BIABC EMBRACES 'SHOP LOCAL' AND 'BUY CANADIAN' BUT CAUTIONS AGAINST UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES THAT MAY HARM LOCAL BUSINESSES

For Immediate Release
February 19, 2025

Vancouver, BC – The current wave of nationalism that is sweeping the country along with a groundswell of support for local merchants are fully embraced by the Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC). However, the organization representing 55,000 businesses in 70 business districts across the province, also suggests there is a need to be cautious about the unintended consequences that have the potential to harm local businesses.

BIABC and other business-related organizations are encouraging consumers to channel their frustration about the prospect of US tariffs on Canadian exports into something tangible, by supporting merchants in their own community, and where possible buying BC and Canadian made products.

However, BIABC suggests that we all need to be cognizant of the challenges facing local business owners in navigating the changing environment.

As an example, a business may be a US franchise – but otherwise, be locally owned, pay local taxes, employ local people, and source products locally. In other circumstances, a business may have inventory that is US grown or developed and will expire or go to waste - at the cost of that local business owner. Likewise, a business may be locked into a distribution agreement with a US provider that can't be terminated in short order – even if they want to.

"We encourage consumers to speak with business owners, be sympathetic to their specific circumstances, and not rush to judgement," says Jeremy Heighton, President of BIABC. "Our desire is to support local businesses, not harm them and by extension, our local economies."

BIABC says the current circumstances have highlighted how, as a nation, we have become too dependent on our existing trade relationship with the United States, and it has exposed how vulnerable our economy and businesses across our communities, provinces and the country are to market volatility.

Irrespective of US actions, BIABC is urging the provincial government to use this window of opportunity to advance changes that will strengthen the resiliency of businesses and the economy and put us in a better position to withstand outside forces.

BIABC is urging the province to create a stronger domestic marketplace by establishing local sourcing opportunities and expand the Buy BC Program to support local businesses, producers, and suppliers. The Association is also encouraging the province to work with their counterparts to remove interprovincial trade barriers, support businesses in identifying both domestic and international market opportunities - and create avenues for business to access capital so they can potentially expand and/or tap into market opportunities, within Canada and internationally.

"It would be naive to believe this trade threat is behind us – so we must learn from this experience and take meaningful steps to ensure we are in a stronger position to withstand any future challenges, on March 4th or beyond," concluded Heighton.

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 our province. Members represent more than 70 business districts that employ hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office employees within defined business districts.

-30-

For any media enquiries, please contact:

Kelly Gleeson
kgleeson@lbmg.ca
604-240-6231