

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Sarnia-Lambton Launches Digital Main Street Service Squad

Economic Partnership receives \$40,000 Digital Main Street Grant to help main street businesses improve online presence

September 9, 2019

The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership today announced that it has received a \$40,000 grant from Digital Main Street (DMS), an Ontario government program, to fund a Digital Service Squad to help main street small businesses improve their online capabilities.

As part of Digital Main Street, the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership received the grant from the Ontario government to establish a Digital Service Squad to help small businesses in the downtown area enhance their use of digital tools and techniques to better evolve and grow. The Squad will consist of two trained specialists who will visit and assist downtown businesses at no cost to help them set up Google Business, conduct a digital-readiness assessment and apply for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant. The Squad will start visiting businesses on September 16, 2019.

“The Sarnia-Lambton area is home to many main street business clusters and this Digital Main Street initiative will allow these clusters to continue to grow and expand their economic footprint while also helping them tackle challenges that come with operating in the digital age,” said Stephen Thompson, CEO of the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership.

“The Digital Main Street project is an additional service that the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership is proud to offer to support the growth of existing business in the region,” Thompson added.

A joint program funded by Government of Ontario and delivered by the Ontario BIA Association, Digital Main Street helps improve how small main street 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 of Sarnia-Lambton 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 Digital Service Squad will help local main street small businesses to gain the expertise necessary to compete in a digital environment,” said Bob Bailey, MPP for Sarnia-Lambton. “The training they’ll receive will help them to expand their business and compete both locally and globally.”

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.

“The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership clearly understands the importance of digital technology and the power of Digital Main Street to help keep the 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 small downtown businesses in the Sarnia-Lambton area compete in an increasingly digital world.”

Businesses within the downtown areas will be introduced to the Digital Service Squad over the coming weeks. For further information contact Chantelle Core.

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ABOUT the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership

The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership (SLEP) is the Economic Development Office for the County of Lambton whose mission is to promote the distinctive advantages that Sarnia-Lambton has to offer to companies and residents. By coordinating community-based economic development initiatives and working to maintain a commercially attractive environment, we foster new business creation as well as help ensure that established firms remain and grow here. The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership provide services in the areas of business attraction, community awareness, entrepreneurship, small business consultations/workshops, existing business support and workforce development/attraction.

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

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