

## Aurora to play a part in automotive, smart mobility development



Garry Lee laughingly describes himself as a 'geek' at heart.

The owner of Aurora-based Megalab takes great pride that his company is able to help innovators take their ideas from concept to reality, particularly if they benefit society.

He will have many more opportunities to do that in the future as Megalab has been named one of the key local partners in York Region's Regional Technology Development Site (RTDS).

Dignitaries gathered at Megalab's Addison Hall headquarters on Friday afternoon to celebrate funding from the Province of Ontario and private sector partners that will make the RTDS a reality.

The mission of the York Region RTDS is to help entrepreneurs and businesses 'bridge the gap between research and development and commercialization, particularly in the sectors of automotive and smart mobility technologies.

Supported by all nine York Region municipalities, the RTDS will be delivered in partnership with ventureLAB and York University, whose YSpace offers companies the chance to 'access cutting-edge labs, research, and talent in areas like smart materials, electrification and system reliability.'

'Today's announcement reflects the power of collaboration, and the shared commitment required to turn innovative ideas into real-world solutions,' said York Region Chairman Eric Jolliffe at Megalab on June 19. 'Today's announcement is an exciting milestone for York Region and for Ontario's innovation economy. Across our communities, we see tremendous growth in advanced manufacturing, automotive technologies, artificial intelligence, and connected industry. We are home to a diverse network of entrepreneurs, researchers, technology companies, and global industry leaders who are developing solutions that will shape the future.

'But innovation does not happen in isolation. Companies need opportunities to test new technologies in real-world environments. The access to infrastructure, expertise, partners, and customers can help move promising ideas from concept to commercialization. Exactly what Regional Technology Development Site is designed to provide.'

The site will help create a 'pathway' for small- and medium-sized businesses to 'validate technologies that accelerate development time and bring innovation and solutions to the market faster,' Jolliffe continued.

'Just as importantly, it strengthens the connections between government, industry and academia, creating an ecosystem where innovation can thrive. This work aligns with York Region's Economic Development Action Plan and our commitment to fostering

business growth, supporting entrepreneurship, and attracting investment that creates high-quality jobs for our residents. It also reinforces York Region's role as a destination for innovation, and a place where new technologies can be tested and scaled.?

York Region's RTSD is one of nine announced by the Ontario Government which are intended to serve as hubs ?connecting infrastructure, talent and expertise to accelerate solutions that address both current and emerging challenges,? said Mona Eghanian, Assistant Vice President and Deputy Head of the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN).

?York Region is a critical part of this network, supported by nine municipalities and a strong ecosystem of private sector partners. Together, these collaborations are driving real results and helping companies test, prototype and bring innovations to market faster,? she said. ?York Region, in particular, has built a strong reputation as a hub of smart materials, electrification and heavy-conductor innovation.?This type of collaboration is essential not only for economic growth, but as we respond to the rising global demand for advanced automotive and smart mobility solutions, both to meet today's needs and the future needs.?

The development of the RTSD in York Region was hailed by community leaders gathered for Friday's announcement, including Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, who said the announcement itself was about ?much more than technology.?

?It's about creating opportunities,? she said. ?It's about supporting local businesses, and it's about ensuring that York Region remains one of the best places in Ontario to invest, innovate, and create good-paying jobs. I'm proud that York Region has been selected as one of Ontario's RTSDs, supported through the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network. This is supported by an investment of up to \$2.5 million from our government. This initiative will help entrepreneurs and businesses develop, test, and commercialize the next generation of smart mobility technologies.

?From connected and autonomous vehicles to electrification and emerging transportation solutions, York Region will play a leading role in shaping the future of this rapidly-growing sector?. Together, we are creating an environment where businesses can access tools, the expertise, the infrastructure, and the talent that they need to succeed?. York Region is already home to a thriving technology and innovation ecosystem. Through this investment, we are building on that success and positioning our region as a leader in the future of mobility and advanced technology.?

Unable to attend Friday's announcement due to a family bereavement, Mayor Tom Mrakas welcomed the Aurora's connection to the RTSD in a statement.

?The Town of Aurora is proud to support the York Regional Technology Development site,? he said. ?Through the testing and engineering expertise of Aurora-based Megalab Group, businesses will be supported as they develop and validate new technologies. This partnership strengthens our shared commitment to innovation and economic growth.?

In addition to Megalab Group, participating partners in the RTSD include Siemens, The MathWorks, Google Cloud, DVLR Electric, FyeLabs, Wurth Elektronik, Innovance Solutions, Bhole IP Law, Mantle, Zeroto One Strategic, Ramudden Digital, Synopsys, SolidWorks, OVHcloud, and Microart Services.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter