



*News Release  
December 18, 2020*

## **Town Partners with Chamber to Help Ponoka Businesses Create Online Stores through ShopHERE Powered by Google Program**

*(December 18, 2020 – Ponoka, Alberta)* – The Town of Ponoka is excited to partner with the Ponoka and District Chamber of Commerce and join them in helping local businesses participate in the Digital Main Street ShopHERE powered by Google program. The DMS ShopHERE program helps small businesses and artists build a digital presence and make the transition to doing business online to help minimize the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Town of Ponoka is contributing \$5,000 from the Municipal Operating Support Transfer grant to help cover the cost for up to 20 Ponoka businesses to enroll in the ShopHERE program. “The Town’s contribution means those businesses will be able to participate in the ShopHERE program and get started at selling online at no cost to the business,” said Heather Bendera, Executive Manager with the Ponoka and District Chamber of Commerce.

### **Building Online Presence Offers Important Advantage During Pandemic**

“Town Council is committed to doing as much as we can to support our local businesses and help them survive during this pandemic, so when the Chamber invited us to join them in promoting this initiative to local businesses we were very happy to get involved,” said Ponoka Mayor Rick Bonnett. “Helping our local businesses expand their online presence offers them an important advantage during this pandemic,” he said.

The ShopHERE program provides businesses with over 17 hours of hands-on support from university students to allow these businesses to sell their products and services online. That support includes set up, training, creating of an online store front and launching the online business.

ShopHERE powered by Google started in the City of Toronto. In May, Google Canada announced a \$1 million investment to enable Digital Main Street to expand the program to municipalities across the country, offering more businesses the opportunity to build their own online store and receive the digital skills needed to participate in the digital economy.

“The Town’s support of the ShopHERE powered by Google program is just one of the ways we are committed to supporting local businesses during this pandemic,” said Mayor Bonnett. The Town also recently launched a \$50,000 Hardship Grant to help Ponoka businesses that have suffered significant financial losses due to COVID-19 impacts. Council also passed a zero per cent municipal tax revenue increase in the 2020 Town Budget and it launched the New Resident Attraction and Incentive Program earlier this year, as well as two recently-announced initiatives to attract new businesses to Ponoka: the New Business Grant and the Commercial New Build Incentive. To learn more about these programs and to apply for the Hardship Grant by the January 31 deadline, please visit [www.ponoka.ca](http://www.ponoka.ca).

### **ShopHERE Program Available to All Eligible Ponoka Businesses**

The ShopHERE powered by Google program is available to all businesses in Ponoka that have fewer than 10 employees (or fewer than 25 if they are a restaurant or bar), are not a corporate chain or franchise, and are a



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registered business with a valid business licence. Businesses interested in applying for the program can contact Heather Bendera at 403-783-3888 or by email at [chamberp@telus.net](mailto:chamberp@telus.net).

### **About ShopHERE Powered by Google**

The ShopHERE program offers businesses and artists the opportunity to build a digital presence and minimize the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ShopHERE is supported by a number of community and corporate partners, including the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, Shopify, Google, Mastercard, Microsoft, Magnet and The Schulich School of Business – York University.

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