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Ontario BIA Association (OBIAA) Shines A Light On Energy Efficiency Awareness for Main Streets

Collingwood, ON— The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association announced today it will work with BIAs to improve the Energy Efficiency Awareness for Main Streets. This project is in partnership with the Government of Ontario and a component of the Main Street Enhancement Initiative, announced in the 2017 Fall Economic Statement.

The Ontario Energy Efficiency Awareness Initiative (EEAI) aims to help small businesses remain competitive by helping them understand opportunities to manage their energy use, including through participation in energy efficiency programs offered by their local electricity and natural gas utilities, and by the Green Ontario Fund. As a whole, the Main Street Enhancement Initiative (MSEI) is expected to provide direct support for business to undertake capital improvements, enhance their digital capabilities and make energy efficiency improvements. The Project, reflecting the goals of the EEAI, is anticipated to result in increased energy management and program awareness among small businesses in main street areas. Using local or sector association is an industry best practice for reaching these traditionally hard-to-reach businesses. OBIAA and BIAs are trusted by small business owners and will use their local expertise to help design and deliver an education and awareness campaign that is tailored to their small business members.

This project will include:

1. Market Research to identify the gaps in knowledge of the BIAs and BIA member business with regards to energy management practices, energy efficiency programs and the benefits of energy efficiency improvements.
2. Education & Awareness to:
 - BIAs with the materials and templates required to hold education and awareness events for member businesses
 - Inform BIAs and members through Webinars, Website and Social Media
3. Participant Recognition through the OBIAA Awards to add a minimum of two new award categories; to recognize (a) a BIA, (b) a BIA-endorsed small business. The new award categories will recognize significant efforts and/or results in promoting and/or undertaking energy efficiency programs.
4. Workshops and Conference Sessions where OBIAA will hold energy efficiency break-out sessions at the annual conferences in 2019 and 2020

The Project is intended to result in an increase in small businesses knowledge of how to manage their energy usage and reduce their GHG emissions through energy management practices and an increased participation in energy efficiency programs (e.g. existing Save On Energy electricity conservation programs and natural gas conservation programs, and planned Green Ontario Fund programs) and will be guided by an Advisory Committee.



About OBIAA

The [Ontario BIA Association \(OBIAA\)](http://www.obiaa.com), since 2001, acts as an important resource for education, partnership and collaboration to each BIA across the province. OBIAA is the network that represents the more than 300 unique and vibrant BIAs across Ontario. OBIAA is a leader in the development and sharing of information, tools, resources and best practices, and is the ONE voice on common issues.

Background:

- The Recipient, the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), is the provincial network representing the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) across Ontario.
- BIAs are established by municipalities through Ontario's Municipal Act, 2001 to promote a vibrant business community and oversee the improvement, beautification and maintenance of the business areas they represent.
- As the provincial network organization for BIAs, OBIAA acts as an important resource for education, partnership and collaboration to support BIAs in helping their member businesses thrive.
- Small businesses are vital to the Ontario economy. They are responsible for a majority of employment, and provide essential goods and services to larger companies, consumers, and government.
- Business associations including OBIAA, as well as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Federation of Independent Business have raised concerns regarding competitiveness and growth issues facing small businesses. Additionally, they have raised concerns about growing costs (e.g. labour costs, energy costs and costs associated with cap and trade).
- There is value in specifically reducing the risk that main street business areas will fail. Failure not only impacts individual small businesses, but also those communities that rely on vibrant main street areas – where small businesses play a significant role – for their economic vitality.
- Ontario's 2017 LTEP, Delivering Fairness and Choice, reaffirms the province's commitment to conservation and commits to the continued availability of conservation programs for all sectors to help customers manage their energy consumption and remain competitive.
- Ontario has a suite of energy efficiency programs available to small businesses, including Save on Energy electricity conservation and natural gas demand side management.
- In addition to these programs, the Green Ontario Fund is mandated to further the deployment of technology that reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and the production of goods, and is delivering programs and other initiatives to support fuel-switching and deep GHG reductions in homes and businesses.
 - The Green Ontario Fund is expected to begin rolling out programs to support small and medium sized enterprises in 2018.
- Despite the availability of programs, small businesses have traditionally been a hard-to-reach sector for energy efficiency programs. According to a 2017 market research report conducted for the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) by Ipsos, small businesses:
 - Tend not to have energy management plans in place and lack resources to commit to energy management.
 - Are reluctant to pay any out-of-pocket cost for energy efficiency initiatives, in spite of being shown pay back periods and potential energy savings on their bills because these initiatives are not linked to their core business.

Would like centralized information on energy efficiency programs to help understand the energy sector and programs as these relate to their business or business segment (e.g. hairdressers vs. book stores).

For more information, please contact:

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