



## **Helping Thousands of Main Street Companies Open Their Virtual Doors to Generate New Revenue, Survive the Pandemic and Drive Our Economic Recovery**

### **Invest Ottawa to Deliver New Digital Main Street Program to Help Future-Proof 4,100 Small Businesses in Canada's Capital and Southeastern Ontario**

**Ottawa, Ontario – June 11, 2020:** [Invest Ottawa](#), lead economic development agency for knowledge-based industries in Canada's Capital, is honoured to join the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#) (FedDev Ontario), the Government of Ontario, and partners across the province to announce a new \$57 million program that will help main street businesses impacted by COVID-19 'go digital' to generate new revenue, survive the pandemic and thrive in the new economy.

This new pan-provincial Digital Main Street program will inject \$9.3 million into Ottawa and Southeastern Ontario. Invest Ottawa will lead the creation and delivery of the new Future-Proofing Main Street program, and collaborate with [Launch Lab](#), the Regional Innovation Centre serving Eastern Ontario, to support 4,100 companies and create 350 jobs for students in this region. Together with the [Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas](#) (TABIA), the [Ontario Business Improvement Area Association](#) (OBIAA) and [Communitech](#), the broader pan-Ontario Digital Main Street program will support 21,900 businesses and 1,400 jobs for students province-wide.

The pandemic has had a detrimental impact on businesses of all sizes across the country. Many 'bricks and mortar' main street companies were forced to close their doors or suspend in-person commercial operations. The federal and provincial governments have joined together with Invest Ottawa and fellow partners to help small businesses go digital, and generate revenue through this new pan-Ontario program.

Building on Toronto's foundational investments into [Digital Main Street](#) and, most recently, ShopHERE (a collaboration including Google, Shopify, Mastercard and Microsoft), this new program will create new digital capabilities and support for Ontario businesses. It will help main street companies navigate the COVID-19 crisis by enabling them to leverage digital, e-commerce and online strategies, new business models and digital technologies to access broader domestic and global markets, customers and revenue.

Employing talented local digital experts and students, this program will help to facilitate the digital transformation and sustainable commercial success of main street companies in sectors such as hospitality, retail, trades and services. Within Ottawa and Southeastern Ontario, the program will target small business owners from every walk of life in Canada's Capital, the St. Lawrence Seaway (including Brockville, Cornwall and surrounding areas), Kingston Region (including Belleville and Napanee) and Peterborough County. Companies are invited to register for this program on the [Digital Main Street website](#).

"Building on critical support from our federal government, we are honoured to collaborate with FedDev Ontario and partners across the province to help future-proof our main street business and economy. This new program will help companies to evolve, maintain jobs and revenue in any storm, and continue to operate and grow in any economic climate. It will equip business owners from every walk of life with new digital business models and strategies, helping them to access new domestic and global markets and drive our economic recovery."

*-Michael Tremblay, President and CEO, Invest Ottawa and Bayview Yards*

“As local economies across Ontario reopen, we’re focused on ensuring that our main streets don’t just survive, but thrive. These businesses are the backbone of our economy, a source of local jobs – and local pride. Thanks to the expanded Digital Main Street platform, they’ll be able to expand their offerings and take advantage of more and more people shopping online. Our message to Ontario’s small businesses, and those whose livelihoods rely on them, is clear: we’re working with you to support good jobs and help our economy come back stronger than ever.”

*-The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and Minister responsible for Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario*

“Ontario’s small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and their recovery is critical to Ontario’s recovery. As thousands of small businesses across the province closed their doors and halted business during the COVID-19 outbreak, many struggled to shift sales or services online. I am very pleased, that together with Minister Joly and our federal partners, we are providing small businesses with the tools they need to recover and flourish as Ontario reopens.”

*-The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, Government of Ontario*

“On behalf of the City of Ottawa, I want to thank the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario for this critical investment in small businesses across our region. I am delighted that Invest Ottawa will lead the delivery of this new program in the nation’s capital and across Southeastern Ontario to help thousands of companies impacted by COVID-19 get online, build virtual business, and generate new revenues that strengthen our economy.”

*-Jim Watson, Mayor of Ottawa*

“We’re excited to architect and deliver the new Future-Proofing Main Street element of this program in Ottawa and Southeastern Ontario. Combining the expertise of our Entrepreneurship Team and local tech talent, we look forward to working with main street companies to address current challenges and pursue new opportunities. This includes helping business owners assess the future of their sector, leverage different digital tools and business models to capitalize on new markets. It will also enable us to put talented students to work on digital marketing strategies and campaigns for these businesses at no cost.”

*-Nick Quain, Vice President of Venture Development, Invest Ottawa*

“The pandemic has significantly impacted the two main street companies I own and operate in Ottawa, creating the greatest challenges I have ever faced as a small business. Although we rapidly evolved to serve customers in new ways, we are struggling to develop sustainable revenues in the current economic climate. And we do not have the internal expertise to build and scale robust online businesses. I am very excited to leverage this Digital Main Street Program to help us address these gaps, and develop new digital business models and strategies that drive more consistent customer acquisition and reliable revenue.”

*-Karla Briones, Owner of Freshii (Westboro) and Global Pet Foods (Hintonburg and Kanata); Invest Ottawa Advisor; and 2018 Immigrant Award Winner, City of Ottawa, 2018*

“The pandemic struck just as we were preparing to expand our restaurant, and welcome a host of clients during March Break. Within days of the lockdown, we realized we had to pivot our main street business to survive this crisis. We evolved our restaurant into a grocery store to generate much-needed revenue, but we have a very limited online presence. We look forward to capitalizing on this Digital Main Street program to boost awareness of our new enterprise, attract new clients and repeat business, and capture a greater share of our market.”

*-Karen Boucher, Co-Founder and Co-Owner of The Noshery, Brockville*

“Launch Lab is honoured to build on our strong collaboration with Invest Ottawa, partners within our region and across the province, and support the delivery of this new Digital Main Street Program in Eastern Ontario. It will allow us to bring our strengths as a Regional Innovation Centre to bear on a much broader array of companies in partnership with small business collaborators across our ecosystem. We look forward to helping main street companies throughout our region develop and implement the digital strategies and platforms required to help them grow and thrive in this new reality.”

- Scott Runté, CEO and Entrepreneur in Residence, Launch Lab

## About the Program

This \$57-million announcement represents an investment of \$50 million from the Government of Canada, through the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario \(FedDev Ontario\)](#) and \$7.65 million from the Government of Ontario.

The pan-Ontario Digital Main Street Program represents \$42.5 million of this investment from FedDev Ontario and an additional \$7.45 million from the Government of Ontario. It brings together key delivery partners from across the province including: the [Ontario Business Improvement Area Association \(OBIAA\)](#), the [Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas](#), [Communitech](#) and [Invest Ottawa](#). These partners will collectively:

- Deliver three tiers of integrated programming, services and support customized to company needs;
- Help 21,900 companies to pivot their operations to digital business models to generate new revenue and become more resilient and competitive as the economy recovers.
- Create employment opportunities for more than 1,400 students during the nine-month program, enabling them to gain hands-on experience developing and implementing digital technologies and marketing strategies for main street companies.

To complement the Digital Main Street Platform, and as part of the \$57 million total investment, the [Toronto Region Board of Trade](#) is receiving a \$7.5 million investment from FedDev Ontario and \$200,000 from the Government of Ontario to help SMEs embrace a digital future through its [Recovery Activation Program](#).

## About Invest Ottawa

Invest Ottawa is the lead economic development agency for knowledge-based industries in Canada's Capital, facilitating economic growth and job creation in the City of Ottawa. Guided by a vision to help realize Ottawa's full potential as a globally-recognized, innovative and future-ready city, and the best place to learn, work, live, and play. Invest Ottawa delivers venture development and global expansion programs and services that catalyze the growth and success of entrepreneurs and firms. These include small business training, mentorship, acceleration for technology firms, foreign business and investment attraction, local business retention and expansion in targeted sectors, commercialization, and marketing Ottawa's diversified economy and high quality of life. Since 2012, Invest Ottawa has worked with thousands of entrepreneurs and companies; helped firms attract more than \$602 million in capital; contributed to the creation of more than 8,450 jobs; and attracted \$575M in domestic and foreign investment: [www.investottawa.ca](http://www.investottawa.ca)

## About Launch Lab

Launch Lab is a Regional Innovation Centre, a provincially-funded network of resources for entrepreneurs. As a RIC, Launch Lab's regional boundaries consist of most of southeastern Ontario (Trenton, down to Picton, over to Cornwall, and back up and around through Smiths Falls and Bancroft). Launch Lab's head office is in Kingston and has a team of Entrepreneurs In Residence (EIRs) that operate throughout the region. Launch Lab's purpose is to foster entrepreneurship and the commercialization of innovations to help build globally competitive companies in Eastern Ontario. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.launchlab.ca/>

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