

Squamish Chamber of Commerce Media Release
For immediate release – July 17, 2020

Squamish Chamber of Commerce Receives Rural Community Development Grant

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

The Squamish Chamber of Commerce has been awarded \$56,000 from a new one-time Rural Community Development Grant funding stream to deliver Workforce Development and Business Sector Promotion programs.

“Rural communities like Squamish are the backbone of B.C. so we’re lending a hand to the people who call these communities home,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “The Squamish Chamber of Commerce will build opportunities for local economic and job growth with this funding. It’s one of 150 great projects worth a total of \$14 million to help rural B.C. come back strong from the economic impacts of COVID-19.”

The first component of the grant – Workforce Development – will convert the Chamber’s popular face to face customer service program (Squamish Excellence, a partnership with Tourism Squamish and the District of Squamish) into an online format. Squamish Excellence was created to offer affordable training to help businesses grow and to provide businesses with strong recruitment and retention strategies by investing in their staff. The online format will ensure the Chamber can continue to deliver training while maintaining social distancing and provide additional flexibility for participants to access the course. To help build workforce skills, complimentary customer service training will be offered to anyone who has been impacted by recent events.

The range of courses offered will be expanded to include cultural training (e.g. decolonization) and additional business courses in the Squamish Business Academy. A [survey](#) has been issued to ensure the programs reflect the current needs of the business community, which will be followed by requests for proposals (RFP) for consultants. Access the RFP for [online workshops consultants](#).

The second component of the grant is to create marketing and communication content, including video overview, blogs and social media, to raise awareness of business sectors and services available within Squamish. Focus groups will be held to provide a forum for strategic discussions on the sectors impacted and help design the Chamber's program to ensure it supports our economic eco-system through these challenging times. Please email louise@squamishchamber.com to participate in the focus groups.

"The Squamish Chamber is very grateful to receive funding from the Province of B.C that will help us deliver valuable training and promotional tools. With recent events, the timing could not be better for the Chamber to provide additional support for our business community and the Squamish workforce." said Executive Director, Louise Walker. "We are pleased to see the growth of Squamish Excellence, which has expanded from face to face programs, to a new youth audience and now a new online format, all of which has been made possible thanks to Provincial grant funding." explained Walker.

Of a total project budget of \$70,000, 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](#).

The one-time Rural Community Development Grant funding stream is providing nearly \$14 million in grants to support economic development and recreational opportunities for British Columbians in rural communities throughout the province. The grants for these projects are in addition to the more than \$5 billion in income supports, tax relief and other funding the Province has already announced in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The current grant builds on previous Squamish Chamber workforce and economic development programs that have been made possible thanks to funding from the Province. A previous 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. More than 300 participants have completed Squamish Excellence face to face training. A [Squamish Economic Dashboard](#) can be accessed on www.squamishchamber.com, along with a [Tourism Impact Study](#), which demonstrates that in 2018, tourism supported nearly 800 jobs in Squamish and generated \$95.2 million in visitor spending.

In 2019, the Squamish Excellence leadership training was adapted for youth in order to create a culture of excellence with strong, confident young leaders who are well-prepared to enter the workforce and/or continue their studies, and become engaged and committed citizens. A six-week course was delivered to students at Don Ross Middle School in 2019. The 2020 spring course will be converted to an online

format for fall. Again, this program was made possible thanks to funding from the Province, which has also supported the Chamber's future ambassador program and other business development / promotional tools.

The Squamish Chamber gratefully acknowledges 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

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