programs (grants, loans, equity investment)
- Mentorship and coaching (one-on-one and group programs)
- Training and workshops (business skills, sector-specific knowledge)
- Networking opportunities (events, peer circles, industry connections)
- Specialized support (for women, Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQI+, newcomer, youth entrepreneurs)
- Export assistance (market research, trade missions, international connections)

Visit their websites or contact them directly to learn how they can support your entrepreneurial journey. Many organizations also have offices or representatives in multiple

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# Acknowledgements

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## **The 2025 Startup Canada Tour would not have been possible without the dedication and support of:**

- Our Partners & Sponsors who invest in Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem every day
- Our Speakers & Mentors who generously shared their time, expertise, and stories
- Our Volunteers who ensured smooth operations and warm welcomes at every turn
- Our Ecosystem Organizations that connect entrepreneurs with resources and support
- Our Venue Partners, BMO Centre and Living Arts Centre, for providing exceptional spaces
- Our Startup Canada Team, whose unwavering commitment and tireless efforts brought the Tour to life, and made every interaction meaningful for Canada's Founders
- Most importantly, our Entrepreneurs who show up, take risks, support each other, and build the businesses that drive Canada's economy

Thank you for being part of the 2025 Startup Canada Tour. Together, we are building a more vibrant, inclusive, and thriving entrepreneurial Canada.