



## Media Release

Tuesday, July 30, 2019

# Windsor-Essex, Ontario Launches Digital Main Street Service Squad Community receives \$125,000 Digital Main Street Grant to help main street businesses improve online presence.

**Tuesday, July 30, 2019 - Windsor-Essex County, Ontario** – Today, the WindsorEssex Small Business Centre announced that it and its partners have received a grant from the Ontario government to fund a Digital Service Squad to help main street small businesses improve their online capabilities.

As part of Digital Main Street, the WindsorEssex Small Business Centre received a \$125,000 grant from the Ontario government to establish a Digital Service Squad to help small businesses in the main street areas of the City of Windsor and Municipalities of Essex County to enhance their use of digital tools and techniques to better promote and sell online. The Squad will consist of four trained specialists who will visit and assist businesses in the 9 BIAs in the City of Windsor as well as the BIAs in LaSalle, Amherstburg, Tecumseh, Harrow, Essex, and Kingsville at no cost. The Digital Service Squad will help them set up a Google Business Profile, conduct a digital-readiness assessment and apply for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant. The Squad will start visiting businesses in August 2019.

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 Windsor-Essex 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.”

**Stephen MacKenzie, President and CEO of the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation (WE EDC)**, added, “The WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation with the Small Business Centre is pleased to participate in the Digital Main Street program. Since technology has re-shaped the way customers are engaging with main street businesses, this program will enable main street businesses to connect with the digital technologies, tools and services needed to increase sales, engage new customers and grow their business. This collaboration is a win-win-win for the small businesses throughout the Windsor-Essex region, the participating BIAs and the Digital Service Squad specialists being hired to provide one-on-one assistance to main street small businesses.”

“Windsor-Essex is showing real leadership in using the power of Digital Main Street to help keep their multiple 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 of Windsor-Essex compete in an increasingly digital world.”

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.

**Sabrina DeMarco, Executive Director of the WindsorEssex Small Business Centre (SBC)**, added, “The Digital Main Street program is a perfect program to expand on SBC’s mandate to support existing businesses, particularly our store-front business operators who are vital to the fabric and character of our communities. Special thanks to the Province of Ontario for the grant and the Ontario BIA Association for their support and commitment in helping to digitize and transform main street businesses across Windsor-Essex.”

Businesses within the participating municipalities will be introduced to the Digital Service Squad over the coming weeks. The Digital Service Squad will be administered by the WindsorEssex Small Business Centre. For further information contact **Sabrina DeMarco, Executive Director, Small Business Centre** and to learn more visit - [WINDSORESSEXSMALLBUSINESS.COM/DMS](http://WINDSORESSEXSMALLBUSINESS.COM/DMS)

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#### **ABOUT WindsorEssex Small Business Centre**

The 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. SBC is a one-stop source – providing guidance and professional advice from concept, through start-up and early growth stages of business. SBC offers two locations in Windsor and a satellite office in Essex.

[www.windsorsexsmallbusiness.com](http://www.windsorsexsmallbusiness.com)

#### **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 government of Ontario has invested \$12 million into the Digital Main Street initiative and partnered with the Ontario BIA Association to deliver it across the province over three years. [www.digitalmainstreet.ca](http://www.digitalmainstreet.ca)

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