

MEDIA RELEASE
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ShopHERE Program to Grow E-commerce Presence for Windsor-Essex Small Businesses

Digital Main Street expands digital transformation supports, mentorship and grants to independent businesses

Windsor-Essex County, Ontario Canada, June 11, 2020 – The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of bricks and mortar stores having an online presence to sell their goods and services. To address this need, the [Digital Main Street](#) (DMS) program is increasing its supports to small businesses, including the expansion of its [ShopHERE](#) program across Canada in hopes of building 50,000 online stores by the end of 2020.

Supported by several community and corporate partners including Google, Shopify, Mastercard and Microsoft, ShopHERE provides independent small businesses and artists with a quick, easy and no-cost way to get selling online right away. Through the program, volunteer website developers will provide businesses with over 17 hours of hands-on support to launch an e-commerce website using Shopify.

In addition to ShopHERE, Digital Main Street is introducing a new program, Future Proofing Main Street, in which businesses get deep dives into their operations and receive recommendations for digital transformation. Digital Main Street is also relaunching its Digital Transformation Grant program by providing 3,200 more grants of \$2,500 each to businesses across Ontario beginning July 1, 2020.

“Main street businesses are facing unprecedented times due to COVID-19 and we are committed to doing everything we can to help them get through this crisis. A digital presence brings businesses enormous opportunities for growth, innovation and job creation. To help support our local small businesses, Windsor-Essex joins the ShopHERE program with a goal of getting at least 500 local businesses to participate in the digital economy,” said **Sabrina DeMarco, Executive Director, WindsorEssex Small Business Centre, a department of the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation.**

Hallmarks of the Digital Main Street program include an online learning platform, structured training programs and a Digital Service Squad (DSS) who help main street businesses grow and manage their business through the adoption of digital tools and technology.

Since 2019, the WindsorEssex Small Business Centre has delivered Digital Main Street supports to companies in Windsor’s nine business improvement areas (BIA) as well as the BIAs or commercial districts in LaSalle, Amherstburg, Tecumseh, Harrow, Essex and Kingsville. Its Digital Service Squad has provided program information to 1,118 businesses and has conducted 444 one-on-one consultations. Forty-one local businesses have been awarded \$2,500 digital transformation grants. Business can access direct local support by contacting the [Digital Service Squad](#) through the Small Business Centre.

QUOTES

Drew Dilkens, Mayor, City of Windsor:

“The ShopHERE program is a great opportunity for local businesses to adopt new technologies in order to compete and adapt to post-pandemic commerce. This program builds on the success of other regional initiatives to help local entrepreneurs pivot their business models and service offerings at this critical time. Windsor companies will benefit from this grant and tailored training program for their businesses.”

Gary McNamara, Warden, County of Essex:

“Essex County businesses and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our local economy. Every dollar spent locally generates three more for our regional economy. We need to ensure area businesses have the tools and training they need to be successful and the ShopHERE program gives them a competitive edge in this changing economic landscape.”

ABOUT WINDSORSESSEX SMALL BUSINESS CENTRE

The WindsorEssex Small Business Centre (SBC) operates as a department of the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Belonging to a network of offices that serve Ontario's small business community, the SBC is your local source for small business support services. Since starting up in 1992, the SBC has provided thousands of entrepreneurs with the training and support necessary to start and grow successful businesses.

ABOUT DIGITAL MAIN STREET

Digital Main Street is a program and service 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 highly trained recent graduates who help main street businesses grow and manage their business through the adoption of digital tools and technology. Digital Main Street was created by the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) with direct support from the City of Toronto. Digital Main Street is also supported by a group of strategic corporate sponsors, including Google, MasterCard, Rogers, Microsoft and Shopify.

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