

TOWN CALLS FOR RENEWAL OF DIGITAL MAIN STREET PROGRAM

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The results are in — the Digital Main Street program helped dozens of local businesses establish themselves online last year in a competitive pandemic world.

Now, the Town is urging the provincial and federal governments to renew funding for the program and expand grant eligibility to include businesses located beyond main street areas. A motion to this effect was also recently passed by regional council.

"Businesses need our help; they need government assistance with this pandemic," said Mayor Rick Bonnette during the Feb. 1 Halton Hills Council meeting. "We've got to advocate on their behalf so that they can compete with the online companies."

"The one-on-one guidance was highly valued as businesses attempted to pivot their business models."

- Allison Graham, Town of Halton Hills Economic Development and Tourism officer

The Digital Main Street program, which ran locally from October to December, helped businesses generally located in Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) expand and improve their online presence.

The Town received a provincial grant of \$12,500 and hired a Digital Service Squad member to launch the initiative.

According to a staff report from Economic Development and Tourism officer Allison Graham, almost 70 small businesses

received support through the program via video chat, phone and email.

More than 20 businesses were successful in receiving \$2,500 digital transformation grants, and 29 businesses took advantage of ShopHERE incentives to create an online store.

"The Digital Main Street program in Halton Hills was very successful," Graham noted in her report. "The one-on-one guidance was highly valued as businesses attempted to pivot their business models,



Graham Paine/Metroland

Many downtown businesses took advantage of the Digital Main Street program last year.

while adjusting to changing regulations and health and safety protocols."

In light of the uncertainty around the duration of

the pandemic, the motion passed by council asks the provincial and federal governments to commit to a minimum two-year fund-

ing extension for the Digital Main Street program.

For further details, visit www.digitalmainstreet.ca/ontario.



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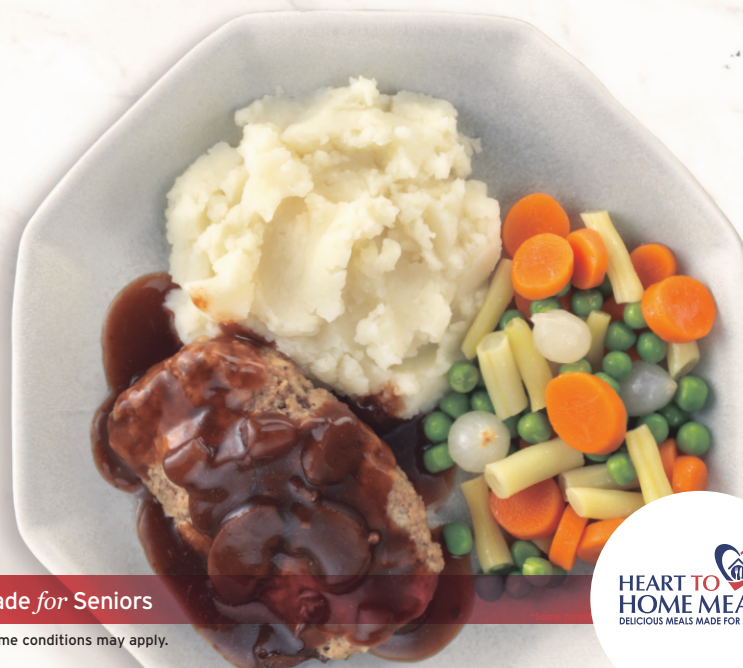
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