



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, August 6, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barrie launches Digital Main Street Service Squad

(Barrie, Ontario) The City of Barrie has received a \$40,000 grant from Digital Main Street (DMS), a Government of Ontario program. The grant will fund a Digital Service Squad that will help main street small businesses learn and adopt digital tools and processes to better evolve and grow.

Through the City's Small Business Centre, trained specialists in the Digital Service Squad will visit businesses in Barrie's city centre to provide free training and advisory services on digital sales and marketing strategies and tools. Nearly 500 independently-owned businesses on Dunlop St, Bayfield St, Essa Rd, and the downtown Barrie district are eligible to receive training. The Squad will operate from August to March 2020.

A joint program funded by the Government of Ontario and delivered by the Ontario BIA Association, Digital Main Street helps small main street businesses adopt new technologies from e-commerce and social media to back-office systems such as payroll and inventory. Digital Main Street also offers 2,000 grants of \$2,500 each to qualifying small businesses across Ontario to help them adopt new digital technologies. For more information visit digitalmainstreet.ca

Barrie's Digital Service Squad is a collaboration between the City of Barrie and Small Business Centre, in partnership with the Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA), Georgian College, Sandbox Centre, and Barrie Public Library.

Businesses will be introduced to Barrie's Digital Service Squad over the coming weeks. For more information, contact the Small Business Centre at 705-720-2445 or smallbusiness@barrie.ca.

QUOTES:

- "This program is an important step in building a strong future for Barrie's independent businesses and further enhancing our creative corridor and growing city centre," said Karen Dubeau, Director of the City of Barrie's Creative Economy Department. "Barrie's Digital Service Squad will help connect new residents, tourists, and consumers around the world directly with our small local businesses, creating a dynamic and vibrant downtown."
- "Our government is committed to helping small businesses improve their competitiveness, create jobs and attract investment," said Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. "That's why I'm so pleased that businesses in Barrie will benefit from the expertise of a Digital Service Squad to help small businesses embrace digital technology. Our investment in the Digital Main Street program will help to ensure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs."
- "Digital Service Squads will help to modernize businesses in Barrie and make them more competitive," said Andrea Khanjin, MPP for Barrie-Innisfil. "The training will also provide them with the tools to take advantage of new digital opportunities that will help our local businesses to grow."
- "Having the ability and tools to integrate technology is a critical factor for business success in the digital age," said Doug Downey, MPP for Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte. "Businesses in Barrie will be receiving hands-on training from the Digital Service Squads to support and help grow their online presence."
- "The City of Barrie and its partners are among the many municipalities that are leading the way in using the power of Digital Main Street to help keep their downtown cores vibrant and strong," said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of the Ontario BIA Association. "Our small main street businesses are a critical contributor to Ontario's economic, social and cultural well-being, and it's vital that we work together to ensure their success. Digital Main Street will help the main street small businesses in and around Barrie compete in an increasingly digital world."



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About the City of Barrie

Barrie is an exciting, caring and progressive community that 147,000 people call home. Situated 90 km north of the Greater Toronto Area on beautiful Kempenfelt Bay, Barrie offers an excellent lifestyle and multitude of recreational opportunities. We are committed to the growth of prosperity of Central Ontario's leading City and most dynamic waterfront community.

About the Ontario BIA Association

OBIAA is the network that represents unique and vibrant BIAs across Ontario. The Association supports and advocates on behalf of its members through the building and nurturing of strong relationships and partnerships. OBIAA is a leader in the development and sharing of information, tools, resources and best practices, and is the ONE voice on common issues.

About Digital Main Street

Vibrant main streets help attract visitors, create jobs, and increase the competitiveness of small businesses, which are the backbone of small rural communities. The world is changing. Small main street businesses across Ontario must think about how to promote online, use e-commerce, and streamline their processes with digital tools to stay competitive and win. To help Ontario's main street small businesses enhance their digital capabilities and online presence, the Ontario BIA Association and Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs have partnered on this \$12 million initiative over three years. www.digitalmainstreet.ca

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