**Not for Release**

**Digital Service Squad Will Help Northern Wellington Small Businesses With Digital Transformation**

July 26, 2021: Minto, Mapleton and Wellington North, ON. The Minto Chamber of Commerce, Township of Wellington North and Township of Mapleton have announced that they have received a $11,884.00 grant from Digital Main Street’s Ontario Grants Program for a Digital Service Squad (DSS), which will provide trained digital specialists to local small businesses to help them adopt online technologies and digitally transform their sales, marketing and back-office operations. The squad will begin visiting businesses in Minto, Wellington North and Mapleton on July 27, 2021.

*“We are excited to launch Digital Main Street (DMS) in Northern Wellington County for the third time,” said Heather Watterworth, President of the Minto Chamber of Commerce.” DMS has made a real impact on our local business community and 75 businesses have received a Digital Transformation Grant to date. This round of DMS will serve bricks-and-mortar businesses that were not previously eligible or have not received the $2,500 Digital Transformation Grant before. A vibrant business sector is essential to a strong community, and because of this grant we will be able to provide our businesses with the opportunity to take advantage of trained specialists who can teach them how to use new technologies, and provide tools and training in order to stay competitive in today’s digital world.”*

Renewed government funding of the OPG will provide 3,000 Digital Transformation Grants to qualified bricks-and-mortar small businesses as well as Digital Service Squad grants for organizations to provide hands-on assistance to local small businesses. The OPG is administrated by the Ontario BIA Association, in partnership with the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA).

*“Ontario small businesses are the heart of our neighbourhoods and the economic foundation of our communities,” said Nina Tangri, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. “Our government is committed to being there for them as they reopen. This additional support will give these businesses the digital boost they need to raise their profile and rebuild better than ever.”*

The cornerstone of Digital Main Street, these squads consist of trained specialists who meet with brick-and-mortar small businesses at no cost to help them complete an online assessment and introduce them to online training modules to build their knowledge and skills. These experts can also assist businesses with developing their Digital Transformation Plan (DTP) and applying for a one-time $2,500 grant to implement it. This one-on-one DSS assistance also includes support for basic website set-up, Google My Business profiles, 360º photos, social media presence, and much more. The DSS can also provide information on the ShopHERE program, if applicable, to assist with digital storefront set-up and e-commerce. Where COVID-19 restrictions are in place, DSS experts can provide support through phone and video tools such as Zoom.

*In the past 18 months, as small businesses across the province fought to stay open and keep customers engaged online, Digital Service Squads were there to help,” said Kay Matthews, Executive Director of OBIAA. "Squads jumped online themselves during lockdowns to help virtually, and businesses have consistently told us how important the DSS were to their success through the pandemic. We are thrilled to support this Northern Wellington DSS and help them provide assistance to even more small businesses than ever.”*

**- 30 -**

**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 a program that helps main street businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, and our Digital Service Squad, a team of street-level team members who help main street businesses grow and manage their operations through technology.

Digital Main Street was created by the Toronto Association on Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) with direct support from the City of Toronto. DMS is also supported by a group of strategic business partners, including Google, Mastercard, Shopify, Microsoft, Facebook, Intuit QuickBooks, Square, and Yellow Pages. [www.digitalmainstreet.ca](http://www.digitalmainstreet.ca)

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