



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

February 12, 2021

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

Dear Minister Joly:

On February 3rd, 2021, City of Burlington Council passed the enclosed resolution calling for the Federal government to renew funding for the [Digital Main Street \(DMS\) Future Proof](#) program to support future proofing and digital adoption for 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. The City of Burlington are an integrated part of BERN including members of senior management, the Mayor and Ward 1 Councillor Kelvin Galbraith who brings his perspective as a business owner in Burlington. The need for digital transformation of business models has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, not just in our retail and main street business sectors but also in our manufacturing and more traditional industries. BERN and Team Burlington welcomed the development of the DMS Future Proof Program in 2020 to support businesses as they transformed their business model in light of the impacts of the pandemic and the acceleration of digital sales and servicing.

The expansion of the Digital Main Street (DMS) program in 2020 to include the [DMS Future Proof](#) components including DMS Labs, Transformation Teams and Community Collaboration projects administered through Communitech and other Regional Innovation Centres (RICs) has been a critical support in helping businesses adopt new technology during the COVID-19 pandemic. The support by the Federal government was announced in June 2020 with \$50M in funding from the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#) to support

Ontario businesses to Go Digital. These new DMS programs have helped both nurture new technology-based businesses in our region such as [LookLocal.ca](https://www.looklocal.ca) and [My Well Self](https://www.mywellself.ca), while providing virtual hands-on support and solutions for businesses to access new customers while managing COVID-19 health and safety measures.

Current funding for the [DMS Future Proof](#) program ends in February 2021 and our small business community faces ongoing barriers to technology adoption and a lack of resources to implement these technologies...resources that are necessary for them to remain competitive given the impacts of COVID-19. Canada's economy will rely on entrepreneurs in the technology, manufacturing and main street business sectors to drive economic recovery, job creation and economic growth. The [DMS FutureProof](#) program can continue providing virtual hands-on support to small business to accelerate the adoption of both program offerings such as [LookLocal.ca](https://www.looklocal.ca), [All Checked In](#) and [My Well Self](https://www.mywellself.ca) and develop new technology solutions that keep our businesses competitive.

At the February 3<sup>rd</sup> Burlington City Council meeting the enclosed resolution was passed, in partnership with the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN), Team Burlington and Haltech Regional Innovation Centre, calling on the Federal government to:

- Work with the Regional Innovation Centres to renew and expand funding to the Digital Main Street Future Proof Program as soon as possible to help our businesses adopt new technologies to support their digital transformation and adapt their business model due to COVID-19.
- Explore opportunities to provide additional support to our main street business sector in adopting digital technologies and future proofing their business models.
- Support Canada's technology sector to develop and bring to market new technologies that can support businesses in Canada and globally to adapt to the new business realities following the impacts of COVID-19 to both Business to Consumer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B) business models.

As we move through the pandemic, please know that the City of Burlington, Team Burlington and Haltech Regional Innovation Centre will continue to seek opportunities to work with you to help Burlington residents and businesses. Programs like [Digital Main Street Future Proof](#) support our local business community in both sustaining their business in the short term and also looking towards the future and ensuring Canadian businesses remain competitive globally. The Burlington and Halton Region business community have been leaders in the [DMS Future Proof](#) program including:

- 25% of DMS Labs projects have been in Burlington and Halton Region
- 18% of Transformation Teams projects have been in Burlington and Halton Region
- 3 Community Collaboration projects have been led by Haltech Regional Innovation Centre and Halton Region including and further projects are in development.

This is in addition to strong adoption of the Digital Main Street programs across Burlington and Halton Region including over 550 businesses supported by [Digital Service Squads](#) and over 400 businesses signed up for the [ShopHere](#) program.

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, Burlington Economic Development, at [Anita.Cassidy@burlington.ca](mailto: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



Marianne Meed Ward  
Mayor  
City of Burlington



Jamie Barron  
Chair  
Haltech Regional  
Innovation Centre

Cc:

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)  
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)  
Haltech Regional Innovation Centre