



THE CORPORATION
OF
THE TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Resolution No.:

Title: Digital Main Street

Date: February 1, 2021

Moved by: _____
Mayor R. Bonnette

Seconded by: _____
Councilor J. Fogal

Item No. 12.1

WHEREAS The Digital Main Street Program was successful in supporting local main street businesses in the Town of Halton Hills, including businesses located within the Acton and Georgetown Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), as well as in Glen Williams and Norval;

AND WHEREAS The Digital Service Squad member was employed by the Town of Halton Hills for 10 weeks, as per the funding agreement with Digital Main Street, from October to December 2020;

AND WHEREAS as part of the program, Halton Hills hired a Digital Service Squad member who reached out to over 150 local main street businesses across a wide range of sectors, including retail, arts and culture, health and wellness, and restaurants; and supported 67 businesses with expanding and building their virtual presence and e-commerce capabilities;

AND WHEREAS with the assistance of the Town's Digital Service Squad member, eligible businesses were able to apply for a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant, administered by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), to purchase hardware and higher quality digital tools, resulting in nearly \$60,000 being provided to support local businesses;

AND WHEREAS as of December 31, 2020, applications for both the \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant and new applications for Digital Service Squad support have been closed to new applications awaiting potential renewal of funding;

AND WHEREAS with the Province being placed in a Shutdown starting on December 26, 2020, the need for online and digital channels for small businesses to interact with customers and generate revenues has been further elevated;

AND WHEREAS the Town established the Economic Support and Recovery Task Force to help respond to COVID-19 challenges faced by local businesses through early and coordinated action;

AND WHEREAS the Town completed a survey of businesses to determine the need for potential additional COVID-19 supports, and the need for enhanced e-commerce capability and funding were identified to be of priority;

AND WHEREAS businesses outside of the Digital Main Street Program eligible catchment area also require e-commerce and funding supports in order to be able to respond to the unprecedented challenges caused by COVID-19.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council for the Town of Halton Hills call on the provincial and federal governments to:

- Renew the Digital Service Squad support and \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant;
- Expand the Digital Transformation Grant to be available to businesses and also previously eligible non-profit organizations that are located outside of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) since the initial program restricted applications to businesses located in commercially zoned main street areas such as those located in BIA areas;
- Commit to a minimum 2-year funding extension to the Digital Main Street program;

AND FURTHER THAT Council for the Town of Halton Hills, in collaboration with the Chair of the Town's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force, be directed to write a letter advocating for the extension and expansion of the Digital Main Street Program and Digital Transformation Grant to the Provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, and the Federal Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, and Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade;

AND FURTHER THAT Staff be directed to send a copy of the letter and resolution to Michael Chong, Wellington-Halton Hills MP, Ted Arnott, Wellington-Halton Hills MPP, Halton Region, Town of Milton, City of Burlington, Town of Oakville, FCM, AMO, GTHA Mayors and Chairs, Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA), Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association (ORHMA), Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), Large Urban Mayors Caucus of Ontario (LUMCO), Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO), Small Urban GTHA Mayors, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Acton Business Improvement Area, Georgetown Business Improvement Area, Milton Chamber of Commerce, Burlington Chamber of Commerce and Oakville Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Rick Bonnette