

## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2021

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### Leeds Grenville receives \$145,000 Digital Main Street Grant

Extended program will help more small businesses increase revenues

WESTPORT, ON. – Five Leeds Grenville Digital Service Squads (DSS) have received a \$145,000 grant from Digital Main Street's Ontario Grants Program (OGP) to continue helping area businesses improve their online presence.

Commercial businesses in all 13 municipalities will have access to the services of trained specialists, including [free consultations](#) on digital / online issues, implementing digital transformation plans to increase sales and assistance in applying for the Digital Transformation Grant of \$2,500.

"Ontario small businesses are the heart of our neighbourhoods and the economic foundation of our communities," Ontario's Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction Nina Tangri said today during the program's official launch at Westport's Cove Country Inn.

"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," she said. The Minister was introduced by Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes MPP Steve Clark. They were joined by Leeds Grenville Warden Roger Haley and Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) Executive Director Kay Matthews, as well as area Mayors, staff and members of the business community.

"Leeds Grenville is excited to receive further funding to continue assisting small businesses," said Warden Haley, adding the new funding announced today will keep the program in place until February 2022.

"It has been extremely successful since its first launch last fall and it's helping our small businesses recover from the pandemic and to stay competitive in today's digital world," Warden Haley said.

More than 700 area businesses have already been supported with some accessing \$185,000 in Digital Transformation Grant funding for a total regional program value of \$370,000.

Squads 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 and applying for a one-time \$2,500 grant to implement it.

"In the past 14 months, as small businesses across the province fought to stay open and keep customers engaged online, Digital Service Squads were there to help," said OBIAA's Kay Matthews. "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 Leeds Grenville and help them provide assistance to even more small businesses than ever," Ms. Matthews said.

Renewed government funding of the OGP, including investment from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, will provide 3,000 Digital Transformation Grants to qualified brick-and-mortar small businesses as well as Digital Service Squad grants for organizations to provide hands-on assistance to local small businesses. The OGP is administrated by the OBIAA, in partnership with the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA).

This one-on-one DSS assistance also includes support for basic website set-up, Google My Business profiles, 360° 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.

"I'm pleased our government is continuing to fund the Digital Main Street Ontario program as part of our ongoing efforts to support small businesses as the province's economy continues to recover," said MPP Clark. "The collaboration between all levels of

government on projects like this one in Leeds Grenville is critical to helping businesses modernize and reach new markets.”

### **ACCESS the program**

The Leeds Grenville Economic Development Office is receiving \$35,000 and will coordinate a squad on behalf of Athens, Elizabethtown-Kitley, Front of Yonge, Merrickville-Wolford, Rideau Lakes and Westport; in partnership with Leeds and the Thousands Islands and Gananoque (receiving \$8,500); Prescott, Augusta and Edwardsburgh Cardinal (receiving \$30,000); North Grenville (receiving \$35,000); and Brockville (receiving \$36,000). In Brockville, there is a partnership with the City, the Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Brockville BIA.

Squads will be visiting small businesses in hamlets, villages and towns across the region. For details on the Leeds Grenville program, visit our [Digital Main Street webpage](#).

### **ABOUT Leeds Grenville**

Leeds Grenville is home to the 1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Waterways. The region has 13 municipalities with a diverse economy that is driven by a balance and interconnectivity between entrepreneurship and strong multi-national companies. Many of the main street businesses enjoy the region’s rich heritage and structures, providing that authentic experience.

### **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 (DMS) 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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This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario

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