



Almaguin Community Economic Development Launches Digital Service Squad to Help Small Businesses Adopt Online Technologies

Receives \$11,775 Digital Main Street Grant

September 15, 2020. Burk's Falls, ON. The Township of Armour has received a \$11,775 grant from Digital Main Street Ontario for a Digital Service Squad (DSS) to help small downtown businesses use digital technologies to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Funding for the grant is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT). The squad will begin visiting businesses in the East Parry Sound District in September.

The Township received the grant on behalf of the Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) Partners, comprised of 10 municipalities and the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce.

"ACED is very excited to offer the Digital Main Street Service Squad Program for the second time in the Almaguin Region. We believe that helping businesses explore and adopt on-line tools to sell and promote their products on-line is more important than ever due to the impacts of COVID-19" said Tim Bryson, ACED Chair and Mayor of Joly Township. "ACED looks forward to supporting businesses as they embrace digital tools to market their product and services."

Established in 2018, Digital Main Street Ontario was recently extended thanks to an investment of \$42.5 million from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) and \$7.45 million from Ontario. The nearly \$50-million investment will help small businesses across Ontario pivot their operations to include online business models, regain lost revenue, and become more resilient and competitive as the economy recovers. The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) administers the program to Ontario's main street small businesses.

"I am proud to have launched this joint federal-provincial investment with Minister Joly as part of our COVID-19 small business recovery strategy. Helping Main Street get back on its feet starts with supporting local small businesses to grow and adapt to today's world," said Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. "Local Digital Service Squads will provide the tools and support that small businesses need to rebuild and transition. When small businesses succeed, Ontario succeeds."

"Providing businesses with the tools they need to adapt, recover and grow is a key part of our economic recovery plan throughout reopening and into the future," said Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. "The Digital Main Street Program is just one example of how Ontario's recovery will be driven by innovation."



Digital Service Squads are fundamental to Digital Main Street’s design and success, with trained specialists who meet with small businesses, at no cost, to help them improve their online

presence. The squads assist with a number of activities, including developing a Google My Business profile, enhancing the company’s social media presence and providing support for basic website and e-commerce set-up. The squads will also assist qualified small businesses through the application process for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant, which includes an online assessment, online training modules and the development of a Digital Transformation Plan (DTP).

“The COVID-19 pandemic hit Ontario’s main streets hard, so Digital Main Street is needed more than ever,” said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of OBIAA. “We know that businesses that participated in Digital Main Street last year were better able to cope when the pandemic hit. We’re excited that FedDev Ontario and Ontario are providing the funding to extend this important program to help businesses in communities across Armour and the Almaguin Highlands.”

- 30 -

ABOUT Almaguin Community Economic Development

Almaguin Community Economic Development (ACED) is a cooperative partnership involving municipalities throughout the East Parry Sound District and the Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce. The ACED Board and Department is committed to ensuring the economic and social prosperity of all communities throughout the region. Guided by the Almaguin Highlands Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan, ACED works to support business growth and development, ensure investment readiness, promote regional features and support community development initiatives throughout the region.

ABOUT OBIAA

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

Digital Main Street is an innovative program designed to help main street small businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, grants and Digital Service Squads teams of street-level experts that help main street small businesses manage and grow their operations through technology adoption. The program was originally created in 2016 by the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA) and a group of strategic partners including Google, MasterCard, Microsoft, and Shopify. For more information, please visit digitalmainstreet.ca.



ABOUT Digital Main Street Ontario

Digital Main Street was expanded across all of Ontario in 2018 with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through the \$38 million Main Street Revitalization Initiative. It has been further extended through funding from FedDev Ontario and the Ontario Ministry for Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT). The new round of funding includes \$42.5 million from the Government of Canada's Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, a national recovery initiative delivered by Canada's regional development agencies. With \$7.45 million from Ontario, this combined federal and provincial project will strengthen Ontario's economic capacity for innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration, and will promote the development of a strong and diversified Ontario economy. For more information, please visit digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants.

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