



For Immediate Release

April 11, 2017

**OBIAA Announces the Expansion of the Main Street Digital Initiative
at the 18th Annual BIA National Conference in Collingwood**

On Monday, April 9, 2018, Jeff Leal, Minister Responsible for Small Business, and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, announced a new program in partnership with the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) to support main street businesses to modernize the way they do business and attract customers by helping them adopt new digital technologies and build online presence.

"We are excited to support small businesses as they seek to enhance their digital capabilities. The Main Street Digital Initiative will provide access to tools and expertise in order to capitalize on the new opportunities that can be realized through technology."

Jeff Leal, Minister Responsible for Small Business and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Part of the province's Main Street Enhancement Fund, the Main Street Digital Initiative will help small businesses improve their digital capabilities and tap into the latest trends of today's digital economy, including setting up an online store, making businesses more mobile-friendly and using social media and apps to promote businesses.

OBIAA applauds the Main Street Enhancement Fund, which recognizes the importance of downtown and main street small business.

OBIAA is looking forward to administering **Ontario's Main Street Digital Initiative** by expanding and complementing the existing Digital Main Street Program, as created by the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA) and the City of Toronto.

The new initiative builds on an existing Toronto-based program and expands the services for small businesses across the province, including:

- **Web platform**: provides access to basic digital services, including vetted lists of vendors who can identify technologies and tools businesses need to become digital ready.
- **Digital training** (online and in-person): offers specific digital technologies or strategies including e-commerce, social media and website development.
- **Service squad**: provides one-on-one assistance and digital assessments by highly trained team who can come into stores to offer services and recommendations, including activating free and easy to use tools.
- **Digital transformation training and grants**: provides grants of up to \$2,500 to help businesses adopt technology and meet their digital goals.

"Ontario's Main Street Businesses know the importance of being online. The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association is pleased to work with the Ontario government to help ensure Main Street businesses succeed by improving their digital skills and their ability to tap into the latest trends of today's digital economy!" stated Kay Matthews, Executive Director of the Ontario BIA Association at last Monday's announcement.

OBIAA, through this project and more, is truly becoming a catalyst for positive social and economic change, enabling growth in Ontario's BIAs, indeed small businesses across Ontario, and their respective communities.



Quick Facts

- Ontario is investing \$12 million in the Main Street Digital Initiative, which will be administered by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA). This initiative is part of a \$40 million investment over three years in the Main Street Enhancement Initiative.
- OBIAA will work with Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas and City of Toronto to expand and complement an existing digital main street program currently available to businesses in Toronto.
- Main street areas across Ontario are largely comprised of small, independent businesses.
- About one-third of Ontario workers are employed by small businesses, which are businesses that employ less than 100 paid employees.
- [Get more information and sign up for updates here](#)
- www.digitalmainstreet.ca
- Hashtag: #DigitalMainSt
- <http://obiaa.com/province-of-ontario-announces-province-wide-digital-main-street-initiative/>

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

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