



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City receives grant to help Barrie and surrounding area small businesses leverage online opportunities

Barrie, ON – The City of Barrie has received a \$35,000 grant from Digital Main Street's Ontario Grants Program (OGP) to support a Digital Service Squad (DSS) to help Barrie-area small businesses improve their online presence.

"Smart recovery programs help build capacity for businesses that can give them lasting strength. Digital Main Street has proven to be effective in supporting small businesses at a time when many of them need it," said Mayor Jeff Lehman. "I'm delighted to see the program expanding here in Barrie and the surrounding area."

"This Digital Main Street program has become a valued resource for the Barrie business community," notes Stephannie Schlichter, Director of Economic and Creative Development at the City of Barrie. "The success stories from local businesses that have leveraged the program shows the need for digital supports and how the program continues to assist in recovery and building a resilient community amidst the pandemic."

Digital Main Street helps businesses achieve digital transformation through online learning platforms, structured training programs, and a Digital Service Squad. This grant allows for the return of two existing Digital Service Squad members and two new members to support the Barrie area. These trained specialists will meet with small businesses, at no cost, to provide digital support in areas like social media, graphic design, web development and photography.

New this year, small businesses no longer need to be part of a zoned main street area to qualify. The Barrie, Simcoe County and Orillia Digital Service Squad will be servicing Barrie, Adjala-Tosorontio, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Essa, Innisfil, Midland, New Tecumseth, Orillia, Oro-Medonte, Penetanguishene, Ramara, Severn, Springwater, Tay and Tiny.

"Ontario small businesses are the heart of our neighbourhoods and the economic foundation of our communities," said Nina Tangri, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for Ontario. "Our government is committed to being there for them as they reopen. This additional support will give these businesses the digital boost they need to raise their profile and rebuild better than ever."

Renewed government funding of the OGP—including investment from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade—will provide 3,000 Digital Transformation Grants to qualified brick-and-mortar small businesses as well as Digital Service Squad grants for organizations to provide hands-on assistance to local small businesses. The OGP is administrated by the Ontario BIA Association, in partnership with the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA).

"In the past 18 months, as small businesses across the province fought to stay open and keep customers engaged online, Digital Service Squads were there to help," said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of OBIAA. "Squads jumped online themselves during lockdowns to help virtually, and businesses have consistently told us how important the DSS were to their success through the pandemic. We are thrilled to support Barrie's DSS and help them provide assistance to even more small businesses than ever."

Businesses can learn more and register for the program at "Digital Service Squad" via barriebusinesscentre.ca.



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ABOUT the City of Barrie

Barrie is an exciting, caring, and progressive community that 151,000 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 OBIAA

OBIAA is the network that represents unique and vibrant BIAs across Ontario. The Association, incorporated in 2001, 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.

www.obiaa.com

ABOUT Digital Main Street

Digital Main Street is a program that helps main street businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, and our Digital Service Squad, a team of street-level team members who help main street businesses grow and manage their operations through technology.

Digital Main Street was created by the Toronto Association on Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) with direct support from the City of Toronto. DMS is also supported by a group of strategic business partners, including Google, Mastercard, Shopify, Microsoft, Facebook, Intuit QuickBooks, Square, and Yellow Pages. www.digitalmainstreet.ca

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