

RIDGE BUSINESS BUZZ

Department of Economic Development



Spring Edition - April

Message from Wendy Dupley, Director, Economic Development, City of Maple Ridge

It's been just over one year since the WHO first declared the COVID-19 a pandemic, and although we're not out of it yet, it seems appropriate to hear that "Here Comes the Sun" is the Beatles' most streamed song on Spotify. After a "long cold lonely winter", we're starting to see the first signs of hope as we begin to emerge from the worst of the pandemic.

The Canadian and B.C. Economies have both proven to be surprisingly resilient and are showing surprising signs of growth. Ravi Kahlon, the provincial Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation recently tweeted, "B.C. has been a leader in Canada having recovered almost all of the jobs lost in the initial months of the pandemic. We're now at 98.4% of pre-pandemic employment levels." Employment in B.C. grew for the tenth consecutive month, as the province added 26,600 jobs in February.

The good economic news continued across the country as well. February's Labour Force Survey brought welcome news that employment grew by almost 260,000, pushing the unemployment rate down by over one per cent to 8.2%, its lowest level since March of 2020. It's also worth noting that three industries—Accommodation and Food Services, Information/Culture/Recreation Services, and 'Other' Services—accounted for 80% of the total jobs shortfall. Once travel restrictions are lifted, we should see a significant rebound in the tourism and hospitality sectors, further strengthening our economy.

Lawrence Schembri, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, recently noted an unanticipated consequence of the pandemic economy has been large increases in personal savings. On average, Canadians spent about \$4,000 less last year on things like travel and entertainment. As a result, household savings have risen across the country to about \$180 billion in the past year, or roughly \$5,800 per Canadian.

If these record savings turn into increased spending, this could help fuel a more and even more rapid upswing in the economy than earlier anticipated. Douglas Porter, Chief Economist with BMO Economics recently upgraded his forecast for Canadian GDP growth this year by a full percentage point to 6%, the fastest annual increase in the economy since 1974.

It's important to remember, though, that we're still in a marathon and not a sprint to the finish. The vaccine roll-out will be critical to helping re-start the tourism and hospitality sectors and driving growth in the overall economy. In the meantime, though, we need to follow the public health orders to keep moving in the right direction, and soon enough we'll all see "the smiles returning to the faces".

Sincerely,
Wendy

Smart 21 Conference



In February, the City of Maple Ridge and the Township of Langley successfully co-hosted the Intelligent Community Forum's "Smart 21 Announcement" event. This three-day, on-line event featured sessions on the future of globalization, best practices for building innovation ecosystems, and fostering regional cooperation amongst other topics. The event featured a global line-up of speakers representing nine countries including Estonia, Finland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Spain, Taiwan, Australia, United States and Canada.

The City of Maple Ridge and the Township of Langley were both named Smart21 Communities, joining 19 other communities from around the world including Philadelphia, Moscow, Adelaide, Wellington and Belfast in this honour. You can watch a *short video* announcing the criteria and the 21 semi-finalists named as **Smart21 Communities** for 2021.

BUSINESS



COVID-19 Accelerates Changes in Local Commerce in Canada

Newly released research by online payments company, Square reveals how Canadians are changing their shopping habits one year into the pandemic. The two big take-aways from their research are Canadian businesses are increasingly moving to e-commerce and Canadians are moving away from using cash to make purchases.

Among the more interesting shifts their research reveals:

- 61% of Canadian businesses are now online, compared to 41% one year ago. This compares favourably to 55% of businesses in the UK, 45% in the USA and 29% in Australia.
- Nationally, BC has the second lowest percentage of online businesses at 57%; Saskatchewan leads all provinces at 79%
- We're increasingly going cashless: only 22% of purchases are now made in cash compared to 39% pre-pandemic. Again, Saskatchewan leads the way: only 11% of purchases made in Saskatoon were made in cash compared to 31% in Victoria.



Digital Main Street ShopHERE

The Economic Development Department has partnered with the BIA and the Chamber of Commerce to offer Digital Main Street's ShopHERE program to local businesses. ShopHERE is a free program that helps local businesses establish an e-commerce platform. Some great examples from local businesses include:

- bean-around-books.square.site
- maximussupplements.ca
- paliottiswestside.ca
- capribakerybistro.square.site



Economic Development Strategy Development Underway

The City of Maple Ridge has engaged Rynic, one of Canada's leading strategic planning and communications firms, to develop a comprehensive economic development strategy for the City. The initial phases of this project will include extensive research including consultations with local businesses, community leaders and other stakeholders.

City Launches Dog Friendly Maple Ridge Pilot Project



Dog owners in Maple Ridge are able to visit select shops and patios with their furry friend in tow as part of a just-launched pilot project. Dog Friendly Maple Ridge (DFMR) provides every local business the opportunity to welcome dogs and their owners through new admittance options and special events.

The program, funded through a grant from the provincial government, is a joint venture between the City, the Downtown Maple Ridge BIA and the Chamber of Commerce Serving Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Business owners can opt into the pilot project and decide how to implement it in their retail space. DFMR will also allow participating food or beverage operators to host dogs and their owners on outdoor patios, in accordance with the Public Health Act.

"We're delighted to support local merchants and dog owners by providing more options to explore our beautiful community with our four-legged companions by our side," said Wendy Dupley, Director of Economic Development. "Maple Ridge has what it takes to be recognized as a remarkable place for dog-friendly experiences that benefit

physical and mental wellbeing, in addition to contributing to our local economy."

Beginning this month, any local business in Maple Ridge can apply to join the program. Applications will be assessed based on ability to offer dog-friendly experiences to customers. Once approved, owners will receive a welcome package including a special decal to place on their storefront to indicate participation.

Watch our new *Dog Friendly Maple Ridge Video* or visit www.mapleridge.ca/1908/ for more



TOURISM



Sharing Joy: Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Art Studio Tour

The ACT is opening the Art Gallery from April 17 to June 26 for "Sharing Joy", a free, limited entry exhibition featuring 20+ artists from the Art Studio Tour. The show explores how art brings joy, especially in challenging times. Patrons can expect to see paintings in all mediums, functional pottery, ceramic sculptures, jewelry, sculpture, paper arts, functional art, mosaics, and more.

Free, timed-entry tickets to the exhibition will open for online booking by the first week of April.

FILM



Filming Continues to Boom in Maple Ridge

If it seems like there's a lot more filming going on in Maple Ridge than normal, it's because there is.

Marg Johnson, the City's Film Liaison, reports there have been 18 productions filmed in Maple Ridge so far this year compared to 12 during the same time frame in 2020. "This year we've seen a lot of TV shows coming through town including Supergirl, Batwoman, Kung Fu, Big Sky, and The 'J' Team," says Johnson. "The most popular filming locations are The ACT, the stores along 224 Street, Whonnock Lake, the Albion Fairgrounds and E-One Moli Energy. Even Ryan Reynolds was in town filming in Golden Ears Park."

Johnson doesn't expect to see any slow down in activity anytime soon, "There's lots of scouting activity going on and the phone is constantly ringing with new inquiries," she says. "The film business employs over 1,000 people in Maple Ridge and spends a lot of money in local businesses. It's great news for the local economy."

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