



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SHOP LOCAL MOVEMENT IS NEEDED FOR COVID-19 RECOVERY

—FINALLY AN EASY WAY TO DO IT

Imagine shopping locally with the same ease and convenience that big ecommerce sites offer, but without the transaction/processing fees that take profits from small businesses at a time they need it most. That's HeyLocal.

WATERLOO, ON | June 8, 2020 — HeyLocal has announced the launch of an ecommerce marketplace that helps local businesses reach more customers while simultaneously helping more Canadians shop locally. The platform was started six weeks ago by three local business owners who were fed up with purchasing from the large ecommerce sites simply because they could not search local products and services as easily as they could on platforms such as Amazon. HeyLocal was born out of the mission to keep online spending local during the Covid-19 recovery period.

“One thing is certain in the aftermath of the Covid-19 shutdown, we will need to support our local businesses now more than ever as they try to survive and get back on their feet” says Scott Higgins, co-founder of HeyLocal. “It is up to us as consumers to shop with convenience but also conscience; that means shopping locally. The people that run these businesses not only provide products, jobs and services—they provide the heartbeat of our cities, the energy in downtowns and the compassion for local charities and social causes. Their success is directly connected to the success of our cities and we must try to direct our commerce accordingly.”

With the closure of retail stores in effect and social distancing at its peak, Canadians are turning to retail giants like Amazon and Walmart for their one-stop online shopping needs. The choice is not out of preference, but out of the need for ease and convenience in a difficult time. A person may not choose to shop local simply because it is not very convenient. Residents are often unaware of the possibilities their city offers in local products and discovering them online is time consuming.

“Local businesses can sell to anyone. But currently there is no easy way to do just that,” says Erin Martin, co-founder of HeyLocal. “We want to help small businesses grow their reach and customer base by making them, and more importantly their products and services, more discoverable online. Our local entrepreneurs often do not have marketing dollars or extensive search engine optimization know-how. They need more opportunities to gain new customers and compete with the online retail giants.”

Currently being piloted in Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph, HeyLocal is in its business onboarding phase and is executing a six month campaign to grow awareness and business sign ups. It has been adopted by municipal leaders, BIAs and local Chambers in support of their small business Covid-19 recovery initiatives.

HeyLocal works based on a simple solution—it digitally recognizes what city a shopper is in and it only searches and displays products/services from businesses within a 50 km radius of that shopper. If the shopper does not find what they need, they can extend their search to a 100 km radius. If they want to check out products from their favourite Canadian city or buy their friend or relative something from their hometown, they simply change their location city to that market and start shopping. It is a simple and easy way to find local products and services.

HeyLocal seeks to help as many businesses as possible, as quickly and easily as possible. Shopify was selected as the platform of choice for the online marketplace as it is the second largest platform next to Amazon. Further, Shopify’s mission is to help small businesses and entrepreneurs. HeyLocal launched as a Shopify App. Small businesses using Shopify can install the HeyLocal App in less than 5 minutes. This involves simply downloading the HeyLocal app and then managing their own ecommerce site. No extra work is required from the small business owner beyond managing their own website, as their products and services will automatically translate over to the HeyLocal marketplace. Other backend ecommerce platforms are being added in the coming weeks.

Built differently than most marketplaces, HeyLocal is centred around keeping the customer relationship, purchase data and profits with the small business owners. With no hidden processing fees, checkout happens on the small business’ website so customers get to know the entrepreneurs behind the products and can discover their stories and other products. The platform is offered at a low-cost monthly fee of \$4.99, however the HeyLocal founders have waived the monthly subscription for 90 days to help get small businesses back on their feet. “We see many big ecommerce marketplaces and platforms capitalizing on high costs towards small businesses for things like inventory storage, processing fees and more. These hurt small businesses almost as much as the revenues from those platforms help them. This is a problem. The HeyLocal model ensures that we are actually giving to our local businesses rather than taking from them,” says Justin Frenette, co-founder of HeyLocal. “We have a solution that won’t just help our community, but all communities across Canada.”

Quotes

“Local retail is vital to our community’s health. It creates jobs and is a critical part of a vibrant local economy. It contributes to a meaningful sense of community that we are all craving so strongly in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic. Our local businesses need our support and HeyLocal provides another way for people to support the local economy, which is important as we gradually shift into this recovery phase.”

—Mayor David Jaworsky, City of Waterloo

“It’s important for our community to support our local businesses during these challenging times. It’s exciting to see platforms like HeyLocal providing new ways for people to access local products.”

—Mayor Berry Vrbanovic, City of Kitchener

“HeyLocal encourages customers to support local business and invest in the local economy. This is a timely, innovative and exciting way to encourage us to become more socially conscious and also support local causes!”

—Mayor Kathryn McGarry, City of Cambridge

“Now more than ever, people in our community are making “choose local” a top priority. HeyLocal has made it easier to shop locally online – a must these days. We are committed to working with them to assist Uptown businesses in improving their virtual presence and getting their products and services into the hands of our socially conscious friends and neighbours in Waterloo Region.”

—Tracey Van Kalsbeek, Executive Director, Uptown Waterloo BIA

“The Downtown Kitchener BIA is so enthusiastic about the HeyLocal App that we created a grant for our small business to support e-commerce platforms. We know that Canadians want to support their neighbourhoods and communities. Kitchener has always been passionate about supporting local businesses and the launch of HeyLocal provided the ease and convenience to do so.

Congratulations to the founders for putting the consumer in control!”

—Linda Jutzi, Executive Director, Downtown Kitchener BIA

“Helping connect shoppers with local products and businesses is something we always support. The fact that this launch comes during the COVID-19 pandemic makes it an even more valuable tool for local businesses.”

—Cory Bluhm, Economic Development, City of Kitchener

"Supporting local businesses is vitally important to our community and the health of our local economy. With the temporary closure of non-essential businesses, the focus to strengthen an online presence is crucial to the survival of downtown businesses. Online sales help ensure businesses can once again open their doors, and with HeyLocal, usher in a new wave of clientele."
—Brian Kennedy, Executive Director, Downtown Cambridge BIA

"HeyLocal offers benefits to both consumers and retailers as a result of supporting and encouraging a shop local movement. It is a place where retailers can take their online small business and give it a megaphone. An affordable, hassle-free solution that connects retailers to so many potential customers - people who choose to shop local."
—Greg Durocher, President & CEO, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

About HeyLocal

HeyLocal is an online marketplace focused on providing local businesses a simple platform that connects and encourages local consumers to shop consciously and conveniently. HeyLocal mission is to support the local economy, community engagement and reduce environmental impacts.

Website: www.heylocal.ca

Instagram: [@_heylocal](https://www.instagram.com/heylocal)

Twitter: [@_heylocal](https://twitter.com/heylocal)

Facebook: [HeyLocal](https://www.facebook.com/HeyLocal)

Media Contact

Madison Lambden

Durrell Communications

madisonl@durrellcomm.com

519-994-1912