

# News Release

Town of Oakville



OAKVILLE

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## **Oakville Launches Digital Main Street Service Squad**

*Oakville receives \$30,000 grant to help main street businesses improve online presence*

### **Oakville, August 15, 2019 – for immediate release**

Oakville's Economic Development department today announced that it received a grant from the Ontario government to fund a Digital Service Squad to help main street small businesses improve their online capabilities. The \$30,000 provincial grant complements the \$20,000 the town has already contributed to the program as part of the mitigation strategy for the Lakeshore Road Streetscape Project.

The town received the grant on behalf of the Downtown Oakville BIA, Bronte Village BIA and Kerr Village BIA to extend the contract for two trained specialists who are already helping small businesses in these areas evolve their online presence. The Squad is a free resource that can assist with conducting an online assessment, developing a digital strategy and applying for a Digital Transformation Grant.

"The digital economy is a growing part of the greater economy and is already bigger than more traditional industries. Town Council is happy to provide assistance to our main street businesses to not only transition to the digital economy but to thrive in it," said Mayor Rob Burton. "Helping local businesses enhance their digital capabilities through this program is a sound investment for Oakville and I encourage more businesses to participate in this program."

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 the program will help them adopt new digital technologies from e-commerce and social media to back-office systems such as payroll and inventory.

"The Downtown Oakville BIA is pleased that this free resource is available to help our members grow and succeed," said executive director, Sharlene Plewman. "Whether a restaurant, merchant or service provider, businesses have the opportunity to apply for a \$2,500 grant, as well as work with digital experts to increase awareness and sales."

To date work is underway with 30 businesses across the Bronte, Kerr and Downtown business areas. More businesses within Oakville's BIAs will be introduced to the Digital Service Squad over the coming months. Businesses interested in signing up to meet with the Digital Service Squad should contact Mary Vallee.

## **Additional quotes**

“One of the most important challenges facing small businesses in the Town of Oakville is their ability to embrace the digital age,” said Stephen Crawford, MPP for Oakville. “It’s vital for businesses today to adapt and become familiar with digital technology. The Digital Service Squad will help them to gain the necessary expertise to compete in the digital age.”

“The training provided by the Digital Service Squad will help modernize businesses in Oakville and provide them with the ability to capitalize on new digital opportunities,” said Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP for Oakville North – Burlington. “This includes setting up an online store or promoting their business to a new audience using social media.”

“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 Oakville 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.”

“Oakville’s business community and the Economic Development department are together providing leadership in using the power of Digital Main Street to help keep downtown cores vibrant and strong,” said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of the Ontario BIA Association. “Our main street small 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 downtown small businesses of Oakville compete in an increasingly digital world.”

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## **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](http://www.digitalmainstreet.ca)

## **For more information, please contact:**

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