



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW STRATFORD GROUP BLENDS TECHNOLOGY AND LIFESTYLE

Stratford, ON – With all the buzz around work-life balance, a new group of Stratford-area technophiles is showing how it's done. Avonova (formerly The Stratford Technology Group) is a grassroots gathering of people living and working in the Stratford area and establishing a local technology culture. They meet the first Tuesday evening of each month at the Stratford Country Club to hear guest speakers address current technology issues, share their own ideas and experiences, and get to know each other as Stratford residents, employees and business owners.

Some of Avonova's fifty members live in Stratford and commute to Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and London for their technology jobs, some live elsewhere but work or own businesses here, some get to stay in town for both. But they all share a professional interest in technology and an affinity for Stratford as a community. Originally called The Stratford Technology Group, the group recently re-branded as Avonova – a palindrome and mash up of the Avon River (*avon* is ancient Breton for "river") and *nova* defined as "a sudden brightening of a previously inconspicuous star."

Avonova is one of several high-tech stars aligning in Stratford: the Mayor is positioning Stratford to reinvent itself as an "intelligent community" and digital technology centre; the Stratford Institute is breaking ground as a digital media research centre in conjunction with the University of Waterloo; Stratford's citywide Wi-Fi network is under construction; a major Canadian bank is proceeding with plans to build a large data centre; last year's Stratford Declaration outlined principles for a digital media strategy for Canada; and the second Canada 3.0 conference is about to kick off.

Ian Wilson, Director, UW Stratford Initiatives, says, "We keep finding more and more reasons to feel good about this being the time, and Stratford being the place, for a new educational institution in digital media. That Avonova has spontaneously emerged at the same time, is yet another healthy indicator that Stratford has a key role in Canada's digital future."

Stratford's Mayor, Dan Mathieson, who recently delivered a keynote at an Avonova meeting agrees. "Avonova is further evidence of Stratford's emergence as a technology centre. It's encouraging to see these highly qualified and motivated people combining their interest in technology with their love for Stratford as a great place to live, work and do business."

One of the group's founders, Mary Reinhart, made her career in IT before her own move to Stratford. "Technology is exciting because it's always changing," she says. "But I came to Stratford seven years ago because there's an extraordinary lifestyle here: a small city with so much culture, community connection and beautiful surroundings. It's an amazing combination."

“I kept meeting these high-calibre people in Stratford who work in technology and live here for the same reasons, and we started thinking, ‘We have to start getting together.’ So Laura Martin of Covarity, Kevin Tuer of the Canadian Digital Media Network, Communitech and University of Waterloo, and I decided to start meeting, bring in interesting speakers for fresh input and cultivate a local technology culture.”

Previous guest speakers have included Mayor Mathieson, Ian Wilson and Kevin Tuer; Andrew Williams, CEO of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance; John Zelek of University of Waterloo and Tactile Sight Inc.; and Randy Mattice of Stratford Economic Development.

AVONOVA is a grassroots group of technology-minded people living or working in the Stratford area. We work with technology because it’s an exciting field; we’re passionate about Stratford for the locale, culture and lifestyle. We think that’s a great combination. **AVONOVA** is about meeting people, exchanging fresh ideas and building a local technology culture. For more information and a schedule of events, visit www.avonova.ca