



Small Business Networking Platform coming to Halton as first Digital Main Street Community Collaboration Project

Halton Region, ON – November 25, 2020 Haltech Regional Innovation Centre and the Halton Small Business Centre are pleased to announce their first Community Collaboration Project as part of the Digital Main Street Future Proof Program in Halton region.

Technology innovator TrustD.space has been selected as the recipient of \$22,500 in funding to help launch a digital networking platform to help small businesses in Halton. This Digital Main Street project is made possible through financial support from the Government of Canada through FedDev Ontario's Regional Relief and Recovery Fund.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the cancellation of in-person networking and social events, many small businesses have lost access to the local support they relied on for new business leads, social connection and collaboration.

"After several months of community consultation, Haltech is delighted to bring these parties together to solve a significant challenge for Halton small businesses," stated Shann McGrail, Executive Director of Haltech.

The new online community hub will help small business owners and employees recover from COVID-19 restrictions by offering free access to virtual networking and discussion groups. There will also be hosted, online events and opportunities to connect in various communities of interest.

Stephanie Mazhari, Manager of Entrepreneurship Services at the Halton Small Business Centre states, "We are pleased to work with TrustD.space to launch this customized digital networking platform to support the Halton small business community."

Chambers of Commerce and local Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) will be able to leverage this platform in several ways. The system will provide 'permission-based' access to content for members. These membership-based organizations can also promote, and host virtual events and they can reach out on the platform to find new members.

The Project includes three phases: Design, Beta Test and Roll-out. Design phase begins immediately. Beta Testing is expected to start on December 10th and the public Roll-out is expected by mid-January. Anyone interested in being a beta tester for the new platform can send an email to smallbusiness@halton.ca with "Beta Test" in the subject line.

Media Contacts:

Haltech: communications@haltech.ca

Halton Small Business Centre: smallbusiness@halton.ca

About Haltech

[Haltech](#) Regional Innovation Centre is a not-for-profit organization funded by the Province of Ontario and corporate sponsors. Haltech is a hub for the acceleration and commercialization of innovation and technology in Halton Region. Whatever stage a company is in, Haltech's staff and team of experienced advisors are passionate about bringing the right education, advisory services, and strategic connections to develop and grow innovation-oriented businesses to the next stage.

About Halton Small Business Centre

The Halton Small Business Centre (SBC) offers a range of services to Halton residents and business owners looking to open, manage or grow their businesses. The Halton SBC team offers one-on-one consultations, grant and training programs, Getting Started and Futurepreneur information sessions, plus small business bootcamp seminars. Due to COVID-19 restrictions these programs and services are offered remotely by phone and video conferencing. Halton SBC can be reached online at www.halton.ca or by email at: smallbusiness@halton.ca

About TrustD.space

[TrustD.space](#) is owned by DistApps Inc. - a software company based in Ontario, Canada. Their mission is to create innovative technology that promotes community collaboration and sustainability. The company is the winner of Toronto's largest hackathon, Elevate 2018, sponsored by the City of Toronto and TD Bank for creating "Connected Communities".

About Digital Main Street

[Digital Main Street](#) is a program that helps main street businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, and our Digital Service Squad, a team of street-level team members who help main street businesses grow and manage their operations through technology. Digital Main Street was created by the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) with direct support from the City of Toronto. DMS is also supported by a group of strategic business partners, including Google, Mastercard, Shopify, Microsoft, Facebook, and Intuit QuickBooks. A \$42.5-million investment from FedDev Ontario and an additional \$7.45 million from the Government of Ontario brought together the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, Communitech, Invest Ottawa, and the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association to expand the Digital Main Street Platform in order to support more businesses to go digital as a response to the impacts of COVID-19.

Main streets across Ontario are under intense pressure due to COVID-19. The Digital Main Street Community Collaboration Program is focused on bringing together community members to collaboratively identify and solve one or more local main street challenges. The goal is to add resources to ongoing conversations across multiple sectors and assist with piloting solutions.