

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

BC Economic Development Association and FortisBC team up to support local businesses

VANCOUVER, B.C., June 3, 2020 - The British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA) and FortisBC are working together to support small businesses during a time of economic uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. FortisBC has established a telephone hotline to assist businesses in signing up for Support Local BC, an online platform allowing customers to purchase gift certificates from local businesses across the province.

“We’re happy to have expanded our Greater Victoria gift certificate platform to become Support Local BC and include the amazing, local businesses throughout the province,” said Michèle Hamilton, managing director of Think Local First in Victoria, the organization that inspired Support Local BC. “Businesses need positive action now and our partnership with FortisBC, BCEDA and other regional and provincial organizations is making that happen.”

The Support Local BC platform launched in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on businesses who have had to adjust their operations or close their doors. More than \$47,000 in gift certificates for over 1,000 businesses have been sold to date through the online platform.

“While business owners are highly resilient, we want to help ensure they have the support they need to move forward during this time of uncertainty,” said David Bennett, director of communications and external relations at FortisBC. “When businesses call the hotline, our contact centre staff will provide them with the information they need and set them up on the platform.”

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, BCEDA launched its *Economic Disaster Recovery Program*, and it continues to support communities throughout British Columbia, including offering a [business restart survey](#) to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our local communities’ economies.

“Local leaders, economic developers and other community organizations will lead the local economic recovery, and we are proud to help them establish programs, modify regulations and launch consultation processes to support every business,” said Dale Wheeldon, president and CEO of BCEDA. “Local businesses will need the support of all levels of government as we take the steps necessary to adapt to new ways of doing business.”

The FortisBC-sponsored hotline will operate from Monday through Friday during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The toll-free number for the hotline is 1-888-772-4667. Businesses will also have the opportunity to complete the business restart survey.

For more information about the program, visit: [Support Local BC](#).

-30-

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About BCEDA

The BC Economic Development Association (BCEDA) is the leading professional association of economic development practitioners in the Province of BC. BCEDA currently has over 450 members from communities throughout the province. BCEDA provides services that help member communities grow and expand new and existing businesses, attract new business investments, and work towards strategic infrastructure investment, land use planning, and community enhancement. BCEDA services include an annual summit and networking event, educational and professional development opportunities, public relations, advisory services and resources and partnering with communities and the Province of BC to market British Columbia for business investment. For further information visit www.bceda.ca

About FortisBC

FortisBC is a regulated utility focused on providing safe and reliable energy, including natural gas, electricity and propane. FortisBC employs approximately 2,200 British Columbians and serves approximately 1.2 million customers in 135 B.C. communities. FortisBC owns and operates two liquefied natural gas storage facilities and four regulated hydroelectric generating plants, approximately 7,260 kilometres of transmission and distribution power lines, and approximately 49,000 kilometres of natural gas transmission and distribution pipelines. FortisBC is a subsidiary of Fortis Inc., a leader in the North American regulated electric and gas utility industry. FortisBC uses the FortisBC name and logo under license from Fortis Inc. For further information visit www.fortisinc.com.