

FOR RELEASE

The Towns of Minto and Hanover Launch Digital Main Street Service Squad

Combined \$17,500 Digital Main Street Grant will help main street businesses go digital.

October 7th, 2019, Hanover, ON & Minto, ON: The Minto Chamber of Commerce and the Community Improvement Partnership of Hanover today announced that they have received a \$17,500 grant from Digital Main Street (DMS) to fund a Digital Service Squad to help downtown small businesses within the Municipalities improve their online capabilities.

Minto and Hanover received the Digital Main Street grant from the Ontario government to establish a Digital Service Squad to help main street small businesses enhance their use of digital tools and techniques to better evolve and grow. Ethan Schwandt has been hired and will visit small businesses in Minto and Hanover at no cost to help them set up a Google Business Profile, conduct a digital-readiness assessment, take training and apply for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant.

"We are excited by this opportunity to assist main street small businesses with technologies and clearing hurdles so they are better equipped to strengthen their individual businesses," said April Marshall, Economic Development Manager for the Town of Hanover. "Most people when making a purchase decision research online first," she added.

"A vibrant downtown is key to a strong community. Because of this grant we will be able to serve our business area and teach them how to use new technologies and provide tools and training to take advantage of new opportunities and stay competitive in today's digital world," said Somer Antonopoulos, Minto Chamber of Commerce.

A joint program funded by the 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 Minto and Hanover 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."

"It is vital our small businesses receive the hands-on training to compete in a digital world," said Randy Pettapiece, MPP for Perth-Wellington. "This funding recognizes the important work the Town of Minto is doing to revitalize our main streets."

"The training that businesses will receive in the Town of Hanover will help them to compete in our digital world and improve their online presence. That is critically important with the pace of change in the technology sector these days," said Bill Walker, MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. "Digital Service Squads will provide the training they'll need to modernize their businesses."

"Minto and Hanover are showing how partnering can take greater advantage of Digital Main Street to keep their downtown cores 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 main street small businesses in Minto and Hanover to compete in an increasingly digital world."

Businesses in the downtown areas will be introduced to the Digital Service Squad over the coming weeks. Hanover & Minto's first big project is hosting two Camp Tech sessions in Neustadt on November 5th and 6th at the Neustadt Community Centre focusing on social media and websites for small businesses. These sessions are absolutely free to our business community and you can reserve your free spot on Eventbrite by searching "Social Media for Small Business: Neustadt Workshop" and "Small Business Websites 101: Neustadt Workshop" If your business is interested in working with Ethan Schwandt or would like to suggest a topic for a workshop, you can contact Somer Antonopoulos by e-mailing info@minto-chamber.on.ca or April Marshall by e-mailing amarshall@hanover.ca

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ABOUT the Minto Chamber of Commerce and the Community Improvement Partnership of Hanover

The Minto Chamber of Commerce is a member-based organization that helps businesses in Minto, connect, learn and develop. The goal of the Minto Chamber of Commerce is to strengthen, promote and celebrate Minto businesses so they can enhance the vitality of our community.

The Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) joins the forces of the Town of Hanover, Hanover Downtown Improvement Area and Hanover Chamber of Commerce with a mission to promote and connect businesses, volunteers and the community to make Hanover a vibrant and progressive place to live, visit and shop.

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

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 by the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA) and a group of strategic partners including Google, MasterCard, Rogers, Microsoft and Shopify. The Province of Ontario expansion of Digital Main Street is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and delivered by the Ontario BIA Association. The Ontario expansion is part of the government's \$12 million Main Street Enhancement Initiative to create jobs and support communities across the province. For more information, please visit digitalmainstreet.ca

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