

The 2023 FirstOntario 1Awards are offering \$200k in cash and professional services

Local businesses can apply now to pitch, win and share in this year's prizes

Hamilton, ON, March 1 – The FirstOntario 1Awards are back with a call to small business owners who could use some support to step up their services. Entrepreneurs in Hamilton, Halton, Brant, the Niagara Region and surrounding areas are welcome to apply for a chance to pitch, win and share in \$25,000 cash and \$175,000 of in-kind professional services.

This year's prize pool pushes the program past the \$2 million mark of funds that have been reinvested back into small businesses communities through 11 years of the 1Awards program.

"We're thrilled to be able to help local businesses in their efforts to stay successful – thanks to our partners who make this all possible" said Joanne Battaglia, Senior Vice President Marketing, Communications and Community Partnerships. "We continue to be overwhelmed by the talent of so many small business owners who are dedicated to what they do and committed to making a difference in their communities."

Partners include [Agro Zaffiro LLP](#), [Giant Shoe Creative](#), [KPMG](#), [Mohawk College](#), [PLAY](#), [The Hamilton Spectator](#), and [Weever](#). Additional sponsors include [The Thornton Group](#), [Hamilton Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Carmen's Group](#).

Successful applicants will present a 15-minute pitch on May 11 to the partners who want to hear about the business – past success, present challenges and future aspirations. Winners can share \$25,000 in cash and \$175,000 of in-kind services. Partners determine how the prizes will be allocated following the presentations based on individual needs.

Applications must be completed online at [1Awards.ca](#) before midnight on **Friday, March 31**. Eligible businesses must have less than 50 employees and have been in operation for at least two years. They must demonstrate measureable growth, innovation and community impact. Full details can be found at [1Awards.ca](#)

About FirstOntario Credit Union

FirstOntario is a full service cooperative financial institution, serving members for more than 80 years throughout the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario. With \$5.8 billion in assets under management, FirstOntario is one of Canada's largest credit unions. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award-winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us today at [FirstOntario.com](#).