



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Almaguin Launches Digital Main Street Service Squad

Region receives \$30,000 Digital Main Street Grant to help main street businesses improve online presence.

July 30th, 2019: Burk's Falls, Ontario. The Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) Department today announced that they have received a \$30,000 grant from Digital Main Street (DMS), an Ontario government program, to fund a Digital Service Squad to help small businesses improve their online capabilities.

As part of Digital Main Street, the Digital Service Squad grant from the Ontario government will be used to establish a Digital Service Squad to help small businesses of the Almaguin Highlands Region to enhance their use of digital tools and techniques to better evolve and grow. The Squad will consist of trained specialists who will visit and assist businesses at no cost to help them set up Google My Business, conduct a digital-readiness assessment and apply for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant. The Squad will be administered by the ACED Department and will start visiting businesses by mid-August 2019.

"ACED is very excited to be partnering with the Digital Main Street Program to launch the Almaguin Digital Service Squad," said Tim Brunton, ACED Chair and Councillor for the Municipality of Magnetawan. "Throughout the Almaguin Highlands Business Retention and Expansion interview process, businesses across the region clearly expressed an interest in learning about social media, e-marketing and other online marketing tools. The Almaguin Digital Service Squad will bring this learning opportunity right to their front door."

A joint program funded by Government of Ontario and delivered by the Ontario BIA Association, Digital Main Street helps improve how small businesses use digital tools and techniques to become more successful. Today's digital economy is vital to small businesses, and DMS will help them adopt new digital technologies from e-commerce and social media to back-office systems such as payroll and inventory.

"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 the Almaguin Highlands Region 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."



“The exposure and training that businesses in the Almaguin Highlands Region will receive in digital technology will prove extremely helpful in gaining the knowledge necessary to compete in the digital age,” said Norm Miller, MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Digital Main Street offers two types of grants:

1. Digital Transformation Grant: There are 2,000 grants of \$2,500 each available to qualifying small “main street” businesses across Ontario to help them adopt new digital technologies.
2. Digital Service Squad Grant: There are 300 grants of \$10,000 each available to qualifying municipal or business groups across Ontario to develop and implement local squads of digital vendors and experts to directly help small businesses.

“Burk’s Falls and the surrounding townships are leading the way in using the power of Digital Main Street to help keep their downtown core 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 health, and it’s vital that we work together to ensure their success. Digital Main Street will help the region’s main street small businesses compete in an increasingly digital world.”

Businesses within the BIA area will be introduced to the Digital Service Squad over the coming weeks. For further information contact the Almaguin Economic Development Office by phone: (705)382-3332 or by email: cedo@burksfalls.ca

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ABOUT the Almaguin Community Economic Development Department

The Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) Department is committed to ensuring the economic and social prosperity of the Almaguin Region. Following the launch of the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan in late 2018, municipal stakeholders from across the region, in partnership with the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce, have formed ACED to work together to execute the plan’s objectives. These objectives are focused on connecting three main areas that make up our region’s economy: The Land, The People, and the Legacy. Together we will celebrate and preserve our rich culture, heritage, natural beauty and quality of life through effective leadership, strong communication and proactive planning for the future of the Almaguin Highlands Region.

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