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Aird & Berlis/Aird & McBurney Partner With Black Entrepreneurs to Protect and Drive Innovation

By Tony Sabeta, B.Eng.

Aird & Berlis LLP and Aird & McBurney LP are pleased to announce a strategic collaboration with the Black Entrepreneurship Alliance (BEA) to provide legal guidance and support for Black entrepreneurs.

“As a firm, we must acknowledge the pervasive racial inequality in our society, take ownership of it, and take action to contribute something enduring to solve the problem,” said Tony Sabeta, Co-Director of the Startups Group and Partner at Aird & McBurney LP. “We are committed to offering Black entrepreneurs practical and strategic legal expertise related to company formation and structuring, intellectual property strategy, financing, and other business matters.”

“We see BEA as a platform for Black entrepreneurs in the community to refine their ideas and define their future,” he said. “Protecting an idea and navigating the commercial and regulatory challenges in bringing it to market is just as critical as coming up with one.”

The BEA is an agri-food program and partnership between York University and the Black Creek Community Health Centre in Toronto. It will offer a full spectrum of education, mentorship and acceleration supports to Black entrepreneurs seeking to establish or improve agri-food businesses.

“Starting a new business can be a daunting endeavour. There are many things to consider such as intellectual property rights, raising capital, hiring the right employees, developing a marketing plan and executing a sales strategy,” said Olu Villasa, Manager, BEA. “One of the most important aspects of starting a business is ensuring that the business is legally compliant and protected. Unfortunately, this is one of the last areas considered by many entrepreneurs, Black or otherwise.”

“This strategic collaboration is an important step along the entrepreneurial journey, and we are excited to work with Aird & McBurney LP,” said Cheryl Prescod, Executive Director at Black Creek Community Health Centre. “Black entrepreneurs often lack the exposure and resources needed to grow a business. Protecting intellectual property and familiarizing entrepreneurs with these services will benefit them and empower Black-owned businesses in our community.”

Expected to support more than 350 entrepreneurs over the next three years, the BEA is supported by a \$3-million Government of Canada investment through the Black Entrepreneurship Program Ecosystem Fund delivered by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

“Black entrepreneurs continue to drive innovation in the Canadian economy, and our government is proud to support collaborations that foster the growth of business skills ecosystems,” said the Honourable Helena Jaczek, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. “Through this and other Black Entrepreneurship Program investments, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring Black entrepreneurs have the tools they need to drive strong, diverse and inclusive economic growth across Southern Ontario.”

Author



Tony Sabeta, B.Eng.
Patent Agent | Partner
T 416.865.7711
tsabeta@airdmcburney.com

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