



## Squamish Chamber of Commerce Media Release

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# Squamish Chamber Receives BC Rural Dividend Grant

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*Squamish, B.C. – The Squamish Chamber of Commerce receives BC Rural Dividend grant to help enhance the skills of the workforce and promote businesses.*

The Squamish Chamber of Commerce has been awarded nearly \$40,000 from the BC Rural Dividend to develop brand, leadership and ambassador programs. The grant will allow the Chamber to update highway signage to promote Squamish businesses, provide youth leadership training and develop an ambassador program.

The BC Rural Dividend fund is designed to help communities diversify and strengthen their economies and contribute to their overall wellness and sustainability. This is the third grant the Squamish Chamber of Commerce has received from the BC Rural Dividend Program.

A first grant was received in 2017 to enhance the tools and resources available on [squamishchamber.com](http://squamishchamber.com) to help businesses start and grow. A second grant was received in 2018, in partnership with the District of Squamish and Tourism Squamish, to improve data and create Squamish Excellence, an affordable training program. In 2018, 76% of Squamish businesses surveyed experienced challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. Squamish Excellence provides businesses with an affordable means to invest in their team while improving their customer service. Investment in training and employees is a strategic approach to improving recruitment and retention.





The 2019 grant funding will enable the Squamish Chamber to deliver services in three key areas:

### **Youth Leadership Training**

The existing Squamish Excellence leadership training will be adapted to target students in middle and high school in order to create a culture of excellence. Leadership training will help support strong, confident young leaders who are well-prepared to enter the workforce and/or continue their studies, and become engaged and committed citizens.

### **Ambassador Program**

Squamish residents are passionate about our community. The ambassador program will provide tools and training to foster proud promoters, supporters and advocates of Squamish and our businesses. Armed with knowledge of Squamish – our history, heritage, values, businesses and community – ambassadors can welcome visitors, provide word-of-mouth recommendations for businesses and enhance Squamish’s reputation as a great place to work, live and visit. The ambassador program will aim to increase community-wide pride and provide support to our crucial volunteer network.

### **Highway Signage**

The Squamish Chamber manages a number of billboards on the Sea to Sky, which will be revitalized to reflect the Squamish brand and up-to-date messaging. Squamish launched its new brand in 2014, which is purposefully representative of our indigenous heritage, with the “Eye of the Creator” framed in Coast Salish red and black. The billboards will be updated visually and with new content, including information to help visitors enjoy our community in a responsible manner (e.g. where to park to access bike trails). A digital element will also be explored to connect visitors and businesses (e.g. a QR code to access business listings or a beacon to push messaging for the BC Buy Local program, which the Chamber leads in Squamish).

“As the largest business organization in Squamish, we are aware of the labour challenges that businesses are experiencing. The Chamber recognized a need to create people-based programs that will enhance workforce skills, foster leadership and support our community.” said Louise Walker, Executive Director, Squamish Chamber. “We saw an opportunity for the Chamber to take a leadership role in creating tools to support businesses, volunteers and our future leaders. In addition, the interactive updates to the billboards will create a valuable tool to promote Squamish businesses.” explained Walker.

The BC Rural Dividend fund was developed to recognise both the contribution of rural communities to B.C.’s economy and the unique challenges faced to diversify beyond natural resources. Funding of \$25 million per year is available for community capacity building, workforce development, community and economic development, and business-sector development. The program is administered by the B.C Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, with a focus on supporting projects that help rural communities navigate changes impacting their economies, such as attracting and retaining youth, innovation and partnerships to drive the economy.





Of a total project budget of nearly \$50,000, the Province of British Columbia will contribute 80 per cent, while the Squamish Chamber will contribute the remaining 20 per cent, including in-kind services. Read the media release from the Province of British Columbia here

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019FLNR0098-000797>

The Squamish Chamber would like to congratulate all BC Rural Dividend recipients in the Sea to Sky Corridor, including Squamish recipients Tourism Squamish, Cutting Barriers, Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association and the Spo7ez Cultural Centre and Community Society. We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia in making these important economic and business development programs possible.

### About The Squamish Chamber of Commerce

The Squamish Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in the Squamish community by actively supporting business, economic growth and diversification. The Chamber takes a leadership role in advocating for the interest of Squamish business and provides member services such as networking and educational events, policy positions and partnerships with other organisations.

More information about the organization, events and initiatives can be found on the Chamber's website at [www.squamishchamber.com](http://www.squamishchamber.com)

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