

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Breaking down barriers to empower 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurs: the Ecosystem Fund for Canada's first-ever 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program is now open to applications from non-profit organizations.**

Toronto, ON - November 27, 2023

Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) announces a groundbreaking milestone in promoting diversity and inclusivity within the Canadian business landscape. The Ecosystem Fund, part of the 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program, is now open to applications from non-profit organizations and registered charities across the country. The 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program, supported by a \$25 million fund from the Government of Canada, marks a significant leap toward fostering a thriving and inclusive Canadian economy, with a specific focus on Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within groups that have been and still are underrepresented and disadvantaged.

“This milestone is great news for 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs.” says the Honourable Rechie Valdez, Minister of Small Business. “The 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program is the first of its kind in the world and shows the concrete steps our government is taking to ensure entrepreneurs from all walks of life have equal access to capital and resources. Together with partners like the CGLCC, we are delivering programs that have a real impact in strengthening our economy and creating good middle-class jobs for all Canadians”.

“We look forward to working with other non-profits and partner organizations across the country through this Ecosystem Fund.” says Darrell Schuurman, CEO and Co-Founder of CGLCC. “This program will support the great work already being done by these organizations as they break down barriers for 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs, particularly those from marginalized and under-resourced communities. We are humbled and honoured to have been chosen to lead this program by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada”.

### **The Ecosystem Fund: investing in non-profits that support 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs**

The Ecosystem Fund has been designed to support non-profit organizations that collaborate with 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs. These organizations are now eligible to apply for funding to fuel two core categories of projects:

- Programs supporting 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs: funding for selected projects from ecosystem organizations delivering support to 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs, with particular consideration for projects supporting under-served 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and/or projects in regions with limited support for 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs.
- Internal capacity-building initiatives: organizations are encouraged to develop their internal capabilities, enabling them to better serve 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs.

Notably, non-profit organizations can submit their applications for support through the Ecosystem Fund until the end of January 2024.

<https://cglcc.ca/programs/2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship-program/the-ecosystem-fund/>

### **More About the 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program**

The 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program aims to break down barriers to start, maintain, and grow a business among Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) across Canada, particularly those among groups that have been and continue to be underrepresented and disadvantaged. It provides targeted support to enhance overall sustainability, and drive growth, competitiveness, innovation, and productivity toward broader economic and social benefits

This groundbreaking program focuses on five key objectives:

- Increasing program, capacity-building, and skill-development opportunities for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises within the 2SLGBTQI+ community;
- Growing the capacity of 2SLGBTQI+ ecosystem organizations, particularly in regions where ecosystem support is limited or non-existent;
- Increasing the awareness of the unique challenges encountered by 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs;
- Fostering a stronger, interconnected community of 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and ecosystem organizations;
- Strengthening CGLCC in its mission to support 2SLGBTQI+ businesses across Canada.

This initiative exemplifies Canada's commitment to creating a more inclusive business landscape for all. The Ecosystem Fund, within the 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program, empowers non-profit organizations to lead the charge toward a more diverse future.

Additional details on the initiative may be found at  
[www.cglcc.ca/2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship](http://www.cglcc.ca/2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship)

This project is funded by the Government of Canada.

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### **About Canada's 2SLGBTI+ Chamber of Commerce**

Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) links 2SLGBTQI+ businesses in Canada to the wider business and corporate community. It fosters economic growth by supporting and nurturing 2SLGBTQI+ businesses, entrepreneurs, students and allies, and by helping Canada's corporate world connect with the 2SLGBTQI+ business community. For more information, visit [www.cglcc.ca](http://www.cglcc.ca)

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