

Youth Inspiring Small Business Month in Brampton *Passion for justice fueling law app and firm*

“Brampton has become a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship.”

These are the words of Christien Levien (story below), a Brampton based young entrepreneur whose passion for broad access to justice helped fuel an app-based business. He’s one of many youth across the city chasing their business dreams – and accessing skills training, mentorship and grant money accessible through the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre.

“Last year, the City supported 100 business start-ups, which led to about 150 jobs...and there’s more to come,” says Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffrey. “We have many young people in Brampton with innovative ideas and the drive to succeed, and they are positively impacting our city and our economy.”

October is Small Business Month, and the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre is celebrating entrepreneurship in Brampton with an overload of training and seminars. Look for additional business seminars, delivered in partnership with Brampton Library, at Library locations across the city. The month will be capped off with the main event on October 27. Comedian Kate Davis will be delivering a keynote address on *Innovation through Connectivity* at City Hall on October 27. Come and find out how to establish, cultivate, and keep connections that lead to productivity and success both in business and our personal lives.

Leading up to Small Business Month, be inspired by a series of profiles on young Brampton entrepreneurs making their mark in business and on the city. The first is below...

Passion for justice fueling law app and firm

Christien Levien, a lawyer, had learned a lot of great skills in school, but when he realized he needed exposure to the skills required for the daily operation of a business, he turned to the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre.

“I didn’t really know a lot about business,” says Christien. “The Brampton Entrepreneur Centre and the programming there was great. But it wasn’t just the sessions and seminars. It was also regular meet-ups and networking with other entrepreneurs. It all combined to provide the training and mentorship I needed.”

Christien participated in the Government of Ontario Starter Company program, aimed at youth entrepreneurs. When he completed the program in December 2015, he left with a \$5,000 cheque in start-up funding and an important network of contacts. “I’m still in regular contact with my cohort from the program. We share information, successes and encouragement.”

Christien entered the Starter Company program with his business called Legalswipe – an app that informs people of their legal rights during interactions with police. He has since started another business, as a partner in the criminal law firm Wiley & Levien.

Both businesses are based in Brampton, where Christien was born and raised. And both also spring from a passion for access to justice. A negative experience with police years ago, in

which he was unlawfully detained, left a lasting impression. In addition to the two businesses, he also hosts workshops around the GTA to help racialized youth better understand their legal rights.

“I’ve had excellent support from the legal and social development communities,” says Christien. He also has a team supporting him, from developers at Ryerson University to business developers.

The app, Legalswipe, has been downloaded more than 20,000 times. An investor came on board recently, fueling development. To have broad-based value, the app needs to be localized, as different jurisdictions have different legal nuances and procedures. In fact, he is soon launching the app for the U.S. market. Christien also has plans to expand Legalswipe into employment as well as landlord/tenant law.

There’s no revenue stream as yet, but Christien is considering direct-to-client law firm advertising for his app – making sure it’s appropriately targeted and ethical. He’s also developing connections with lawyer referral services.

“I think Brampton has reached a point where it’s becoming a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship,” says Christien. “Smart people and existing infrastructure – like the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre – are the right combination to see exciting companies grow and prosper.”

The Starter Company program is funded through the Province of Ontario’s Youth Jobs Strategy, and delivered through regional or municipal offices like the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre. It’s one of the many resources entrepreneurs with plans to launch or grow a business can tap into.

The Brampton Entrepreneur Centre runs events throughout the year to support business and connect entrepreneurs. They also offer individual consultations and advice, and are the access point for funding and programs to support start-up and established businesses. Go to Brampton.ca/bec for more information.

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About Brampton: The ninth-largest city in Canada, Brampton celebrates a diverse population that represents people from 209 distinct ethnic backgrounds who speak 89 different languages. Brampton residents and visitors have access to state-of-the-art recreation facilities and one of the fastest-growing transit systems in Canada. Opened in 2007, Brampton Civic Hospital is part of the William Osler Health System, which is one of the largest community hospitals in Canada. For more information, visit www.brampton.ca or follow [@CityBrampton](https://twitter.com/CityBrampton) on Twitter.

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