



— For immediate release —

CITY GRANT EMPOWERS CONNECTED CANADIANS TO ASSIST OTTAWA SENIORS WITH REMOTE TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

Breakthrough training program will pay unemployed service industry staff to become technology mentors for isolated seniors

May 4, 2020, Ottawa

Thanks to a City of Ottawa grant for economic development, the Connected Canadians (CC) core mission to empower local seniors with technology training can reach new heights during the coronavirus lockdown.

The new funding means that between now and November 2020, CC will run a ground-breaking skills development program that arose in direct response to COVID-19. The objective is to pay unemployed individuals — primarily from the food service/hospitality industry — to become remote technology mentors for CC's elderly clients.

“We are extremely gratified that this grant will allow us to improve and expand our free services at a time when they are more urgently needed than ever,” said CC co-founder and CEO Emily Jones Joannis.

CC took shape in early 2018 to assist the multitude of seniors who lack the technology skills to easily connect to their friends and family online. The federally incorporated organization had assisted more than 300 senior individuals with in-person technology training prior to the COVID-19 shutdown. Now that pandemic isolation has made the need to connect even more pressing, CC outreach services are in even greater demand.

For the newly funded remote mentorship program, food service/hospitality employees were identified as preferred mentors because of their pre-existing people skills, said Jones Joannis, but they'll also be expected to add new skills.

“Our training will build on the mentors' basic grasp of commonplace technology and help them develop new research and problem-solving abilities,” she added.

Once they complete a two-week training regimen, three separate groups of CC mentors will be made available to senior individuals who request remote technology assistance. Mentors selected for training are required to have their own laptop (equipped with a video camera and mic) as well as access to a reliable internet connection.



One early participant in the mentor training, long-time service employee Tania Maljar, is extremely grateful for an energizing opportunity to give back.

“Since the virus breakout shut down the industry that I love, I’ve felt demoralized and defeated,” Maljar said. “But I’m more than excited at the prospect of helping our community’s most vulnerable people keep in touch with their loved ones.”

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