

**Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**  
**Community Development**  
**Economic Development Services**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Jamie Rainbird, Manager, Economic Development Services  
**Date:** March 25, 2020  
**Subject:** Starter Company Plus Program – Successful Applicants

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This report is for the information of Council.

**Background**

The Starter Company Plus Program, fully-funded by the Province of Ontario, is an initiative that provides training and mentorship geared towards assisting those entrepreneurs in need of business knowledge and support as well as providing the opportunity to apply for a business grant of up to \$5,000.

Upon completion of mandatory training via webinar, applicants that pursue the \$5,000 financial grant are required to submit a viable, sales-ready business plan and engage in follow up consultations for a minimum of three months with the Chatham-Kent Small Business Centre Business Consultants. This is a competitive process and a limited number of grants are awarded after each training session held twice yearly. Applicants must be able to contribute cash or in-kind of at least 25% of the grant amount.

**Eligibility**

- 18 years of age or older at the time of application
- Proposing a new company, expansion of an existing company or buying a business in Ontario
- Not attending school full-time or not returning to school
- Be a resident of Ontario
- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- Have not previously participated in the Starter Company Plus Program
- Not enrolled in other provincially employment or self-employment related programs that include or do not include financial assistance

- Not currently enrolled concurrently in any self-employment or entrepreneurship training/financing programs offered by government funded organizations (some exceptions may apply due to COVID-19)

Business or Proposed Business must:

- Be an independent, for-profit business venture based in Chatham-Kent
- Not be a business that relies on commissioned sales (MLM)
- Be a legal business in Ontario
- Not be a franchise
- Operated at arms-length from family business ventures
- Operate full-time as defined in the business plan
- Have a Master Business License or Articles of Incorporation, or register the business prior to launch
- Maintain a business banking account
- Follow all government rules and regulations and applicable by-laws for the operation of the business
- Demonstrate a viable and sales-ready business plan at the time of funding

### **Comments**

On October 26-30, 2020, a five-day training webinar took place with interested eligible entrepreneurs who were provided a wealth of business advice and knowledge. After the training was completed, those entrepreneurs interested in pursuing the financial grant, completed and submitted their viable business plan to the Small Business Centre. Based on a scoring matrix, the following nine businesses were awarded grants of \$5,000 each:

#### **The Esthetic Studio, Chatham**

Located in Chatham, The Esthetic Studio is a small beauty studio that provides many different spa and beauty treatments.

*“I cannot express enough how the Starter Company Plus program has helped me be able to start my business and set me up for success! The program offered a one-week course with so much valuable information on how to start and grow your business. This really helped me understand the ins and outs of operating a business and the steps I would need to take. After the course, I had to submit a business plan and was chosen as the \$5,000 grant recipient. These funds have allowed me to get a location to operate out of and all equipment and supplies need to operate! What I love most about this program is the ongoing support I have with an amazing team of men who have expertise in business and have guided and coached me throughout the whole process, which was so very helpful as I run my business alone. This program has allowed me to turn my dreams into a reality and I am so very grateful.*”

*I highly recommend this program to anyone who has a vision for their business and is looking for not only financial support but also personal support to help your vision come to life!*

Stephanie Laforet, The Esthetic Studio, Chatham

### Custom Woodpeckers, Tilbury

Custom Woodpeckers is a builder of custom built wood products of all types and sizes using a finishing choice of Shou Sugi Ban along with many others. This is a technique that utilizes fire to treat and also stains the wood. Once processed and completed, this gives a 3D effect that makes the grain of the wood stand out.

*“The Starter Company Plus Program is so much more than just receiving a grant. The people guiding you through this process are kind, patient and apply no pressure throughout your journey. Webinars, Digital Main Street and all the others are invaluable tools to help guide you towards a better chance of success. At the very beginning of my journey, before the grant application process, I just went out and spent some money on tools and machines and said, “I’m ready.” I wasn’t! If I succeed or I fail, at least NOW, “I am ready...”*

Leslie Meloche, Custom Woodpeckers, Tilbury

### Floating Therapy, Chatham

Floating Therapy provides a therapeutic and relaxing environment away from the daily stresses and over-stimulation in today’s society. This is achieved through the use of floatation tanks, a natural form of physical, mental, emotional and cognitive therapy popularly known as R.E.S.T. (Restricted Environmental Stimulus Therapy) or sensory deprivation. In addition to the floatation tanks, Floating Therapy also offers a Halotherapy Salt Room, Infrared Sauna and guided meditation.

*“Floating Therapy was one of the lucky recipients to participate in the Starter Company Plus for 2020, although we are coming up on our fifth year in business we had moved locations and expanded last year and this was the perfect opportunity for us to reassess our operations and review what Economic Development Services have to offer. Floating Therapy began as a small two tank centre on King street in 2016, we knew we offered a beneficial health service but the concept was a very new concept to Chatham and education was key.*

*I first met Rosemarie in the early stages of planning and she was a great help to guide me through building a successful business plan. We attended wellness shows/events, mass marketing, hosted several open houses and partnered with local small business to grow our visibility in the community. We braved bridge closures, construction and an eventual building flood which became a make or break moment. I once again reached out to the Economic Development team and got to work with Taylor Hughes, Matt Reaume and Doug Robbins. As a team, we created a growth plan and with the help of Randy Myers at BDC, I was able to finance a building purchase and expansion to a full*

*service wellness centre. In many ways I felt like I was starting over with the new concept as the operations was a significant step up. We now operate with the only Open Concept float tank in Ontario, great for couples and those with mobility restrictions. We offer Halotherapy Salt Room, Infrared sauna, Breathwork/Meditation classes and will soon be adding Cold Plunge (Fire & Ice) services. Our wellness centre team now features three medical practitioners, Shemiah Murray RMT, Rebecca Flanagan Psychotherapy and Sheryl Gray Osteopathy.*

*The Economic and Community Development team has been an integral part in getting up and running but even now five years into business, there was so much more we were able to use for learning and growth. The team helped facilitate grants, funding, marketing and accounting resources that allowed me to streamline and improve business operations. I was able to step back with new information and assess the operations in place and potential to streamline and improve. The team meets with you one on one and understands the needs of your business, suggests business specific goals and provides mentorship to help you maximize the potential of your business.*

*With an expansion last year, the Business Starter Plus program was a massive help with five days of training that dialed into every major aspect of operations. I was able to look with fresh eyes at how I was operating, if it made sense and where i could improve. Being able to do this with a group of peers allowed for great communication and brainstorming as well. I'm very appreciative of the program, training, funding and support I've received and encourage those with business in Chatham-Kent to look into the programs and grants offered by the municipality of Chatham-Kent. Special thank you to Rosemarie, Taylor, Matt, Doug and Randy for your ongoing help and support.”*

Laura Foster, Owner/Operator, Floating Therapy and Maple City Wellness

### Beyond the Storm Counselling Services, Chatham

Beyond the Storm Counselling Services provides individual psychotherapy sessions allowing clients to have one-on-one interactions with a licensed therapist. Sessions allow clients opportunities to explore their emotions, thoughts and behaviours in a confidential, safe and non-judgmental environment. Beyond the Storm Counselling Services also offers couple/marriage counseling to strengthen the connection between partners.

*“Although my participation in the Starter Company Plus Program was delayed several months due to the pandemic, I am glad that I participated. The educational portion of the program was valuable and taught about budgeting, marketing, taxes, and a variety of other important topics. The grant itself allowed me to pay off certain start-up costs and provided the opportunity to grow in areas that I would not have considered otherwise. I would highly recommend this program to any new business owners, not only for the possible grant, but also as an excellent learning opportunity with an experienced and knowledgeable presenter.”*

Shawn Coolen, BA, MACP, RP(Qualifying), Beyond the Storm Counselling Services

### The Flour Bin, Dresden

The Flour bin is a sole proprietor bakery business located in Dresden. The Flour Bin creates cakes and confections tailored to anyone's taste and style, made for special days and occasions. The Flour Bin strives for high-end quality product and are committed to serving unique and superior baked goods throughout the community.

*"I've been working on my business for a few years, but officially wanted to open in July, 2020 during COVID-19. I applied for this program and was accepted into the fall cohort. Attending the online sessions about opening a new business gave me great insight that I could apply to my shop. I learned lots about continuously marketing my products, how to gain repeat customers, and how to successfully write a business plan.*

*After receiving the grant, it allowed me to make upgrades in a bigger kitchen so I could increase my production; as well, I could officially open to the public and launch a website curated to my business. I have further plans to offer an online shop for kitchen and bakeware as well as begin a blog to spread my knowledge and outlook on my cake expertise, food photography, and owning a small business. I believe this is a very important program that should continue supporting new businesses in Chatham-Kent! It reminds the community to shop local and gives us business owners a chance to show the community what we have to offer.*

*Without this program, my business would not have gotten this far in the last few months. Thanks again!"*

Clarisse Gibbons, Owner & Founder, The Flour Bin

### We're So Koi, Ridgetown

We're So Koi is a pond and garden supply shop. They also carry domestic and imported Japanese Koi, aquatic plants and pond supplies as well as pond clean-outs and pond installations.

### Crazy 8 Barn, Muirkirk

Crazy 8 Barn is an historic 8-sided farm filled with a mixture of merchandise for you, your home and garden. Surrounded by an acre of perennial gardens and native trees is the perfect place to reconnect with nature, take a break and learn a garden skill or funky fact.

Crazy 8 is an oasis for arts, crafts and lifestyle workshops; unique, home, garden and rural products; and a country café featuring fresh made soup, sandwiches, soups, salads, butter tarts and pies.

### Hereafter, Chatham

Hereafter is a retail and consignment store that offers all natural eco-friendly, Canadian made products, many of which are created right here in Chatham-Kent. Hereafter's

mission is to inspire and support local sustainability by connecting conscientious shoppers with nature made in Canada products.

### Pour Decisions Wine Co., Chatham

Pour Wine Decisions is the only store in Chatham that carries the sought after RSJ Craft making wine kits that come from a division of Arterra Wines, which is Canada's leading producer and marketer of award-winning wines such as Jackson Triggs, Inniskillin and Kim Crawford.

With a unique spin on the wine making process, Pour Wine Decisions offers complimentary charcuterie boards while sampling your wine. Pour Wine Decisions also offers takeout and curbside charcuterie boards as well as nosh boxes and grazing tables. Merchandises provided by local artisans include custom charcuterie boards, signs and candles.

### Consultation

No other departments were consulted in the preparation of this information report.

### Financial Implications

All grant and training costs associated with this program are covered by funding through the Province of Ontario. Economic Development Services' staff provide mentoring, business plan and business advice assistance to the small business entrepreneurs through their normal job duties.

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Attachments: None

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