

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Initiative to Support Local Businesses Generates \$1,000,000 in Less Than a Year**

*Support Local BC program allows British Columbians to spend money locally to offset economic impact of COVID-19*

**Wednesday, April 7, 2021, Unceded traditional territories of the WSÁNEĆ and Lkwungen-speaking peoples/Victoria B.C.** -- Since its launch on 24 April 2020, Support Local BC – an online platform that sells gift certificates on behalf of local, independent businesses across BC to help ease financial pressures caused by COVID-19 – has generated over \$1,000,000 in gift certificate purchases. The program has been a key source of cash flow for over a thousand local businesses across the province and has shown to be a great support in the revival of our local economy.

The initiative – spearheaded by Think Local First Victoria and partnered with Vancity, LOCO BC, British Columbia Economic Development Association, Northern Development Initiative Trust, and FortisBC – has created an successful ecommerce website where people can buy gift certificates to their favourite local businesses (or discover new ones) while they are either closed or forced to offer limited services due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The program ensures that all 1,742 businesses registered on the website will receive the full value of the gift certificates purchased, without the expense of payment processing costs. To make this cost-free structure possible, the program relies on the collaboration and investment of economic development organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Associations, Community Futures, and other small business champions.

People can purchase a gift certificate for a specific business or send a "[Support Local BC E-Gift Card](#)" to someone else, which can be used to buy gift certificates to specific businesses on the Support Local BC website. Organizations have been using the e-gift card option to provide gifts to their staff, team members, clients, and volunteers.

With the third wave of COVID-19 health restrictions in place, businesses once again need help covering their hard costs while generating less revenue. The Support Local BC initiative is evidence that people want to get behind local businesses and that support allows businesses to

continue to pay staff, to create jobs, to provide a local service and to contribute to vibrant communities.

### **Support Local BC Quick Facts:**

- \$1,002,588 in gift certificates have been purchased to date
- 1,742 participating businesses in 109 communities
- \$236,530 in Support Local BC e-gift cards are waiting to be used. These e-gift cards are applied to the purchase of a gift certificate to a specific business on the Support Local BC website.
- 202,873 unique site visitors who have placed 18,429 orders

### **Partner Organizations:**

“The Support Local BC platform provided a convenient way for British Columbians to spend their money at their favourite local businesses even when those businesses were closed. As we look forward to the reopening of our economy, let’s keep that ‘shop local’ behaviour and become more conscious consumers. Take a moment, before you part with your hard-earned money, and decide where it can be put to best use. Love Local + Buy Local should become our mantra.”

**Michèle Hamilton, Managing Director, Think Local First + Support Local BC**

“The pandemic has shown us that we’re more connected than we thought we were, and that we rely on one another more than we thought we did. We must continue to channel that connectivity into how we think about the local economy and how we can support our local businesses through this incredibly trying time.

“When the country gets through this pandemic, small businesses will play a significant role in helping to drive our economic recovery. Vancity is proud to be working with Support Local BC to support our local businesses which, now more than ever, need us all to think, shop and click local.”

**Christine Bergeron, President and CEO, Vancity**

“Northern Development is very excited to be a part of the Support Local BC success. When we started over a year ago, we had no idea the tremendous impact this initiative would have

– not only for Northern B.C., but the province overall. Thank you to everyone who helped achieve this goal."

**Holly Plato, Director, Communications + Marketing, Northern Development Initiative Trust**

"It's great news that Support Local BC has helped BC residents to support local businesses in such a huge way. In the same week that some local businesses face a second COVID-19 operational curtailment, it reminds us that there is an easy way to help keep our favourite local businesses afloat by purchasing gift certificates to use at a later date."

**Amy Robinson, Executive Director, LOCO BC**

"BCEDA is so proud to have helped expand the Support Local BC program to many communities throughout the province. To now have exceeded \$1,000,000 in the sale of gift certificates to support local business is quite the accomplishment. During any disaster, including the current pandemic, everyone needs to pull together to support every business – those same businesses that we reach out to for support of community groups and programs. Small business is the backbone of every community, and we all need to work together to ensure that they survive during difficult times. We look forward to continuing to work with Support Local BC in the further expansion of this program."

**Dale Wheeldon, President & CEO, BC Economic Development Association**

To support local businesses across BC, please visit <https://supportlocalbc.com>

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