

Nova Scotia was Business Dynamism Leader Between 2015 and 2019

According to Canadian Federation of Business (CFIB) more businesses have been closing than opening in Canada. It's time to admit it: We're in an entrepreneurial drought. High costs, red tape, labour challenges and never-ending uncertainty discouraging the next generation of entrepreneurs.

More businesses in Canada have closed than opened for six consecutive quarters, and more than half (55%) of small business owners say they would not recommend starting a business right now, according to new research by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

CFIB's new report, Canada's Entrepreneurial Drought, Part 1: The Shrinking Business Landscape, is the first in a two-part series examining the growing imbalance between business creation and

closures across the country.

The entrepreneurial drought, a sustained period of four or more quarters where business exits outpace new business entries, has been ongoing since early 2024. While the overall trend of business creation in Canada has been declining since mid-1980s, openings had mostly outpaced business closures. That's not the case anymore. In the second quarter of 2025, exit rates reached 5.6%, while entry rates fell to 4.8% in Q4 2025, marking some of the highest closure rates and weakest startup activity outside the pandemic period.

Nova Scotia's experience reflects these warning signs. While the province was the only one to show modest business dynamism between 2015 and 2019 and experienced a moderately strong recovery following the pandemic

through the end of 2024, that momentum has since become subdued. Recent data points to weakening net business entries, suggesting that confidence in entrepreneurship is softening.

"Small business owners are facing record-high costs, mounting taxes, and endless red tape, while governments focus elsewhere. You can't grow an economy by pricing entrepreneurs out of it." Said Louis-Philippe Gauthier, CFIB Atlantic Vice-President. "If we want a stronger, more competitive economy here at home, we need to make it easier, not harder, for entrepreneurs to get started and grow."

The pressures facing small businesses go well beyond entry and exit trends. Nationally, two-thirds of small firms say they feel unsupported by their provincial governments, only 3% strongly believe

their government has a clear vision for entrepreneurship, and 73% are not confident in the federal government.

"Left unaddressed, Canada's entrepreneurial drought will continue to shrink the small business sector, limit job creation, and weaken communities. Governments cannot afford to ignore these warning signs—restoring the conditions for entrepreneurship must become an economic priority," concluded Gauthier.

Part 2 of CFIB's entrepreneurial drought report series: "Fixing Canada's Shrinking Business Landscape" will be released on April 28, 2026. Part 2 will provide practical recommendations for governments to help end Canada's entrepreneurial drought.

Visit cfib.ca/drought for more information.



Projects Supporting the Growth of Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem

(Also see story on page 3)

NOTE: Because Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the latest buzzword, and all of us have limited knowledge, we want you to be exposed to what companies in Atlantic Canada are involved. Hence this list of 40 companies, who have been awarded \$8.5-Million for research funding.

The following companies are supporting the growth of artificial intelligence ecosystem in Atlantic Canada as identified by ACOA. The projects funded through the Regional Artificial Intelligence Initiative (RAII).

Bulletproof Solutions ULC: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Engage expertise to enhance productivity through Artificial Intelligence integration. Investment: \$49,500 (non-repayable)

Université de Moncton – Campus de Shippagan: Shippagan, New Brunswick. Optimize production lines through AI and collaborative robotics. Investment: \$93,000 (non-repayable)

CKF Incorporated: Hantsport, Nova Scotia. Execute training initiatives and launch business tools developed from AI strategies. Investment: \$124,500 (repayable)

Aucure Inc.: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Undertake market development activities to increase market awareness and accelerate growth. Investment: \$75,000 (repayable)

Liquid Health Data Inc.: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Engage expertise to develop an AI-driven system for financial operations in healthcare. Investment: \$50,000 (conditionally repayable)

LEXA Intelligence Corporation: Moncton, New Brunswick. Commercialize iOne technology to enter the physical security market. Investment: \$250,000 (repayable)

HomeschoolToGo: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Commercialize an AI-powered platform for custom homeschool curricula. Investment: \$84,000 (non-repayable)

Canadian Black Women in Excellence Society: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Support business accelerator programs to equip Black women entrepreneurs with AI tools, business strategies, and mentorship. Investment: \$60,750 (non-repayable)

Chick Pick: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Commercialize AI-powered chick sorting equipment. Investment: \$400,000 (non-repayable)

FLOQER Inc.: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Scale its AI-powered sales platform, create jobs and achieve compliance to expand into new markets. Investment: \$294,000 (repayable)

Volta Labs Incorporated: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Foster AI and digital technology adoption in SMEs across the province, and create new business opportunities for regional AI Driven Enterprises (AIDEs). Investment: \$557,000 (non-repayable)

Dalhousie University: Halifax,

Nova Scotia. Support the AI2Market pilot program to train students in AI and entrepreneurship, turning ideas into companies. Investment: \$200,000 (non-repayable)

trophii.ai: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Undertake marketing and product development activities to accelerate revenue growth. Investment: \$950,000 (repayable)

qualiTEAS Inc.: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Undertake commercialization activities to accelerate revenue growth. Investment: \$60,000 (conditionally repayable)

Université de Moncton: Moncton, New Brunswick. Encourage the adoption of artificial intelligence for small and medium-sized enterprises. Investment: \$1,820,000 (non-repayable)

Additional Projects funded through ACOA's Regional Economic Growth through Innovation (REGI) program to support the adoption and development of generative AI applications:

Kardio Diagnostix Inc.: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise for product development and market research to prepare for Health Canada and FDA approvals. Investment: \$200,000 (repayable)

CKF Incorporated: Hantsport, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to evaluate operations, design and implement AI and digitization strategies. Investment: \$100,000 (non-repayable)

Mariner Partners Inc.: Saint John,

New Brunswick. Engage expertise to develop an AI-driven fault detection system. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Pluragon IT Inc.: Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to develop and commercialize an AI-driven mobile app for grocery savings. Investment: \$49,500 (non-repayable)

Myomar Molecular Inc.: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Engage senior software developer to build predictive analytics for clinical and market adoption. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

e-WorkSAFE: Saint John, New Brunswick. Engage expertise to develop AI roadmap. Investment: \$37,500 (non-repayable)

ResolveHD: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to develop a new AI-based product to expand into new markets. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Greenlight Analytical Inc.: Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to enhance development of AI-based analytical model. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Expertise Hub Co-operative: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Implement phase I of a multi-phase immigration retention and mentorship initiative. Investment: \$131,250 (non-repayable)

ImmigrateAI Global: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to support development of AI-powered platform to simplify immigration applications. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Tourism Industry Association of New Brunswick Inc.: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Host the 2025 NB Tourism Summit and deliver capacity-building training to operators. Investment: \$153,910 (non-repayable)

Bulletproof Solutions ULC: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Develop and commercialize a new AI-centric cybersecurity service offering. Investment: \$49,500 (non-repayable)

Innerlogic: Bedford, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to accelerate the adoption of its engagement and culture analytics platform. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Digital Nova Scotia: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Deliver Artificial Intelligence training and micro-credentialing program. Investment: \$387,000 (non-repayable)

TechImpact: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Support the 2025 InnovateNB Awards and the AI Conference Series. Investment: \$67,500 (non-repayable)

Easy Platter: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Engage expertise to launch a market-ready version of the platform powered by its AI assistant. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Food and Beverage Atlantic Association Inc.: Moncton, New Brunswick. Support high-impact AI workshops helping SMEs integrate AI into core operations. Investment: \$88,108 (non-repayable)

L & A Metalworks Inc.: Frederic-

ton, New Brunswick. Engage expertise to develop an AI-driven estimating engine. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Event Temple: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Assist company with product development and AI integration. Investment: \$367,500 (repayable)

Digital Nova Scotia: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Assist Nova Scotian SMEs with AI adoption and integration. Investment: \$200,000 (non-repayable)

CharliAI Inc.: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Establish marketing and Artificial Intelligence hub. Investment: \$487,500 (repayable)

Spandrel Interactive: Fredericton, New Brunswick. Engage expertise of

Artificial Intelligence specialist. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

AGADA Biosciences Inc.: Halifax, Nova Scotia. Expand facility, acquire advanced lab equipment and create five jobs to develop new services. Investment: \$576,750 (repayable)

Wellfish Tech (Canada) Inc.: Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Engage expertise in AI training and validation. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Quidi Vidi Brewing Company Ltd.: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Enhance Artificial Intelligence capabilities to boost productivity and growth. Investment: \$50,000 (non-repayable)

Millen Farms

80 Little Dyke Road RR #1 Great Village 902-662-3848

SUPPORT LOCAL PRODUCERS

Fresh Frozen Berries

IN STORES NOW

SHOP LOCAL

GREAT PROJECTS start here!

- Lumber & Decking
- Siding

POST & RAIL FENCING

LUMBER

In Stock Available and Sawn to Order

LUMBER

- SIDING
- Clapboard, T&G, Shiplap
- TAMARACK LARCH DECKING**
- Rot Resistant & Eco-Friendly
- Call or email to order

SIDING

Visit Us Online: www.novatree.ca

2715 Hwy #4, Glenholme NS B0M 1G0

902-662-3129

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 7:30am - 5:00pm
Saturdays by appointment.

DAVE RITCEY

MLA

Truro • Bible Hill

Millbrook • Salmon River

902-897-0884

mlaritcey@bellaliant.com