

## Local entrepreneur driven to propel economic growth in York Region

As an industry leader, Aurora resident Keith Loo identified a "very real challenge" needed in York Region's healthcare programs and, as an innovator, he set out to find a solution to alleviate the strain in the system.

Skinopathy, the company Loo founded with Dr. Colin Hong, has gone from strength to strength using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to initially screen for skin cancers, but now they're seeing their innovation can tackle much larger challenges in healthcare.

This eye on the future is just one of the reasons Loo has stepped up as a member of the Region of York's new Innovation Leadership Council.

The Council, says Charles Banfield, Manager of Strategic Economic Initiatives for the Region of York, was formed to "help drive innovation and economic growth, with economic vitality being a priority of York Region Council as identified in the recently-approved Strategic Plan."

"York Region is Canada's second-largest technology hub and home to more than 55,600 businesses," he said. "This group will work alongside staff to identify emerging economic development opportunities and strengthen York Region's position as a thriving hub for innovation, which is a key driver of economic growth."

The Council will engage with industry leaders and get their input on innovation-related activities, including insights on the current and future state of the York's "innovation ecosystem," assisting the Region in identifying opportunities, risks, challenges and needs, and "fostering mutually beneficial and productive relationships between the business community and York Region."

"I have lived in York Region for over 30 years, and have worked here for half that time. Contributing to the continual growth and success of our Region is truly important to me," says Loo. "York Region has a phenomenal history of innovation and entrepreneurship" and it's important that we continue to build on this. Further, part of what makes Aurora special is our tie to a larger Region that brings together the local municipalities, enabling each city and town to thrive in its own way, while leveraging the strengths of all our neighbours.

"We founded Skinopathy due to a very real challenge we have in York Region, and Canada today. Our healthcare system is strained" and we need to drive real innovation to ensure Canadians get the care they need and deserve. I want to bring the voice and perspective of entrepreneurs, start-ups, and innovators to the table, as these are often cornerstones of economic impact and growth. The York Region Economic Development team has been incredible in assembling a melange of voices and perspectives that I truly believe will provide valuable input to sustain the Region's economic growth and competitiveness. As a result, I would love to see increased collaboration between players in the innovation ecosystem, cross-pollination of ideas, and new partnerships between organizations of all sizes forming within the Region."

The new Council first met on February 27 for orientation and to select a Chair and Vice Chair. They were set to get down to business this week with a focus on reviewing research the Region undertook on the local "innovation ecosystem" over the last two years. The meeting was also set to include talks on leveraging existing assets such as YorkNet's dark fibre network and the Entrepreneurship & Innovation Fund to "support economic development and innovation-related activities."

"While the purpose of this Council is to play an advisory role by working with York Region staff, there is the opportunity for York Region projects to be identified and developed based on input from the Council members," says Banfield.

Adds Loo: "I think that's the beauty of entrepreneurship and innovation: We are working together to figure out how we can best help the Region. That is, we are learning as we go along. That said, the best outcome I can think of is to provide real insight and input that will enable the Region to shape and to achieve its economic development plan. I am so impressed and thrilled to see the members who have volunteered to join this committee. This is a spectacular group! It is truly humbling to be included in this group

and I look forward to working closely with and learning from these titans of innovation.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter