

Four local businesses share over \$200,000 in 1Awards prizes

FirstOntario Credit Union's annual small business competition reveals winners

Hamilton ON, May 27, 2026 – Four small businesses were named FirstOntario 1Awards winners as part of the annual pitch competition. Milton's [Tijuana Tom's House of Hot Sauce](#) and Oakville's [Ecoboard Inc.](#) joined Niagara's [Arms Open Counselling](#) and [Swept Away Services](#) as the 2026 prize winners.

This year's pitch competition saw a vast variety of industries vying for prizes and included healthcare, food, energy, event, eco and recreation fields. All 10 finalists put on powerful presentations at Hamilton Stadium, each one trying to sway the panel in their favour with hopes of sharing the \$200,000 prize pool.

Each business owner put a unique twist on their pitch, and they all did an incredible job of explaining what they do, why they do it, and what they need to elevate their success.

"It's important to FirstOntario to continue to support our small business communities," said Joanne Battaglia, SVP, Marketing, Communications and Community Partnerships. "It's because of our 1Awards partners that we've been able to establish this long-standing program that was created to help businesses thrive – we admire all the finalists and their obvious passion for what they do."

Each winner walked away with a customized package based on their needs that included cash and professional services. This year, the cash component consisted of \$35,000 and was divvied up amongst all four businesses.

FirstOntario is proud to continue supporting local business communities and is already looking ahead to 2027's 15-year milestone!

For more information, please contact:

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About FirstOntario Credit Union

FirstOntario is a full service cooperative financial institution, serving members for more than 85 years throughout the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario. With \$7 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 at [FirstOntario.com](https://www.firstontario.com).