

Town of Whitby Staff Report

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Report Title: Economic Development Trade Mission

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: May 12, 2025

Report Number: CAO 09-25

Department(s) Responsible:

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Submitted by:

Sarah Klein, Deputy CAO

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,
Chief Administrative Officer**

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Report CAO 09-25 Economic Development Trade Mission be received as information; and,
2. That the Clerk be directed to forward a copy of Report CAO 09-25 to the Director of Economic Development & Tourism, Region of Durham.

2. Highlights:

- The purpose of this report is to highlight the recent Economic Development Trade Mission led by the Region's Economic Development and Tourism Division (Invest Durham), in collaboration with the Durham Economic Development Partnership (DEDP) and regional innovation community partners at the Hannover Messe 2025 tradeshow which took place from March 31 to April 4, 2025 in Hannover, Germany.
- The Hannover Messe is the world's largest annual tradeshow for industrial technology. In 2025, Canada was the featured partner country at the tradeshow. Over the past year, Invest Durham planned and prepared a comprehensive itinerary for the delegation, including two representatives from the Town of Whitby, the Mayor and Senior Manager of Economic Development.

- Delegates, including Town of Whitby representatives, participated in meetings with global companies focused on digital technologies, industrial transformation, and clean technologies, interested in investing in North America and willing to consider Durham Region as a location for potential investment. With the ongoing U.S. Tariffs having a widespread impact across Canada, the development of international relationships provides an excellent opportunity for Whitby businesses to explore trade diversification in the European Union.
- The Invest Durham booth and delegation were successful, resulting in many business development, research and development, and academic opportunities. Hundreds of attendees visited the booth, building international awareness of the Town of Whitby and Durham Region's value proposition. Several notable visitors included the Chancellor of Germany, Canadian special envoy to the EU, Canadian Ambassador to the EU, Minister of Economic Development, and the CEO of Invest in Canada.

3. Background:

As the Regional Economic Development lead for Durham Region, Invest Durham is responsible for generating and sourcing leads for potential new investments into Durham Region, including investment attraction missions and in-market lead generation. Invest Durham staff partners with the DEDP, including economic development leads from all Durham municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and innovation community partners. Trade mission events provide the DEDP with the opportunity to meet directly with companies interested in learning about expansion into Canada.

With Canada as the featured partner country at the 2025 Hannover Messe, the world's largest annual tradeshow for industrial technology, participation in the tradeshow was a unique and unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate Durham's investment readiness to potential international markets.

Hannover Messe 2025 was the flagship event for Invest Durham to showcase the region's value proposition for investment. In addition, participating in this tradeshow achieved a broader goal of meeting and building relationships with senior investment attraction agencies such as Invest Ontario, Invest in Canada, the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED), the Canadian Foreign Trade Commissioner Service (FTCS), and the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT).

This trade mission aligns with the 2023-2026 DEDP Action Plan, Durham Region's 5-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, and the Town of Whitby's 2022-2026 Economic Development Strategy.

Durham Region approved the Invest Durham Exhibit at the Hannover Messe 2025 tradeshow in collaboration with the Durham Economic Development Partnership

(DEDP) to showcase the Region to key business audiences for investment attraction. Delegation partners included the following:

- Invest Durham Staff: Staff tasked with lead generation and business engagement.
- Regional Economic Development Teams: Representatives from local area municipalities (DEDP).
- Collaborative Partners: Representatives from local post-secondary institutions and innovative community partners.
- Political representatives: Regional Chair and CAO (Durham Region), Mayors of Pickering, Ajax, and Whitby.

Beginning in fall 2024, Invest Durham staff began meeting with members of the DEDP, post-secondary partners and other delegation members to prepare for the tradeshow. Invest Durham engaged a lead generation firm to build a campaign to establish pre-qualifying meetings with global companies looking to expand and/or invest in Durham Region. Invest Durham coordinated closely with ISED, NGEN, and MEDJCT to ensure that regional efforts were coordinated with broader Canadian efforts and objectives of the tradeshow.

In light of the U.S. administration's tariff-led policy changes and ongoing global uncertainty, the Hannover Messe tradeshow offered a strategic opportunity for the Town of Whitby and Durham Region to advance discussions with European-based firms seeking new suppliers and business relationships in North America.

4. Discussion:

The primary objective for Durham Region for the Hannover Messe tradeshow was lead generation for investment attraction and building brand awareness for the purpose of investment attraction. The secondary objective was to support Canadian efforts to promote global expansion and international trade and strengthen relationships with senior government investment attraction agencies.

The target outcomes from Durham Region's participation at Hannover Messe 2025 were as follows:

Target Outcome	Metric
Number of new connections with individuals	500
Number of qualified new leads for prospective investment in Durham Region	50
Number of resulting requests by prospective investors for site selection support within 3 months	5
Number of relationships advanced with staff from senior investment attraction agencies in Ontario and Canada	20
Percentage of Durham and partner participants surveyed who felt the booth was very effective or effective at representing Durham Region as a whole	90% or higher

Percentage of Durham and partner participants surveyed who felt exhibiting at Hannover Messe 2025 was very valuable or valuable to their organization's goals	80% or higher
Number of domestic or international Federal or Provincial/State Ministers who visit the booth to learn about Durham Region	5
Paid and organic digital impressions for the dedicated promotional campaign	350,000
Deeper engagements (click-throughs) to website content	4,000
Mentions in major media	5

Invest Durham will present a report to Regional Council in September 2025, highlighting and summarizing the tradeshow's outcomes, addressing each targeted outcome.

The following highlights some early wins and outcomes:

- The Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association (APMA) announced Project Arrow 2.0, the next phase of Canada's first, original, full-build, zero-emission concept vehicle. It will be created at Ontario Tech University and tested at the ACE Climatic Aerodynamic Wind Tunnel, bringing together more suppliers and producing a series of vehicles in Canada.
- Participated in a seminar and networking session hosted by the City of Nuremberg and the Chamber of Commerce. The event featured expert speakers who shared key industry insights, provided opportunities to connect with top executives from Germany and Canada, and fostered the development of valuable international partnerships.
- Mode40, with support from Durham College AI/HUB, officially launched its Manufacturing Source of Truth, a platform designed to meet the complex needs of today's manufacturing environments.
- Participated in tariff discussions with the Business Council of Canada.
- Comprehensive meetings with the Minister of Economic Development, Invest in Canada's CEO, and Invest Ontario, where Whitby projects and land discussions were held.
- Booth visits from the Chancellor of Germany, the Canadian special envoy to the EU, and the Canadian Ambassador to the EU received international media coverage.
- Participated in one-to-one meetings with German manufacturing companies seeking expansion opportunities.
- Detailed discussions with Oshawa and Hamilton Port Authorities focused on port access for local businesses to export activity.
- Participated in several meetings with international investment offices to discuss trade diversification efforts in priority sectors for Durham Region.

Over the five-day event, the Invest Durham booth attracted hundreds of visitors, resulting in numerous valuable new connections. Further details and outcomes will be shared in the Region's final report, expected in September 2025.

The Senior Manager, Economic Development, is actively working on leads and following up with German and European companies that have expressed interest in business development and investment opportunities in the Town of Whitby.

5. Financial Considerations:

The Region of Durham's Planning and Economic Development Committee approved one-time funding to support the Region's participation in the Hannover Messe tradeshow, including covering the flight and accommodation costs for one representative from each respective municipality. As a result, the cost to the Town of Whitby to participate in the 2025 Hannover Messe tradeshow was \$4,274.35. These funds will come from the 2025 Economic Development Operating budget.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

Invest Durham launched a comprehensive marketing campaign in early March 2025. Invest Durham staff provided materials, including messaging and customized partner graphics, to all DEDP members to promote the Hannover Messe 2025 tradeshow. The Town of Whitby staff also reached out to Whitby companies interested in exporting to the European market.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

The Finance Department and Invest Durham reviewed this report.

8. Strategic Priorities:

This initiative is consistent with the Town's Community Strategic Plan, specifically Pillar 3: Whitby's Economy. It addresses the following:

Objective 3:1: Accelerate progress, create jobs, and drive local economic growth

Action 3.1.1: Continue to implement the Economic Development Strategy that focuses on the following sectors: information and communications technology, professional and technical services, advanced manufacturing, and downtowns and lifestyle.

Action 3.2.1. Expand Whitby's commercial and industrial tax base.

9. Attachments:

None.