

Powering the people who power BC

Entrepreneurial drive and gumption are hallmarks of our business culture in British Columbia. This is apparent when we pause to remember that 98 percent of all business in our province are small businesses.

This week (October 16-22) is Small Business Week and we want to highlight the achievements of the people who are powering BC.

At the BC Chamber of Commerce, our 36,000 members give us unique insights into the importance of small business to our economy. With over a million people in BC working in small businesses – spanning industries such as technology, manufacturing, agriculture, retail, art, and tourism – there are so many stories to be told.

Tom Wittal is the manager at the William's Lake office of E. B. Horseman & Son, a fifth-generation, family-run business. During the summer wildfires, Tom, his wife, and his team of six were evacuated. Not willing to stand by idly, Tom and the E. B. Horseman family raised thousands of dollars, and provided much-needed food and supplies to ranchers and families stranded by the fires.

During Small Business Week, Chambers of Commerce across the province are telling these types of stories, through lunches and galas, seminars and learning opportunities.

While small businesses power our local and provincial economy, they also power their communities. Many of our members are leaders in volunteer and charity work, providing support to local sport and cultural programs, or furthering prosperity in their regions.

For instance, Carol Hiebert runs a successful lingerie store – Undercover Secrets – but her compassion towards women who have undergone mastectomies led her to provide special products to help women feel their best, one of the most gratifying aspects of her work.

Or look at West Coast Edge ATV, which through an agreement with the Uchucklesaht First Nation, provides breathtaking trips of a lifetime to visitors from around the world, showcasing the beauty and culture of Vancouver Island.

Karen Walters runs a five-generational, family-run, seasonal greenery business. In the off-season, she and her family have turned the farmland into a highly sought-after wedding location. In turn, this has provided an incredible economic boost to other businesses in the area.

These individuals and families are showing their grit, their dedication, and their ambition through the good times and the bad. Small businesses often face difficulties with little or no protection. With entire families or even generations of families, working tirelessly to succeed, there is little time off, no room for error, and no safety net when disaster strikes. With this in mind, the BC Chamber of Commerce urges the federal government to further examine the implications of their proposed tax changes, and the effects it will have on small businesses.

This October, we take the opportunity during Small Business Week to highlight and support the many people who make the province of BC so successful and to reiterate our support during the tough times.

Our future strength – and the strength of the economy – will come from powering the people who power BC.

-30-

Val Litwin is the President and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce

The BC Chamber of Commerce BC's largest and most broadly -based business organization with 36,000 businesses members of every size and from every sector and region of the province. The BC Chamber's purpose is to know what's on BC's mind.