



2026
NEWSLETTER



THE QUEEN'S ENTREPRENEURS' COMPETITION

Students. Innovators. Leaders.

MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN SINCE 1988

2026 NEWSLETTER



Thank you to our photographer, Joshua!

@zuckermanstudios



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01

— SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

A Word from the Co-Chairs

QEC Highlights



A NOTE TO WELCOME YOU

LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

As co-chairs of the Queen's Entrepreneurs' Competition, we are thrilled to welcome you to the QEC 2026 newsletter. Now in our **38th year**, QEC continues to stand as one of Canada's most prestigious student-run entrepreneurship competitions, and this year, we are more energized than ever about the talent, ideas, and community that make it all possible.

This year's competition has brought together an extraordinary cohort of entrepreneurs from across North America, each pushing the boundaries of what's possible. From the early rounds to the final stage, we have been inspired by the caliber of ideas and the tenacity of the competitors who bring them to life. QEC exists to give these individuals the platform, mentorship, and connections they deserve, and every year, they remind us exactly why this work matters.

None of this would be possible without the incredible community that surrounds QEC — our partners, alumni, judges, and volunteers.



THANK YOU.

You are the entrepreneurial ecosystem that makes QEC more than a competition.

Together, we are building a network of future leaders who will go on to shape industries, create opportunities, and fuel innovation in their communities. As we look ahead to competition weekend in **January 2027**, we invite you to stay engaged, celebrate the remarkable entrepreneurs in our midst, and share in our collective excitement for what lies ahead. The road has been paved by those before us, and we are proud to carry that legacy forward.

With Gratitude,

Your 2026 Co-Chairs



Marc-Olivier Robert Anne-Sophie Ouellet



YEAR IN REVIEW

QEC 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

\$700,000+

raised for startups in the last 10 years

\$37,500+

prize pool for QEC 2026

150+

physical attendees

10,000+

post impressions

6

high-quality speaker events

60+

judges & mentors

— WITH GRATITUDE —

Thank you to our **competitors, judges, speakers, sponsors, and partners**
for making this possible!





— SECTION TWO

THE QEC 2026

Competitors

Speakers

Judges

Sponsors

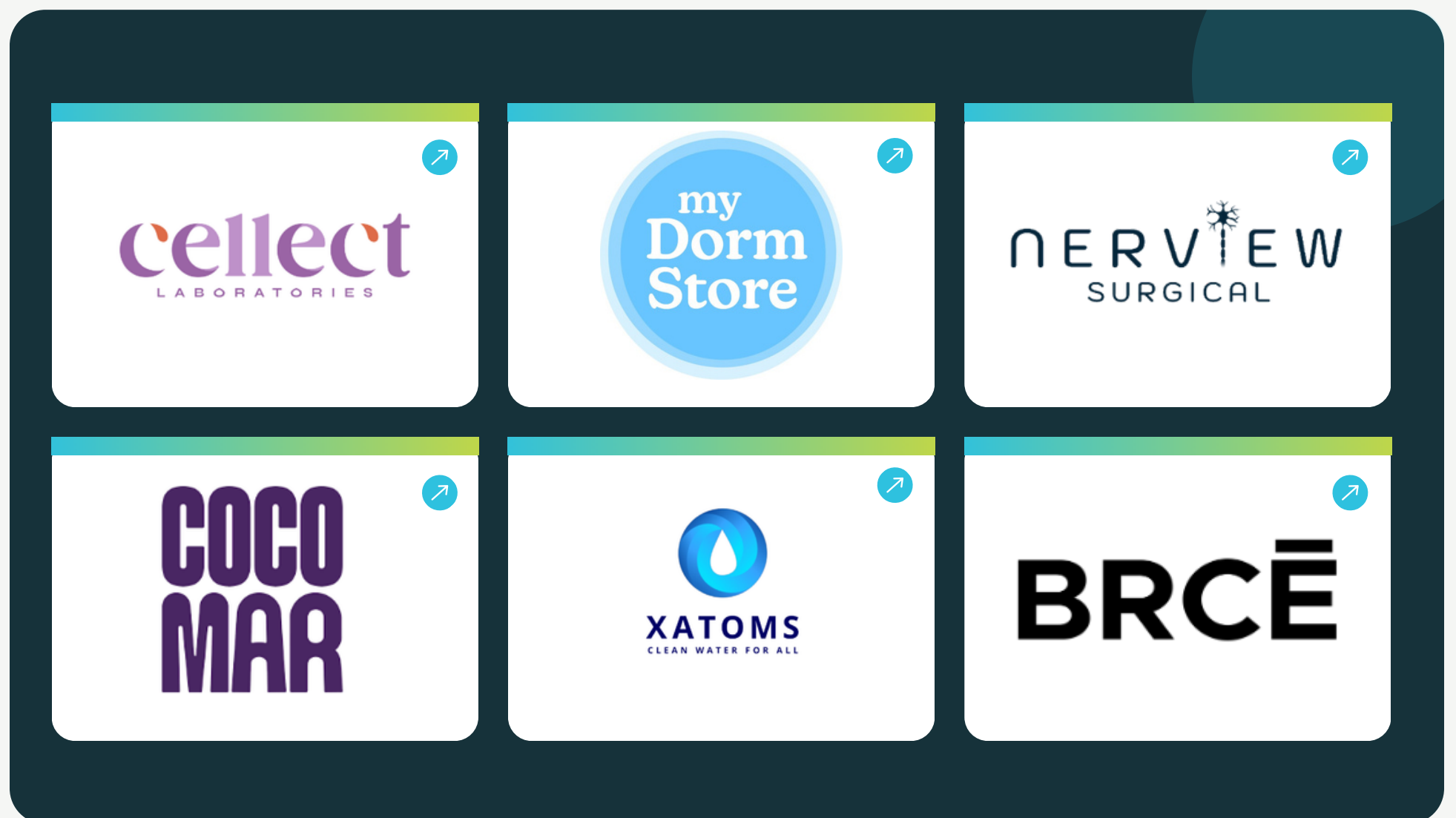


THE QEC 2026

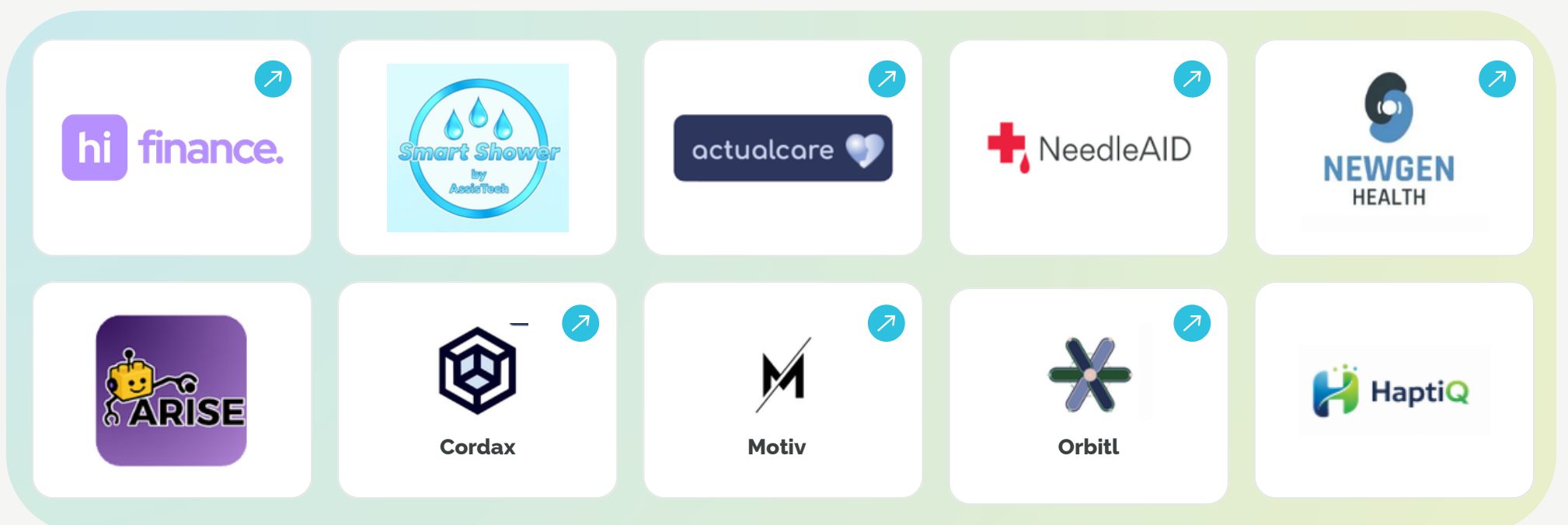
THE COMPETITORS

Out of more than **60 applicants**, only the **16 best startups** earned a spot at Final Weekend in Toronto — competing for a share of the **\$37,500 prize pool**.

CLICK THE LOGO TO VISIT THE STARTUP 



ROUNDING OUT THE TOP 16





— THE QEC 2026 WINNERS —

DRUMROLL, PLEASE...

More than 60 applications. Sixteen pitches. One unforgettable Final Weekend. It all comes down to this —

60+

APPLICATIONS

16

TOP 16

6

FINALISTS

3

WINNERS

FINAL WEEKEND · THE CHAMPIONS

WINNERS SPOTLIGHT



1ST PLACE

\$20,000

BRCÉ

A material-tech startup creating ultra-light, fire-resistant, and steel-strong gear for athletes and professionals. Backed by science and built with experts, their products enhance performance and prevent injury — extending beyond sport into industrial applications.

2ND PLACE

\$10,000

NERVIEW
SURGICAL

Developing a novel, non-invasive device for real-time nerve visualization that reduces accidental nerve damage during surgery — a solution built to make a difference for doctors, patients, and healthcare teams, and to set a new standard of care.



3RD PLACE

\$5,000

COCO
MAR

A clean, hydrating protein solution for athletes and the health-conscious looking for more than a traditional shake — pairing high-quality protein with real, exotic flavours that honour Cocomar's Brazilian roots.

MEET THE SPEAKERS

01



OPENING KEYNOTE

Eva Wong
CO-FOUNDER & CPO



The QEC 2026 opened with a fireside chat featuring Eva Wong, a Queen's alumna and co-founder of Borrowell, one of Canada's leading fintech companies. Eva shared her journey from management consulting to entrepreneurship and how she identified an opportunity to make credit more accessible and transparent for Canadians. She also discussed leaving a stable career, choosing the right co-founder, and learning from setbacks while building Borrowell into a platform used by millions.

02



PERFECT YOUR PITCH WORKSHOP

Will Greenblatt
FOUNDER



Competitors also learned from Will Greenblatt, founder of OutLoud Speakers School and one of Canada's leading pitch coaches. In an interactive workshop, Will helped participants refine their presentations, build confidence, and practise their pitches before the competition. He also shared practical storytelling and delivery techniques to help competitors connect with their audience and communicate more effectively.

03



3 PILLARS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRESENTATION

Kristine Beese
FOUNDER & CEO



Another highlight was hearing from Kristine Beese, founder and CEO of Untangle Money. Drawing on her experience in engineering, finance, and entrepreneurship, Kristine presented "What I Would Tell Myself Five Years Ago About Product, Funding, and Relationships." She shared lessons from building a startup and offered practical insights on product development, fundraising, and the importance of strong relationships.

04



KEYNOTE · THE FUTURE OF AI

Ian Scott
CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER



Day 1 concluded with a keynote from Ian Scott, Chief Science Officer at Deloitte Omnia, on the future of AI and its impact on entrepreneurship. Ian encouraged competitors to consider where real opportunities exist in an AI-driven world and how to build a lasting competitive advantage. He also explored how small, agile teams can compete with larger organizations as AI continues to reshape industries.



DAY 2 · SPEAKER SERIES

MEET THE SPEAKERS

OPENING KEYNOTE



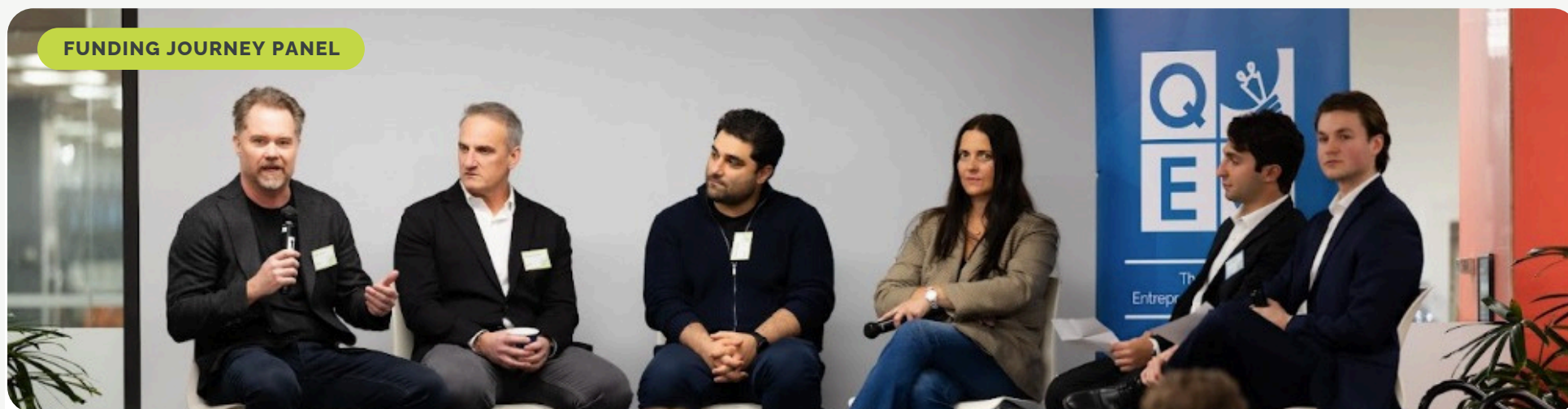
Pino Di Ioia

CO-FOUNDER & CEO, BEAVERTAILS



Pino shared his journey from BeaverTails employee to co-owner, explaining how he, his wife, and his brother acquired the company and expanded the brand. He emphasized that its success comes not only from the product, but from creating memorable experiences and emotional connections with customers. By noting how many people remember their first BeaverTail because it was tied to a special moment, Pino showed startups the value of building brands that create lasting memories and strong customer relationships.

FUNDING JOURNEY PANEL



The Funding Journey Panel

A highlight of QEC 2026 was a fireside chat with leading founders, operators, and investors, offering insights into fundraising, scaling, innovation, exits, and building successful startups.

PANELISTS — FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

VONIGO

John Carter

CO-FOUNDER, VONIGO

John Carter, founder of Vonigo, shared lessons from scaling and successfully exiting the company, with a focus on sustainable growth and preparing for acquisition opportunities.

Financeit

Michael Garrity

EXECUTIVE CHAIR & CO-FOUNDER, FINANCEIT

Drawing on his experience building Financeit, Michael Garrity discussed raising capital, managing rapid growth, and staying focused on the company's long-term direction.



GREEN SKY VENTURES

Moien Giashi

PRINCIPAL, GREENSKY VENTURES

Moien Giashi offered an investor's perspective on what makes deep-tech startups compelling, from breakthrough innovation and research potential to the strength of the founding team.



Dejana Dua

HEAD OF HARDTECH & CAPITAL PROGRAMS, VENTURELAB

On the panel, Dejana Dua broke down what investors look for, how startups should approach fundraising, and what it takes to become investment-ready.



THE TOP 6 JUDGES

FINAL WEEKEND JUDGES

Anatoliy Melnichuk

CEO, SAFE DIRECT MEDICAL SUPPLIES

A serial entrepreneur with a track record building and scaling tech and consumer businesses. He previously founded SnapSaves and Buytopia, both focused on digital commerce and consumer engagement. He brings deep expertise in product strategy, growth, and early-stage company building.

Robert Janson

CEO & CIO, WESTCOURT CAPITAL

Co-CEO and CIO of Westcourt Capital, an advisory firm specializing in alternative assets for high-net-worth and institutional clients. A Queen's University Master of Finance graduate, Robert spent years in wealth management and private banking across Switzerland and Canada before joining Westcourt. He's known for his disciplined, systematic approach to investing.

George Rossolatos

FOUNDER, CANADIAN BUSINESS GROWTH FUND (CBGF)

A Canadian investor and entrepreneur with over 15 years in private equity and growth capital. As former CEO of CBGF, he led investments in 30+ companies, supporting large-scale SME growth across Canada. He now serves on several boards, focused on scaling mid-market businesses and strengthening Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Rachel Zimmer

FOUNDER & CEO, SIMPLE VENTURES

A growth and brand leader experienced in scaling consumer-facing businesses, from early-stage ventures to established organizations. Her focus spans marketing strategy, storytelling, and product positioning. As an entrepreneur and advisor in Canada's startup ecosystem, she has a strong track record helping brands connect meaningfully with modern audiences.

FINAL WEEKEND JUDGES

THE TOP 15 JUDGES



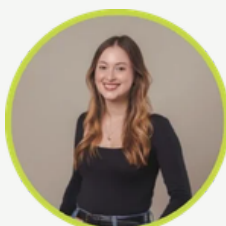
Avy-Loren Cohen
Managing Partner, Race Capital



Graham McBride
President, LarchHill Capital Inc.



Daniel Tisch
President & CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce



Sarah Willson
Principal, Panache Ventures



Shannon Whitaker
Senior Associate, Venture Capital and Growth Equity, CPP Investments



Marc Weiner
Managing Partner, Westhaver Partners



Randy Clemens
Managing Partner, Rhenium Investments Inc.



Florence Hughes
Co-Founder, Nomadique Ltd.



Amir Gorgi
Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, Fairstone Bank



Gregory Duggan
CEO & Co-Founder, Alcorn Partners



Filip Stoj
Director of Early Stage Banking, RBCx



Lori Simpson
Founding Partner, Leading Minds Lab



Wendy Alderdice
Owner & Principal Consultant, OutPerform HR Consulting



Andrew Rush
Executive Vice President & Partner, Carpedia International



Femmie Schippers
Senior Vice President, Digital Employee Experience & Corporate Functions, Takeda



THE JUDGING PANEL

PRELIMINARY JUDGES

The 36 industry leaders who reviewed every application and shaped the road to Final Weekend.

Andrew Guilfoyle

Co-Founder & Wealth Advisor, Chronicle Wealth

Brad Barbeau

Business Technology Professor, Smith School of Business

Brent Richards

CEO, 5 Prime Sciences; Professor, McGill University

Chris Holt

Associate Professor, Conrad School of Entrepreneurship & Business

Conner Galway

President, Junction Consulting; President, eLearningU

David Belbeck

Advisor, Staircase Ventures

Dimo Dimov

Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, University of Bath

Dirk Rodenburg

Professor, Faculties of Engineering/Arts and Science, Queen's University

Dominic Lim

Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship, Ivey Business School

Donna Gillespie

CEO, Kingston Economic Development Corporation

Dudley Cosford

Director of Partnerships, Maple; Venture Advisor, Storytime Capital

Elsbeth Murray

Associate Professor, Smith School of Business

Endrit Kromidha

Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Birmingham Business School

Eric Mok

President, GRQ Capital Corporation

Faye Pang

Chief Growth Officer, FreshBooks

Gillian Henderson

Vice President, Enerlife Consulting

Greg Libitz

Professor & Distinguished Teaching Fellow of General Management, Queen's University

Jeff Moore

CEO, JM Tech Labs; CEO, ReMendIt; COO, Divergence Neuro Technologies

Jeffrey Fenton

Partner, De Mello Coffee

John Carter

Founder & CEO, Vonigo

JP Shearer

Associate Director, CEISI, Smith School of Business

Julien Sellgren

Founder/Principal, Breakout Analytics

Manoj Anandan

Principal, Private Markets Group, OPTrust

Mark Merchand

Principal, Sustainable Investing & Innovation, OPTrust

Michael Carter

Professor, St. Lawrence College; AI Expert & Metaverse Podcast Host

Peter Gallant

Professor of Innovation, Strategy & Entrepreneurship, Smith School of Business

Revital Gadish

Co-Founder & CEO, Qira

Robbie Marks

Director, MaRS Investment Accelerator Fund

Ryan Donovan

Co-Founder, CEO & Chief Product Officer, RetireMint

Ryan Frankel

President, ROI Research On Investment

Sanjay Gupta

CEO, Earnings Genius

Sarah Burrows

Professor of Entrepreneurship, Queen's University

Sarah Dey Burton

Partner, Leader in Innovation & Design, Bain & Company

Sophie Galper Komet

Founder, Wisdom Star

Susan Bartholomew

Professor & Distinguished Teaching Fellow of International Business, Queen's University

Sidney Sommer

Founder & Managing Director, Stealth Monitoring Inc.



SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Thank you to the organizations who empower entrepreneurship and help make the QEC possible.

SPONSORS



Janson Family Foundation



Calgary Foundation



Mulvihill Drug Mart



Armstrong Partnership



IN KIND



Two Small Fish Ventures





2026
NEWSLETTER



SECTION THREE

QUEEN'S IMPACT

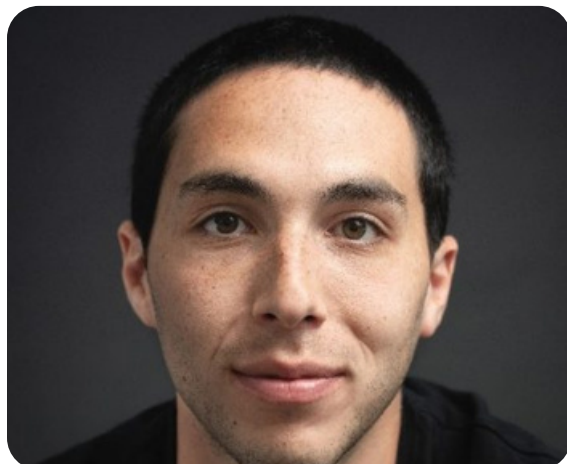
September Speaker Event

Mini QEC



QUEEN'S IMPACT · SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER SPEAKER EVENT



SPEAKER & FOOD AMENITIES SPONSOR

Jeffrey Fenton

PARTNER, DE MELLO COFFEE

An up-and-coming entrepreneur, Jeffrey shared his early-stage journey — and kept the room energized as the event's coffee and food sponsor.



The audience enjoying delicious coffee and snacks provided by De Mello Coffee.



David & Chris Sinkinson

CO-FOUNDERS, APPARMOR · AUTHORS & QEC ALUMNI

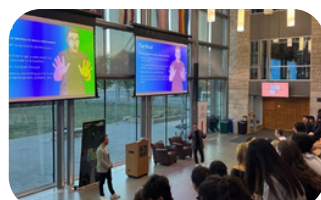
Brothers David and Chris Sinkinson returned to Kingston to share how they built AppArmor — a campus-safety platform used by millions — and scaled it to a multi-million-dollar exit. Their candid, tactical talk on doing things differently was incredibly insightful.



CHECK OUT THEIR NEW BOOK

Startup Differ

The myth-busting blueprint for your multi-million dollar business



Students came to the Goodes atrium to hear David and Chris break down what really builds a multi-million dollar company.



QUEEN'S IMPACT · BEYOND CAMPUS

MINI QEC



THE WINNERS

1

1ST PLACE

KynTrack



2

2ND PLACE

Perceivable Design Studios Inc.



3

3RD PLACE

Astro

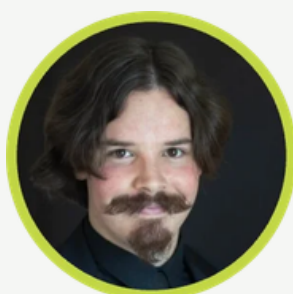


THANK YOU TO OUR MINI QEC JUDGES



Shari Hughson

Founder, Lecturer and
Entrepreneurship Advisor, Smith
School of Business



Simon Denford

International & Domestic Programs
Coordinator, Dunin-Deshpande
Innovation Centre



Peter Gallant

Professor of innovation, strategy
and entrepreneurship, Smith
School of Business



THE QUEEN'S
ENTREPRENEURS'
COMPETITION

2024

JAN 12, 2024

date

pay to the order of

TASTE THE CITY

FIFTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS 00/100 \$15,000

sponsored by:

THE QUEEN'S ENTREPRENEURS' COMPETITION

SECTION FOUR

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

[Peek at Past QEC Competitors](#)



PEEK AT PAST QEC COMPETITORS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Three QEC alumni that have gone on to raise capital, hit national TV, and scale across markets since they competed.



SHARK TANK • \$300K INVESTMENT

Since competing at QEC, BRCÉ has evolved from performance laces into an advanced materials company developing stronger, more durable, and heat-resistant textile composites. The company has secured OEM partnerships with major global brands, appeared on Shark Tank Season 17, earned a U.S. utility patent recognized as a Top 5 Invention by the USPTO, won the Rice Business Plan Competition, and is currently closing its pre-seed funding round.



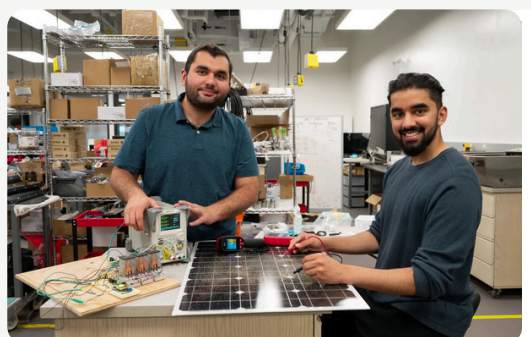
1M+ EARNED BY STUDENTS

Since competing at QEC, LocalStudent has helped over 4,000 students across Ontario earn more than \$1 million through meaningful work opportunities. The experience also helped the team refine its core value proposition and positioning strategy, creating a strong foundation for the company's continued expansion.



TiE50 GLOBAL AWARD WINNER

Since competing at QEC, NerView Surgical has continued to advance its nerve visualization technology, earning recognition through top competitions including FACIT Falcons' Fortunes, the Rice Business Plan Competition Texas Medical Center Healthcare Innovation Prize, and the TiE50 Global Award. The company is now preparing for first-in-human exploratory testing as it works to reduce preventable nerve injuries during surgery.



US\$1.7M RAISED

Since winning QEC, Swish has grown from an early research concept into a VC-backed energy technology company developing AI-powered software and self-cleaning solutions for utility-scale solar infrastructure. The company has raised US\$1.7 million, built a multidisciplinary team, and gained commercial traction across several countries. QEC was an early vote of confidence that helped the team refine its vision, expand its network, and pursue the venture full-time.



DRAGONS DEN

Since winning QEC, Taste the City has expanded its prepaid, text-guided restaurant experiences across several cities, helping guests explore multiple local restaurants in one evening. The company also gained national exposure and secured a \$300,000 deal with Brian Scudamore on Dragons' Den, marking a major milestone in its continued growth.



SECTION FIVE

THE QEC 2027

Timeline



THE ROAD TO FINAL WEEKEND

QEC 2027 TIMELINE

OCT

19

2026

SUBMISSION

Preliminary Round

Competitors submit a 5 page business plan for review by our preliminary judging panel.

FINAL WEEKEND · DAY 1

The Pitch in Toronto

The top 12 teams are invited to pitch in person in front of our judges and live audience.

JAN

8

2027

JAN

9

2027

FINAL WEEKEND · DAY 2

Crowning the Winners

Final-round judges deliberate and select the three winning teams to share the prize pool.



— SECTION SIX

CONTACT US

theqec.com

[@theqec](https://www.instagram.com/theqec)



WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

CONTACT US

If you'd like to learn more or connect with us directly, please don't hesitate to reach out to any member of the QEC team — we'd be glad to hear from you.



theqec.net



[the_qec_2026](https://www.instagram.com/the_qec_2026)



[Queen's Entrepreneurs' Competition](#)



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Marc-Olivier Robert

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Harrison Macdougall

ALUMNI RELATIONS DIRECTOR

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Kira Shteiman

ALUMNI RELATIONS COORDINATOR

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Henry Carter

SPONSORSHIPS DIRECTOR

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Beau Leone

JUDGES & SPEAKERS
DIRECTOR

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Nicholas Bulic

COMPETITORS DIRECTOR

nicholas.bulic@queensu.ca

GET INVOLVED · QEC 2027

Want to be part of QEC 2027?

Compete, judge, speak, sponsor, or partner — fill in the form and the team will be in touch.

Count me in!

Click to access the QEC 2027 Interest Form



— SAVE THE DATE —

QEC 2027 will take place on January 8th & 9th, 2027



2025 - 2026 APPRECIATION

THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING 2025 - 2026 EXECUTIVE TEAM

Your leadership, creativity, and dedication built the foundation for an unforgettable year. **Thank You** for everything.



APPRECIATION

Here's to the team that made **QEC 2025 - 2026** such a memorable year!

Co-Chairs

Michael Di Marzo
Brooklyn Mulvihill
Brian Wu

Senior Advisor

Rachel Matheuszik

Judges & Speakers

Marc-Oliver Robert
Beau Leone
Adam Komet
Ronin Kinloch Varga
Jacob Tisplat

Sponsorship

Alex Osborn
Henry Carter
Elizabeth Lang
Harrison MacDougall
Andrew Newall

Brand

Ty Trotman
Bree Michell
Mike Nguyen
Kira Shteiman
Rosanne Lai

Operations

Adelaide Rider-Nicholson
Jackson Dawson-Scully
Jacob Frankel
Shahana Gugathasan
Lucas Richards

Competitors

Anne-Sophie Ouellet
Anyuan Tu
Elizabeth Amato
Alexandra Hong
Nicholas Bulic

Outreach

Kareena Pathak
Riya Pathak

Culture

Alexia Tudose
Varin Lal

Finance

Andrew Sun
Adrian Gorgi

