



Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN)
414 Locust Street
Burlington, Ontario
L7S 1T7

Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages' Office
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0H5

Minister Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade's Office
777 Bay Street, 18th floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1S5

Dear Minister Joly and Minister Fedeli:

On January 11, 2021, City of Burlington Council passed the enclosed resolution calling for the Provincial and Federal government to extend and expand funding for the Digital Main Street program to support local business.

The City of Burlington's fundamental priority throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been to protect the health and safety of Burlington residents, employers and employees, and support our business community to survive the economic impacts of COVID-19 public health measures.

The members of Team Burlington (Burlington Economic Development, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Burlington, Burlington Downtown Business Association and Aldershot Village BIA) came together to create the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) to engage our business community and ensure they are receiving the support they need during this challenging time. Supporting our local businesses to create digital sales tools was one the key recommendations of BERN which was achieved through accessing the Digital Main Street program.

The Digital Main Street Program has been a critical support to local main street businesses during COVID-19 that Team Burlington has implemented based on business concerns raised by the Burlington Economic Recovery Network. As part of the program Burlington has benefitted from hiring two Digital Service Squad members who have had over 1,000 touchpoints with businesses and supported over 130 businesses to date in growing their digital presence and tools. In addition, qualifying businesses have been able to access a \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant to implement digital tools within their business.

When the province of Ontario went into lockdown on December 26th online and digital channels became the primary method for main street businesses to interact with customers and generate revenues. Many businesses reached out to Burlington's Digital Service Squad team for support in how to engage with customers, update their website and use social channels to promote curb side pickup and takeaway, in line with provincial lockdown restrictions placed on business. As of December 31st 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 renewal of funding.

At the January 11th Burlington City Council meeting the enclosed resolution was passed, in partnership with the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) and Team Burlington, calling on the provincial and federal governments to:

- renew and expand funding to the Digital Main Street program as soon as possible to help our businesses to survive the provincial lockdown and reopening of the economy in the future;
- renew the \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant and Digital Service Squad support; and
- expand the Digital Main Street Transformation Grant to be available to main street businesses that are located outside of BIAs as the initial program restricted applicants to BIA member businesses only
- Commit to a minimum 2 year funding extension to the Digital Main Street program

The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) has successfully managed two Digital Main Street projects and it continues to be a highly successful and sought-after project. With funding now ended we highly recommend the Digital Main Street 3.0 program proposed by OBIAA have its funding renewed expeditiously for a minimum of two years. In addition we would ask for an expansion of the Digital Transformation Grants qualification criteria to include all main street business not just businesses located in Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). While the Digital Service Squad team members provide essential supports to help main street businesses improve their digital presence the additional funds provided through the \$2,500 Digital Transformation Grant is critical to support businesses to implement digital tools to support their businesses to survive the impacts of the measures associated with lockdown and stay at home orders to their business. The expansion of these supports would help address the concerns identified as part of the Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan to build e-commerce tools so small business can do more online.

As we move through the pandemic, please know that the City of Burlington will continue to seek opportunities to work with you to help Burlington residents and businesses. Programs like Digital Main Street support our local business community and residents by improving opportunities to

offer a safe consumer and employee experience so that local businesses operations can remain viable.

Thank you in advance. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Burlington Economic Recovery Network's lead on this matter Anita Cassidy, Executive Director of Burlington Economic Development, at Anita.Cassidy@burlington.ca or (905) 332-9415. It would be a pleasure to hear from you.

Sincerely,



Randall Smallbone
Chair, Burlington Economic Recovery Network



Mayor Marianne Meed Ward
City of Burlington

Cc:

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade
Minister Karina Gould
MP Pam Damoff
MP Adam Van Koeverden
MPP Jane McKenna
MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos
MPP Parm Gill
Halton Regional Council
Members of the Towns of Milton, Halton Hills and Oakville Councils
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Ontario Big City Mayor's Caucus (OBCM)
Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO)
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)
Milton Chamber of Commerce
Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce
Oakville Chamber of Commerce
Team Burlington (Burlington Economic Development, Burlington Chamber of
Commerce, Tourism Burlington, Burlington Downtown Business Association and
Aldershot Village BIA)
Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN)