Budget Fails to Deliver Practical Tariff Support for Small Businesses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 4, 2025

Vancouver, BC – The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) says today's federal budget missed a critical opportunity to support small business operators struggling with the impacts of ongoing US tariffs.

While the federal government previously established a tariff relief fund, BIABC had hoped today's budget would modify the program so that small businesses could access it. Instead, the program remains complicated, difficult to navigate, and continues to exclude businesses that employ fewer than 10 staff.

"Small businesses are the economic backbone of our communities – in BC and across Canada. They are family-run retailers, restaurants, services, and makers - and most operate with fewer than 10 employees," said BIABC President Jeremy Heighton. "The issue with the tariff relief fund is not only eligibility - it's accessibility. The application process is complex, bureaucratic, and unrealistic for small operators who are already stretched thin. Simplifying the program would open the door for the smallest businesses that need support the most."

Heighton noted that high tariffs, layered on top of inflation and rising supplier costs, are eroding already thin margins. Even modest relief, he said, would help stabilize operations and keep businesses viable.

"If small businesses could actually access these funds, they could invest in equipment upgrades, packaging and shipping efficiencies, or source Canadian-made alternatives to reduce reliance on U.S. goods," he said. "These are practical, measurable improvements - but only if the relief is accessible."

Heighton added that support programs should reinforce resilience, not add barriers.

"A tariff relief program that excludes the smallest businesses - or is too complex for them to apply, is not meaningful support," he said. "If Ottawa wants to strengthen Canadian competitiveness, the framework must be expanded and simplified. We stand ready to work with the federal government to get this right."

About BIABC

The Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) is the provincial champion of strong, vibrant, and successful downtowns, main streets, and commercial districts throughout the province. Its members represent more than 80 business districts, employing hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office workers.

– 30 –

Media Contact:
Kelly Gleeson
kgleeson@lbmg.ca
604-240-6231