



**Subject: My Main Street - Local Business Accelerator Program**

**To: Council**

**From: Chief Administrative Office**

Report Number: 2021-314

Meeting Date: December 13, 2021

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**Recommendation:**

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2021-314 be received;

That Council approve the Funding Agreement with the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) for the My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program, attached as Appendix A to Chief Administrative Office Report 2021-314; and

That a by-law to enter into an agreement with FedDev Ontario be brought forward.

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to acknowledge the City's success with its application for the My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program and to request approval of the Funding Agreement with FedDev Ontario.

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**Background:**

In mid-August of this year, staff in Economic Development and Tourism Services were notified of the federal government's announcement of a \$23.25 million investment to help drive business and restore vibrancy to local communities across southern Ontario in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The My Main Street initiative is a partnership between the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) and the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) and is funded by Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario).

Applications for My Main Street and its two funding programs – Community Activator and Local Business Accelerator – opened on October 1, 2021. The Community

Activator Program provides funding for projects that support sustainable placemaking strategies in public spaces like main streets, downtown strips, and plazas. The Local Business Accelerator Program provides \$57,500 in funding for a dedicated Main Street Ambassador and \$100,000 in non-repayable funding contributions to small businesses.

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## **Discussion:**

An update delivered on October 27, 2021 announced that Port Colborne will be one of 65 communities to receive the My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program funding. Over 100 applications from a diverse range of communities across southern Ontario were submitted and reviewed. Staff also submitted an application to the Community Activator Program for 2021 (or year 1) projects and received notification on December 1, 2021 that the City will be given \$13,299 for its LGBTQ2+ community project (in collaboration with the Downtown Port Colborne BIA), which comprised the installation of a rainbow crosswalk at Clarence & West Streets. Staff intend to submit another application to this same program for 2022 (or year 2) projects before the February 1, 2022 deadline.

In total, the City will receive \$70,799 from My Main Street. These non-repayable contributions will go towards reimbursement for the rainbow crosswalk, the hiring of a full-time My Main Street Ambassador for a 12-month contract, and more importantly, access to a \$100,000 funding pool for Port Colborne small businesses. While the details around the small business funding opportunity have yet to be revealed, the My Main Street website states that five \$10,000 grants will be available for existing small businesses and the other five \$10,000 grants will be reserved for new small businesses.

To secure the full \$57,500 for the Local Business Accelerator Program, staff are recommending that Council approve the Funding Agreement with FedDev Ontario. If approved, staff can then move forward with developing a job posting for the My Main Street Ambassador position and advertise it on the City's website. Candidate interviews will take place in mid-January and the successful candidate is expected to start the role in early February.

Adding a My Main Street Ambassador to the Economic Development & Tourism Services division offers the team more capacity to interact with the local business community, encourage a diversity of new businesses, deliver excellent customer service, and grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Port Colborne's main commercial districts. Working alongside and supporting the Economic Development Officer, this added capacity will help the City capitalize on its vision of growth and prosperity.

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**Internal Consultations:**

Consultations with the Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Chief Administrative Officer were held prior to applying for My Main Street and its two funding programs.

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**Financial Implications:**

The addition of a full-time Main Street Ambassador to the Economic Development and Tourism Services Division will have very minor financial implications. Besides the workspace, Internet access, and basic office supplies required over the 12-month employment term, the \$57,500 contribution will cover the salary for this position and the various expenses incurred for program delivery.

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**Public Engagement:**

Once the Funding Agreement is signed and submitted, staff will start working with the local business community throughout the 2022 year by providing wrap-around business support and opportunities to access \$100,000 in non-repayable contributions.

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**Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar of the strategic plan:

- Attracting Business Investment and Tourists to Port Colborne
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**Conclusion:**

My Main Street is a \$23.25 million FedDev Ontario investment in supporting the recovery and revitalization of main streets across southern Ontario. Recognizing the importance of this funding opportunity for a small city like Port Colborne, City staff applied to My Main Street's two programs – Community Activator and Local Business Accelerator – and will receive \$70,799. To secure the \$57,500 contribution, which will go towards the salary of a Main Street Ambassador and program delivery support, staff are recommending that Council approve the Funding Agreement with FedDev Ontario. Assuming that approval will be given, the program can be scheduled to begin in February 2022.

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## **Appendices:**

- a. Funding Agreement – Local Business Accelerator Program

Respectfully submitted,

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## **Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.