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## MEDIA RELEASE

# SEVEN MORE SMALL BUSINESSES LAUNCH INTO STRATFORD AND AREA

## Provincial Starter Company Plus Program Helps Local Entrepreneurs with Grants

Stratford, Ontario – April 8, 2024 ... **Today the Stratford Perth Centre for Business announced the launch of 7 new local businesses with the Starter Company Plus program, a provincially supported program aimed at entrepreneurs within Stratford, St Marys, and Perth County.** The Stratford Perth Centre for Business runs the Starter Company Plus program which is funded by the Province of Ontario, and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and delivers 2 cohorts each year. This year's fall session offered 7 successful applicants 5 weeks of business planning training in February and March, focusing on areas of business planning, cash flow, operations, and marketing. After completing the training, graduates received a \$5,000 grant. The Stratford Perth Centre for Business, a department of investStratford, provided mentorship via a hybrid training and mentorship program with individual coaching to support their entrepreneurial business dreams.

### **The 7 new businesses include:**

**Stratford Walking Tours, Owner Lauri Leduc:** Come and explore the rich history that downtown Stratford has to offer on a guided walking tour. Stratford Walking Tours takes guests on a unique journey through the past with interesting stories and knowledge about the unique people who shaped the city. See iconic buildings and historic sites to deepen your knowledge and appreciation of the Festival City [www.stratfordwalkingtours.ca](http://www.stratfordwalkingtours.ca) [hello@stratfordwalkingtours.ca](mailto:hello@stratfordwalkingtours.ca)

**Pearl Inspirations, Owner Erin Swinkles:** With a background in Speech Language Pathology, Behaviour Analysis, and Early Childhood Education, Erin is a passionate advocate for evidence-based and collaborative practices. She specializes in integrating strategies from speech pathology and behavior analysis to empower her learners. Supporting families and communities, she helps students become more successful communicators and learners. [erin@pearlinspirations.ca](mailto:erin@pearlinspirations.ca) ph: 226-772-3342

**Dunny's Source for Sports, Owner Janis Antonio:** Dunny's is a locally owned and operated sporting goods stores in Stratford and St. Mary's specializing in Hockey, Baseball, & Custom Team and Corporate Apparel. Contact [janis@dunnys.ca](mailto:janis@dunnys.ca) 519-271-1442 or 519-284-1446

**Coles and Keys Optical, Owner Nicole Streicher and Nikki Wagler:** Coles and Keys have sourced the most stellar independent eyewear in the game so that you can look your best in more ways than one. Whether it's prescription eyewear or a great pair of sunglasses (or both), at Coles & Keys Inc. they've got you covered. Bring in your prescription and they will help accessor-eyes with the perfect frame and lenses for any occasion. ph. 519-508-2525 or [colesandkeys@gmail.com](mailto:colesandkeys@gmail.com) [www.colesandkeys.ca](http://www.colesandkeys.ca)

**Odyssey Indigo, Owner Kate Orland Bere:** As the creative force behind Odyssey Indigo Communications & Consulting, Kate offers writing consultations writing workshops, career consultations and career development workshops. A professional speaker, she also offers keynotes for groups on the importance of writing in today's world, the aftermath of bullying, dirty or complicated grief, careers of the future. [kate@odysseyindigo.com](mailto:kate@odysseyindigo.com)

**The BookCellar365, Owner Shar Mattucci:** Bookcellar365 is a Book Seeking Service/Mobile Bookshop which sustainably keeps books in circulation and replenishes reader's bookshelves. Preowned books are made available through special requests, vendor pop ups, collaborative events with other businesses and Instagram. The mission of Bookcellar365 is to source and migrate books to new homes, give readers an affordable option to access great books and lessen our environmental impact. DM via [@thebookcellar365](https://www.instagram.com/thebookcellar365)

**Bilingual Dairy Services, Owner Luis Velazquez:** Bilingual Dairy Services (BDS) helps Dairy Farmers to communicate with their Latin workers. BDS provides the services of an interpreter, training, and consulting. [luisveal@hotmail.com](mailto:luisveal@hotmail.com)

The next round of starter company is currently closed for applications and will open in late August 2024. More info at [www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca](http://www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca)

**Holly Mortimer, Business Advisor, Stratford Perth Centre for Business:** “Aside from the structured learning The Starter Company Plus program offers, there is also the unique experience of participating the entrepreneurial community. This is extremely important and creates a new kind of enrichment they navigate the 5 weeks course material together and rely, not only on the program instructors but also on each other. Becoming an entrepreneur can be a lonely experience and the sense of support and community created within the 4 weeks last as a peer networking group for many long after the program concludes.”

**Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford:** “Starter Company has been a flagship grant program of the Stratford Perth Centre for Business for many years and has served to launch many of our local businesses and entrepreneurs. I am thrilled to see this new group of business owners get started and flourish in our community.”

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About the Stratford Perth Centre for Business

The Stratford Perth Centre for Business operates as a department of investStratford in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. It is committed to helping small business owners achieve their business goals. The Centre offers local small business support and complimentary consultation and easy access to resources, including business start-up services to support the development of new and already established small businesses. In addition to advisory services, events, seminars, and training opportunities are held throughout the year to meet small business essentials.

[www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca](http://www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca) or [info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca](mailto:info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca)

About investStratford:

investStratford is committed to advancing the economic future of Stratford, Ontario, Canada through investment in arts, education, and industry. Globally Connected | Community Driven For more info visit: [www.investStratford.com](http://www.investStratford.com)

For further information contact:

Holly Mortimer, Business Advisor, Stratford Perth Centre for Business 519-305-5055 x 1005

Elke Bidner, Marketing and Communications Lead 519-305-5055 x1003