



Friday, June 16, 2017

For Immediate Release

KINGSTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES CEO APPOINTMENT

The Board of Kingston's Economic Development Corporation is pleased to announce that Donna Gillespie has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer. After completion of the review process in 2016, the Board of Directors engaged Summit Search Group to undertake a national search for this leadership position.

Summit Search Group identified over 300 potential candidates and put forward five candidates who were interviewed by the Selection Committee of the Board. After careful deliberation, the Search Committee and Board of Directors endorsed Donna Gillespie as the best candidate to move the organization forward. Over the last 18 months in her role as Interim CEO, Donna has led the organization's turn around with significant advances in terms of transparency, relationship building and strong results in business attraction.

The Kingston Economic Development Corporation was recently applauded by UK based *Financial Times* for being a top economic development organization in the Americas for Foreign Direct Investment Strategy. This accolade came after Kingston EcDev's recent work in attracting Portuguese fruit processor Frulact and Chinese infant formula manufacturer Feihe to Kingston. These two opportunities bring close to \$300 million new investment to the city of Kingston and are projected to create 300 new direct full-time jobs in the next few years.

In addition, under Gillespie's leadership Kingston EcDev has initiated an enhanced Business Retention and Expansion Program for 2017 which has brought in \$500,000 in new support for local businesses from the Province of Ontario and community partners.

Kingston Economic Development Corporation is governed by a Board of Directors which includes the Mayor and three city Councillors. Community members are appointed through the City of Kingston Nominations process.

Quotes:

"The Board is unanimous in the appointment of Donna Gillespie as CEO. She brings extensive economic development experience which sets her as a leader in her field. The Board looks forward to working with Donna on the many significant files the organization is working on including the on-boarding Feihe and Frulact, two of Canada's largest foreign direct investments."

-Judith Pineault, Chair, Kingston Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors

“We are extremely excited by the selection of Ms. Donna Gillespie as CEO. I had the opportunity to work directly with her for our Feihe project and we were extremely impressed by the leadership her and her team demonstrated on behalf of the people of Kingston. We are even more confident that our groundbreaking project will be a success under her guidance.”

-Judy Tu, Vice President, Feihe International

“I am thrilled to learn of the CEO appointment. Donna has done an incredible job in taking KEDCO through a challenging time and rebuilding the organization. Her knowledge of our community is extensive and she is a tremendous asset to local businesses. I look forward to working together with Donna and the new economic development organization to continue building a strong Kingston business community where Kingstonians can work, live and play.”

-Peng Sang Cau, CEO, Transformix Engineering

“In my opinion, Donna has the ability to recognize expertise both within and outside of her organization, and the facility to leverage both to the overarching benefit of all in the community. She takes the approach of creating unity rather than divisiveness. She is a savvy and successful business woman who is ably demonstrating her leadership skills.”

-Peter Kostagiannis, Broker, Cushman & Wakefield Kingston

“I’m excited to learn Donna has been named #TeamYGK’s Chief Sales Person. In her role as interim CEO of our Economic Development Office I’ve seen her seek feedback, ask hard questions, adapt her plans and then take action. Donna’s leadership will be critical in our collective efforts to create greater prosperity for our city. In the near term, her skills will help us build more effective relationships, and in the long term, I know she will push our young entrepreneurial talent to think big and do bigger. I congratulate her and wish her great success in her leadership of Kingston’s sales team.”

-A.J. Keilty, President & CEO, Varsity Properties Inc.

“I have the pleasure to congratulate you, for the enormous job that you are doing for the success and visibility of “my new city” of Kingston. You are really a passionate team leader, that loves what you are doing and have the right capability to make the things happen... and it makes the differences.”

-Joao Miranda, Owner, Frulact

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About Kingston Economic Development Corporation

The Kingston Economic Development Corporation is focused on building a strong community and supporting Kingston’s thriving economy. Its mission is to provide dynamic and collaborative leadership by leveraging Kingston's unique assets to create jobs and investment in order to sustain, grow and transform Kingston's economy to meet the needs of the 21st century.

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