

District of Mackenzie

# BUSINESS WALK REPORT

2023



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Mackenzie completed the 2023 Annual Business Walk on Wednesday, October 18, 2023.

47 Businesses across various industries were surveyed by the District of Mackenzie Council, staff, and business support organizations.



The District of Mackenzie has developed a roadmap for creating a diverse, vibrant local economy. The Community Economic Development Strategy outlines actions and strategies towards building an environmentally and financially sustainable local economy centred on diversity and inclusion.

A key part of moving the strategy forward is ongoing community engagement; hearing from local businesses is an important part of this. We'd like to understand what's working well and what could be improved for current and potential businesses in Mackenzie.

The District of Mackenzie Business Walk Program occurs annually, aiming to facilitate the exchange of business support resources and enhance communication between the District of Mackenzie and the local business community. Insights collected during the Business Walk play a crucial role in shaping the District of Mackenzie's bylaws, policies, grant applications, and the development of new business support initiatives.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The annual Business Walk Report depended on the involvement of many community members and organizations, the business community, District of Mackenzie staff, and Mayor and Council. We thank all of those who contributed their time, knowledge, and ideas.

We would like to especially acknowledge the contribution of the following organizations who helped guide this project as a Steering Committee:

- The College of New Caledonia
- WorkBC - Mackenzie
- Province of BC - Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation (JEDI)
- Northern Development Initiative Trust
- Community Futures - Fraser-Fort George
- Mackenzie Chamber of Commerce

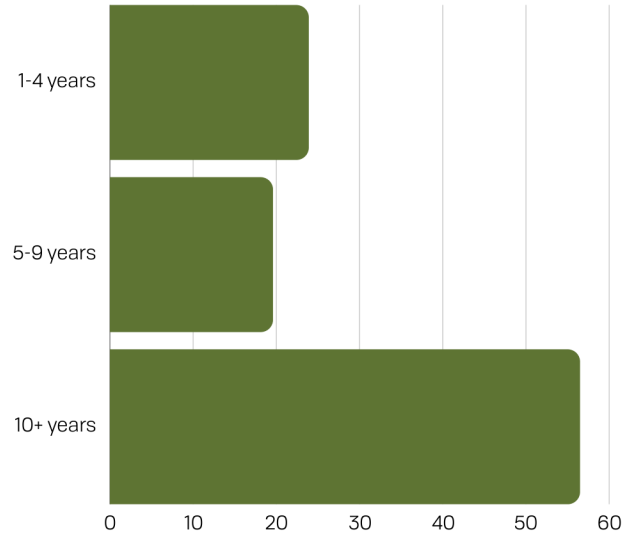
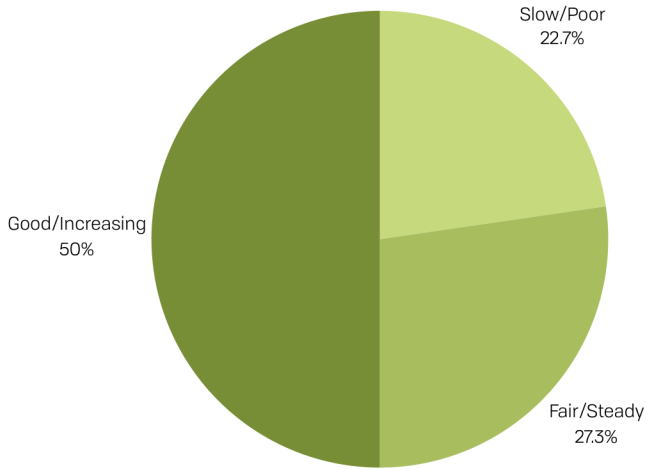
**The District of Mackenzie acknowledges that we live, work, and play on the traditional lands of the Tse'khene People of the McLeod Lake Indian Band.**

# HIGHLIGHTS

Total Businesses Surveyed: 47

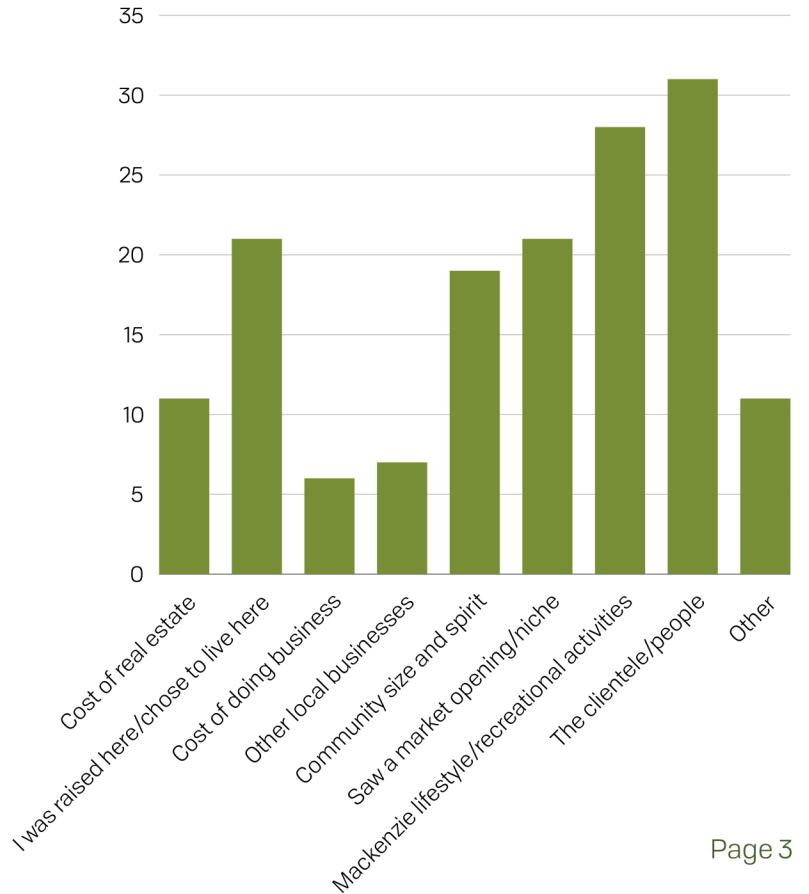
Over 50% of businesses surveyed have been in business for 10+ years!

50% of respondents reported an increase in levels of business



## Why Mackenzie?

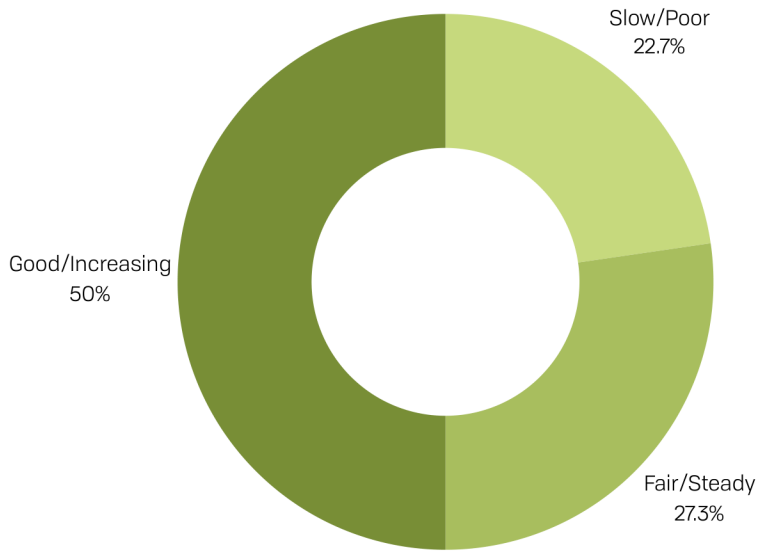
The people/clientele was the main reason stated for establishing a business in Mackenzie.





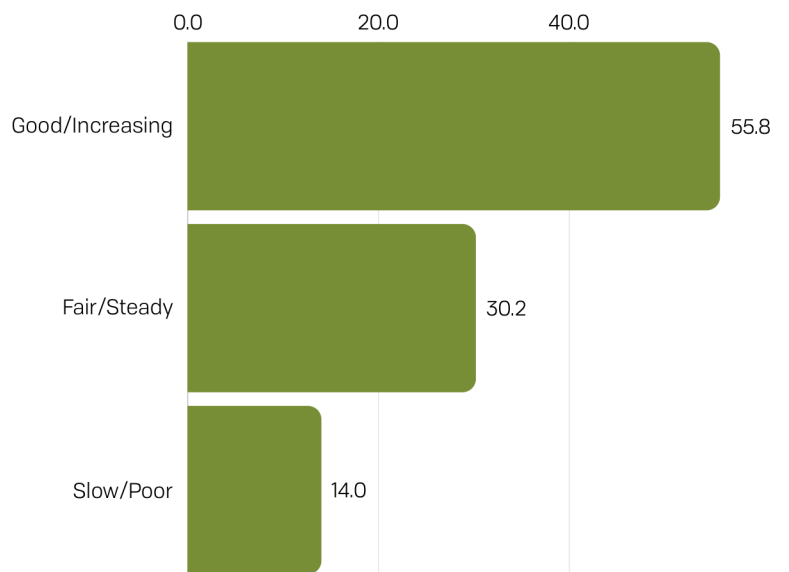
# HOW HAS BUSINESS BEEN? \_\_\_\_\_

## ...AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS



Almost 1/4 of the respondents state business has been slow the last two years.

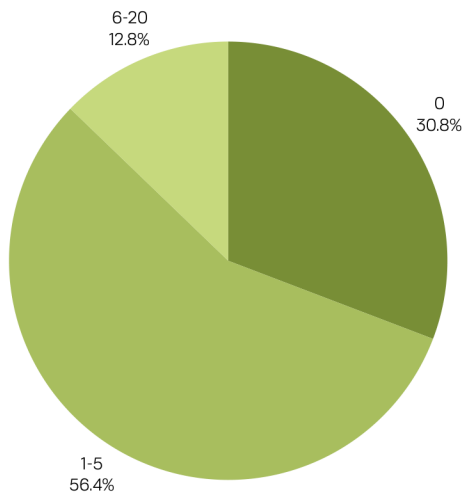
While over 56% of the respondents expect an increase in revenue in the next two years.



# EMPLOYMENT

***"A big business starts small." — Richard Branson***

## Full Time Employees

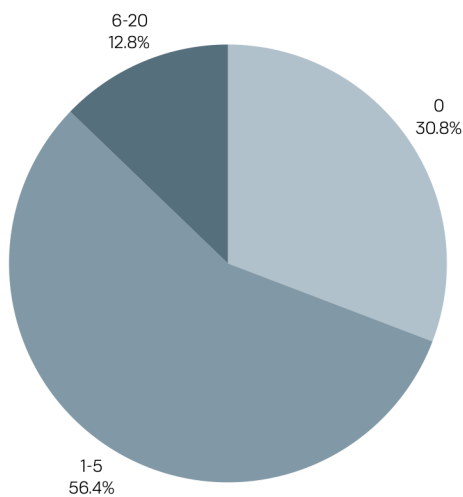


Over half of the businesses that responded to this question employ 5 or less full-time employees. While over 30% are considered sole-proprietors.



Over 10% of the respondents employ contract or temporary employees.

## Part Time Employees



Over 75% do NOT employ seasonal employees.





# BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

***“Your network is your net worth.” —Porter Gale***

If we were to recruit a new business to town, what would benefit your operations?

Top Answers:

- A Business Hub (where space can be rented by the hour or by the day)
- Electronic Repair Shop
- Tourism Accommodations
- Dollar Store
- Indoor Greenhouse
- Grocery Store, Butcher, Food Supplier
- Construction Company
- Niche Shops
- Microbrewery
- Hospital Supports, Medical/Optical/Dental Professionals
- Daycare services
- Fine Dining Restaurant
- Hand Tool Rentals
- Transit service

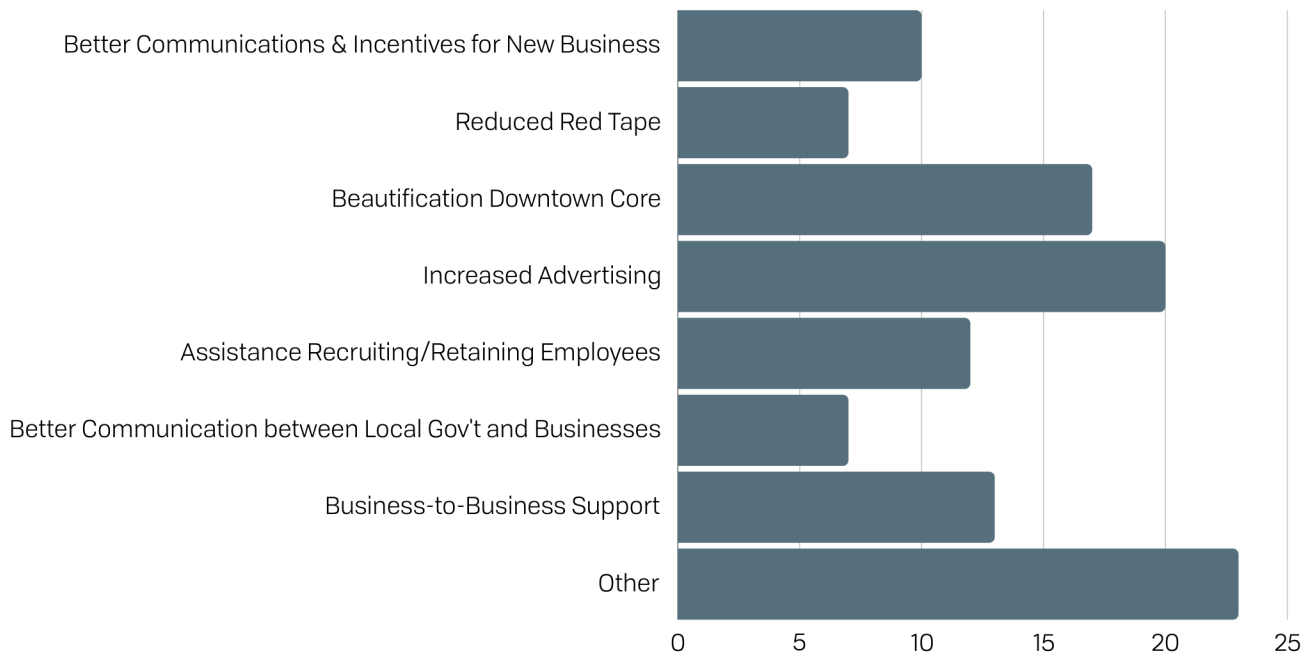
***“Industry Diversification” —Survey Respondent***



# BUILDING A THRIVING BUSINESS

***“It is impossible to progress without change, and those who do not change their minds cannot change anything.” – George Bernard Shaw***

What can be done to help your business thrive?



'Other' included the following:

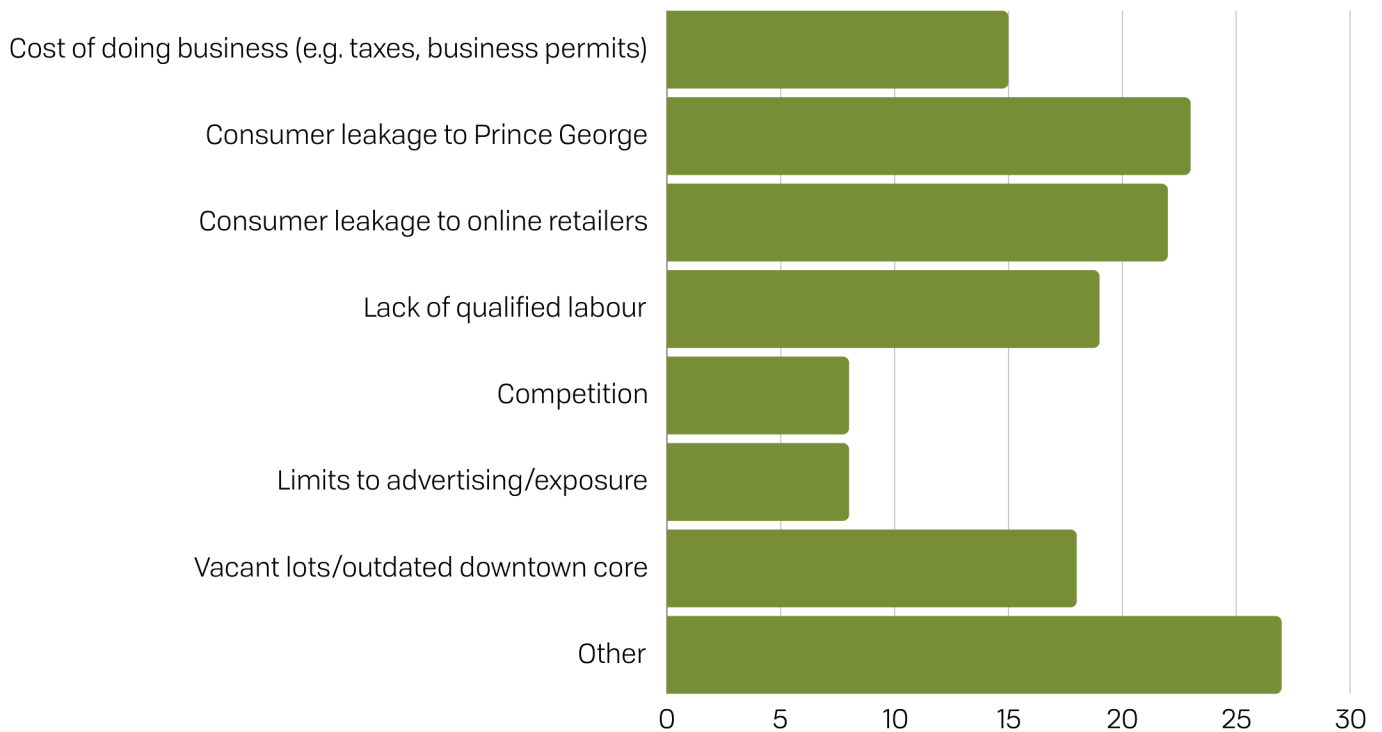
- Grant Funding
- Resident Attraction
- Tourism Retail (including Bike Shop)
- Advertising local businesses abroad
- New signage/advertising
- Industry Diversification
- Customer Service Training
- Education on why to support local businesses
- Policy change in raw log export
- Formal assistance with Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) applications





# CHALLENGES

Survey respondents identified consumer leakage to Prince George and online retailers as the top challenges facing businesses today.



'Other' included the following:

- Inflation (supplier price increase)
- Cost of Living (customers having to choose needs over wants)
- Located off the main highway (Hwy 97)
- Low economic activity
- Entrenched community habits
- Lack of support from fellow business owners
- Perceived notion that Mackenzie is a dying town
- Lack of rental housing
- Weather (staying indoors during unfavourable weather conditions)
- Lack of high speed internet
- Lack of health supports, medical/optical/dental professionals

# WHAT CAN BE DONE? \_\_\_\_\_

**Respondents provided the following ideas to address challenges and/or support local economic development in Mackenzie.**

Collaborate with a builder to construct speculative homes on vacant lots and find a solution to generate income while adding new homes to the community.

Embrace tourism.

Secure fiber optic and/or high speed internet.

Enforce derelict building by-law.

Eliminate the tax burden on the Old Age Pension for retirees who own a business.

Advertise Mackenzie outside of our district, with more regional and national marketing.

**Business Gathering:**  
A place where local business owners can meet each other without intimidation.

Extend highway 39 to meet back up with highway 97.

Encourage businesses to have regular hours as posted, rather than close because it is a long weekend.

• Continue following through with the Downtown Vision Action Plan and work towards beautification of businesses and our downtown core.

Encourage businesses to support one another.

Develop and market a map highlighting where businesses are located, including small home based businesses.

Engage in initiatives to attract residents.

Place a map at the Tree Crusher marking where all the businesses are located

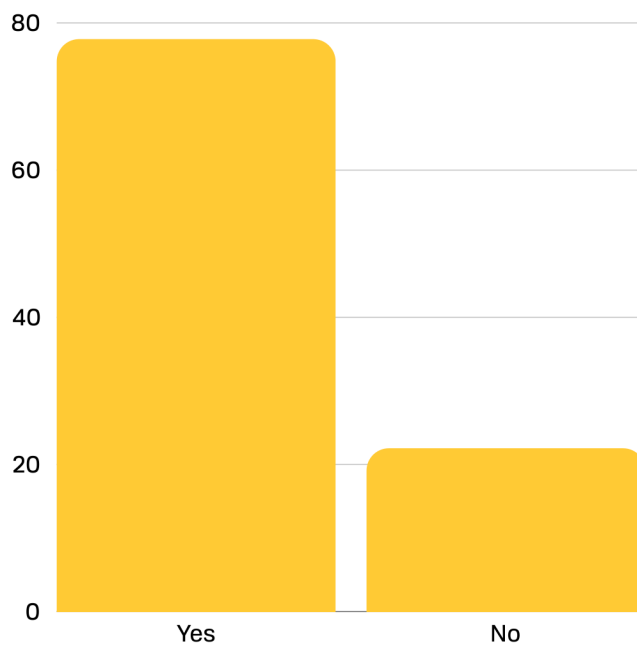
Advocate for a full 100% Northern Living Allowance for the residents of Mackenzie.

Advocate to have Co-op Grocery Store provide bulk product at a competitive price.



# WE ARE HERE TO HELP

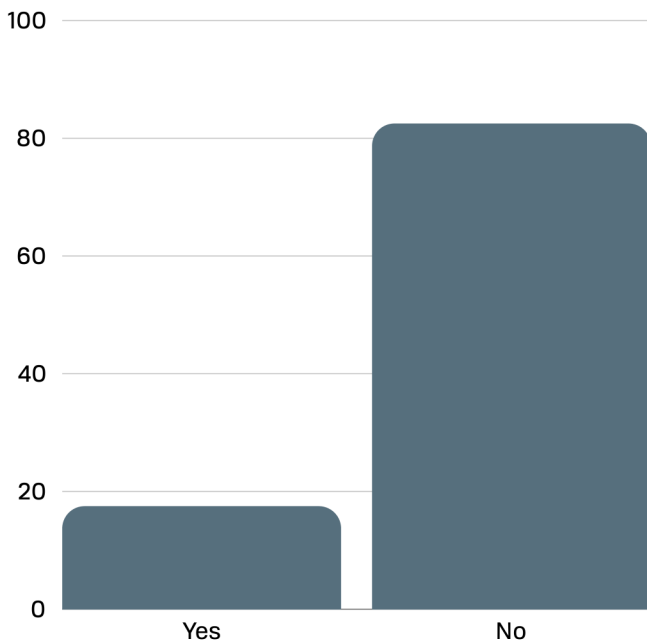
Out of the businesses surveyed, over 77% of the respondents stated they were interested in being part of the implementation of solution based initiatives.



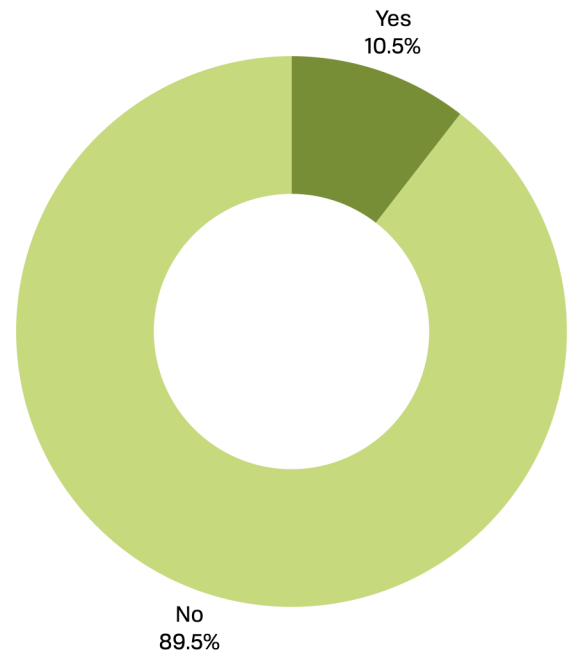
# SUCCESSION PLANNING

***"A leader's lasting value is measured by succession." - John C. Maxwell***

Out of the businesses surveyed, 17.5% of the respondents stated they were planning to retire or sell their business in the next 5 years.



Of those that answered yes, more than 80% DO NOT have a succession plan in place.



## COMMUNITY FUTURES FRASER FORT GEORGE

Looking for help with succession planning?

Business owners planning for transition can get the info they need to plan and prepare for selling a business. Understand your exit options, ensure your business gets exposed to the right market, and maximize your business value when you sell.

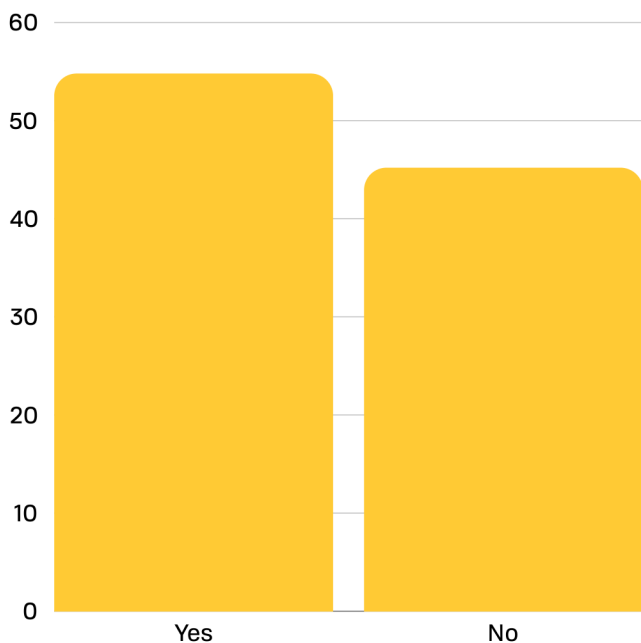
<https://cfdc.bc.ca/sell-for-businesses/>



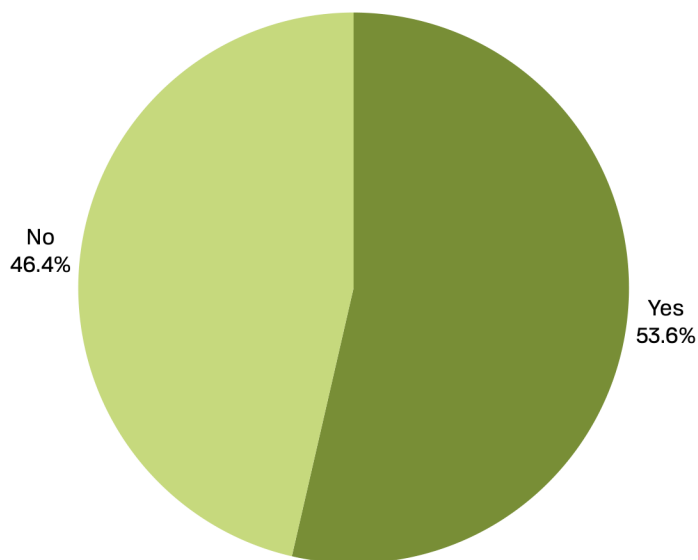
# BUSINESS GROWTH

***"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning." — Benjamin Franklin***

Out of the businesses surveyed, over 50% of the respondents stated they plan to grow or expand their business in the next year.



Of those that answered yes, nearly half do not have a growth plan in place.



## Looking to grow your business?

Since 1986, Community Futures has been helping small businesses throughout the Fraser-Fort George Region.

Supports include the following:

- Coaching & planning
- Business lending
- Workshops
- Exporting beyond your local market

<https://cfdc.bc.ca/grow-for-businesses/>

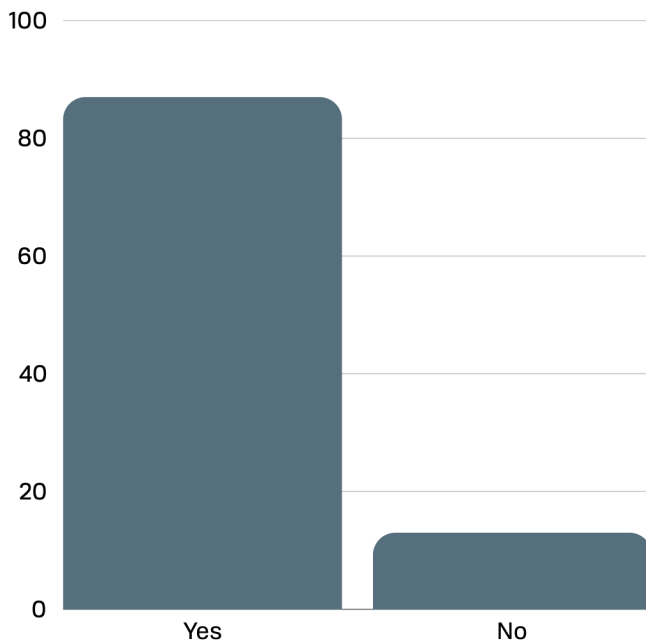




# WORKBC SERVICES

***More employers in British Columbia are recognizing the benefits of inclusive hiring practices. Hiring from a diverse population strengthens your business, increases your impact in the community and brings in new knowledge and fresh viewpoints. -WorkBC***

Out of the businesses surveyed, 87% are aware of the services that WorkBC can provide to an employer.



**Access Employer Resources at WorkBC**

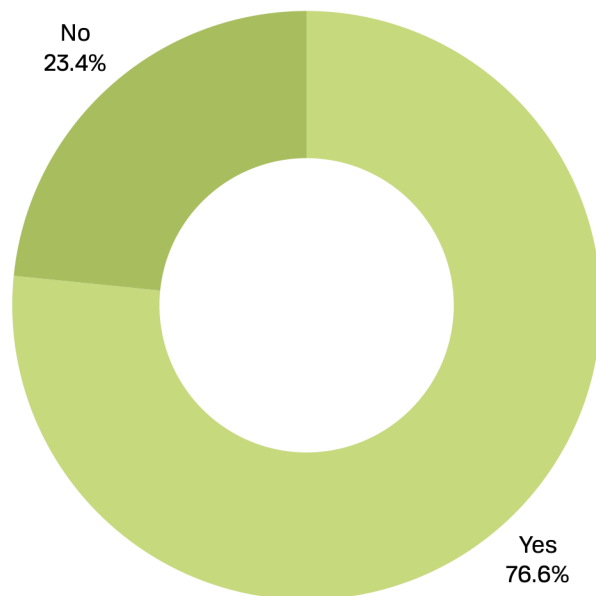
Learn how to grow your business and discover resources to help you hire, train, support and keep employees.

Contact Information:  
540 Mackenzie Blvd.  
Mackenzie BC V0J 2C0  
250-997-7208  
Email: [workbc@cnc.bc.ca](mailto:workbc@cnc.bc.ca)  
<https://workbccentre-mackenzie.ca/>

# ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

***“The untapped power of hiring workers with disabilities. One study showed that workers who have disabilities were five times more likely to stay on the job.” -CBC Journalist Rubina Ahmed-Haq***

Out of the businesses surveyed, over 75% of the respondents stated they have considered hiring a person with a disability.



## WorkBC

Discover job options and services designed to support people with disabilities and build your career here:

- Pursue post-secondary education.
- Get funding or assistive adaptations for your education.
- Gain the work experience, job skills and technologies you need to do the job.
- Create or expand your own business.

<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/resources/people-disabilities>

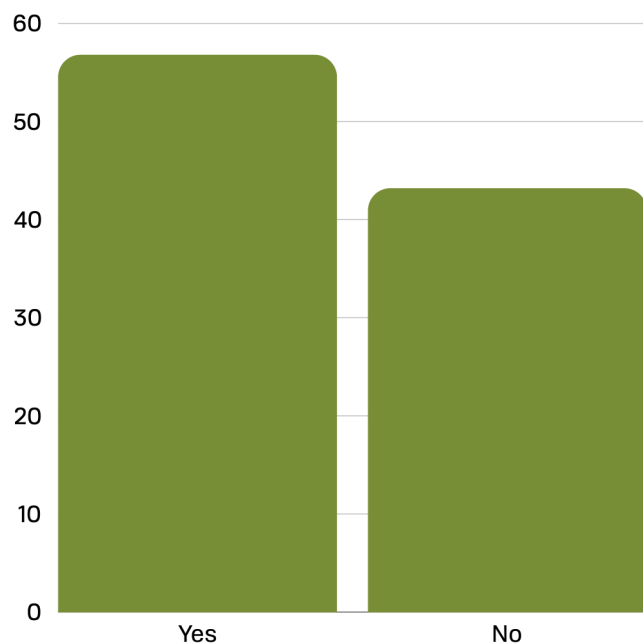


# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Most of the respondents chose group classroom discussion as the best format for their organization and staff.

Out of the businesses surveyed, just over half of the respondents stated they would consider having staff attend professional development training.



Respondents provided the following courses/training of interest:

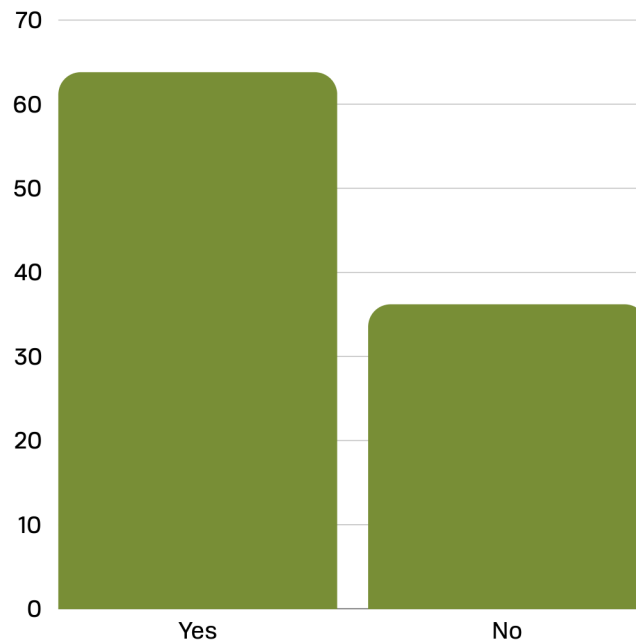
- Super Host
- Marketing/advertising
- Website development
- Occupational First Aid
- Food Safe
- Office 365
- Esthetics
- Leadership/management
- Workplace Safety

College of New Caledonia  
Mackenzie Campus  
540 Mackenzie Boulevard  
PO Box 2110  
Mackenzie, BC, V0J 2C0  
Tel: +1 250 997 7200  
[Get Directions](#)  
[cncmackenzie@cnc.bc.ca](mailto:cncmackenzie@cnc.bc.ca)



# CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Out of the businesses surveyed, 63.8% of the respondents are a member of the Chamber of Commerce.



Chamber of Commerce - Mackenzie

Office Manager: Janey Morgan

Address:

PO Box 880

#11 - 600 Mackenzie Blvd

Mackenzie, B.C.

VOJ 2C0

Phone: 250-997-5459

Fax: 250-997-6117

Email: [office@mackenziechamber.bc.ca](mailto:office@mackenziechamber.bc.ca)

**MACKENZIE**  
—CHAMBER OF COMMERCE—  
MOVING BUSINESS FORWARD

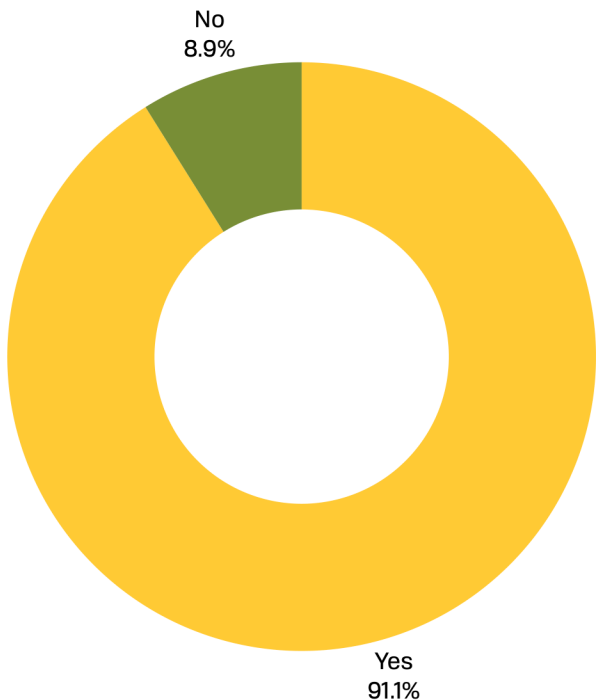




# BUSINESS FACADE

***“What a difference in the look of the building prior and after the building’s facelift. Without your help in this program, the improvements would not have happened this year.” -Sylvain Laferriere***

Out of the businesses surveyed, over 90% of the respondents are aware of the Business Façade Improvement program.



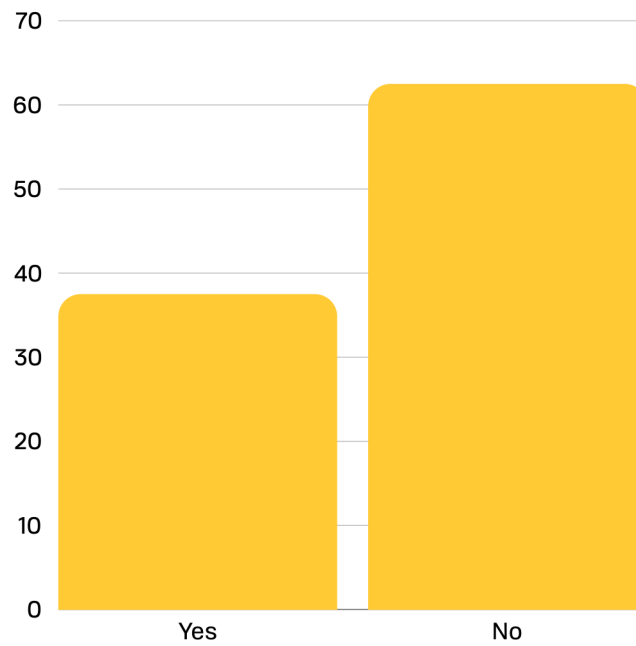
Respondents provided the following suggestions for improving the program:

- Include flowers and outdoor seating
- Eligible improvements too restricted
- Extend completion of work timeline



# REVITALIZATION TAX EXEMPTION

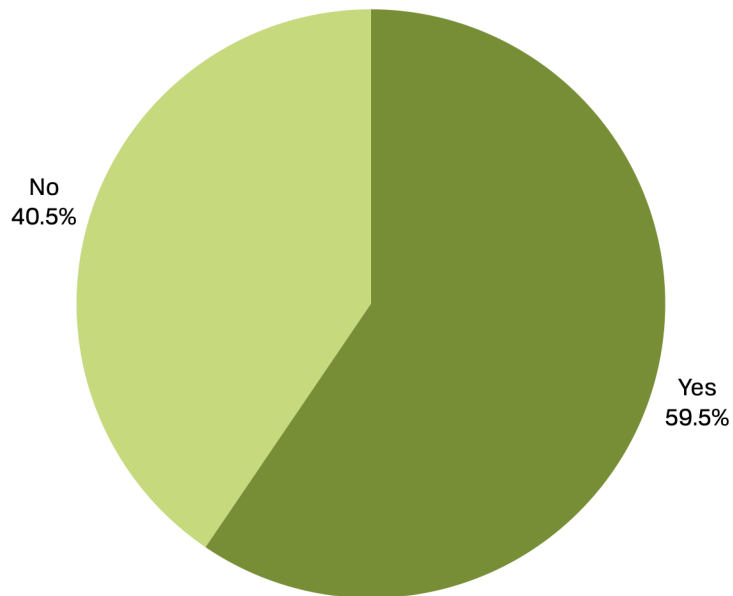
Out of the businesses surveyed, 37.5% of the respondents were aware of the Revitalization Tax Exemption program.



# E-COMMERCE

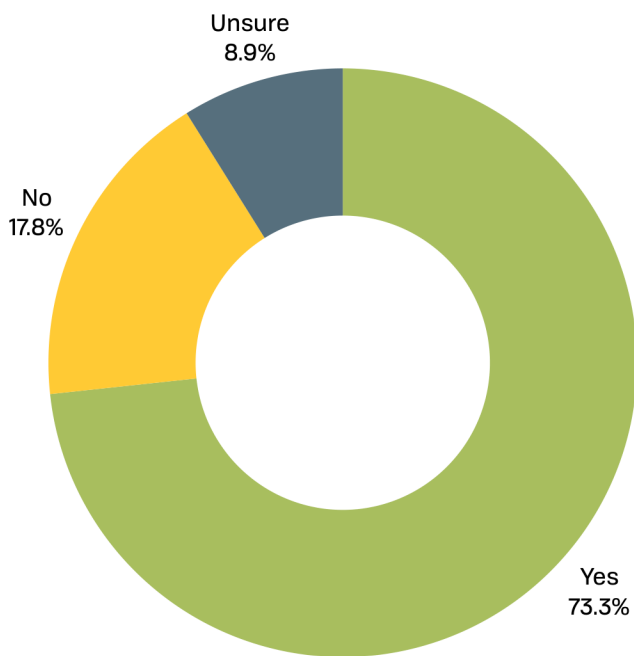
---

Out of the businesses surveyed, almost 60% of the respondents were interested in an e-commerce website for Mackenzie.

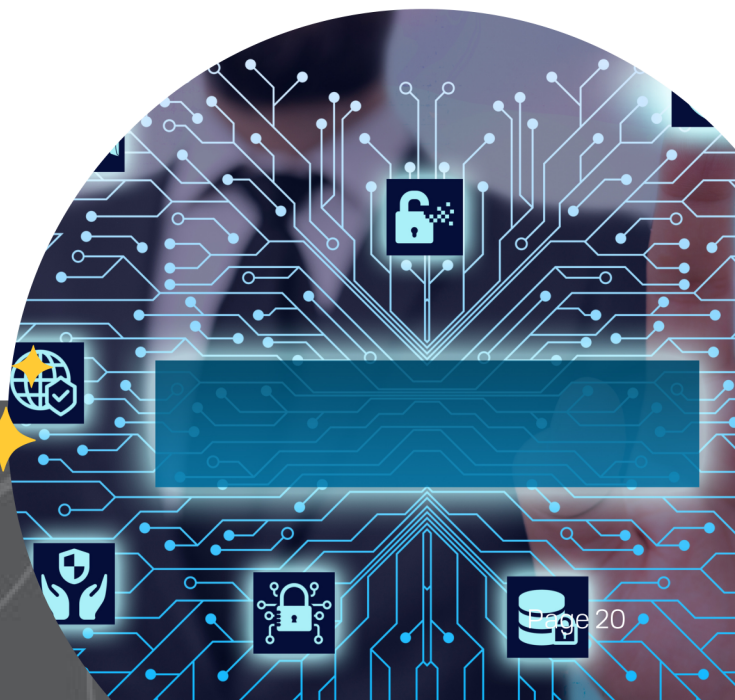
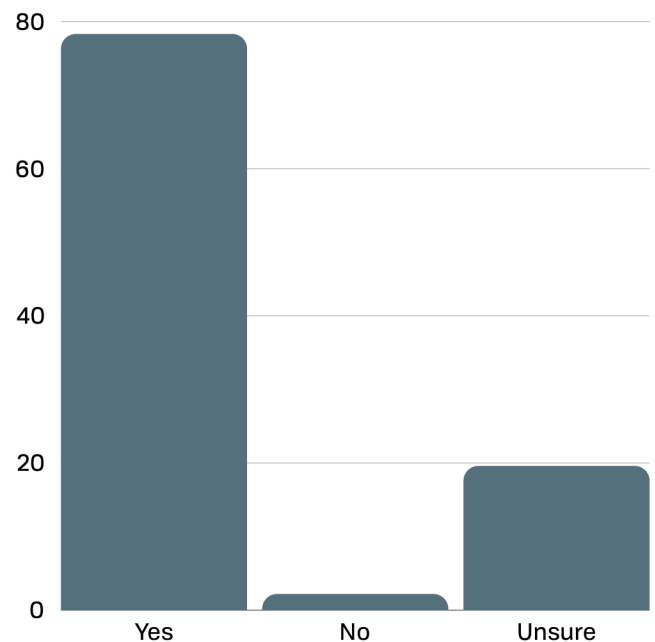


# CONNECTIVITY

Out of the businesses surveyed, 73% of the respondents believe the current internet connectivity hinders their business in expansion and/or attraction



Out of the businesses surveyed, 78% of the respondents believe the current internet connectivity in Mackenzie impedes other investors from investing.





# SHOP LOCAL

---

**Respondents to the business walk survey provided ideas on what they would like to see in a new shop local initiative. They are as follows:**

- Coupon Book
- Education on the benefits of shopping local, including business-to-business)
- Social media presence/sharing
- More Bruce the Moose
- Include all local businesses
- More marketing/advertising
- Digital sign boards for advertising
- Video production marketing
- Contest for Mackenzie Bucks
- More signage
- More 'Plaid Friday' like events



# RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS —

**While there may not always be a definitive solution, exploring available resources is always worthwhile for business owners, offering valuable insights and potential solutions to their challenges.**

## Resources

### Northern Development Initiative Trust - Business Development Funding Programs

<https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/>

#### Competitiveness Consulting Rebate

The Competitiveness Consulting Rebate program provides a rebate to small and medium sized businesses in eligible industries for customized consulting services.

#### Small Business Recovery (SBR) Consulting Rebate

This program is designed to help businesses reduce the barrier to accessing professional expertise and recover the costs of third-party consulting projects.

#### Northern Industries Innovation Fund (NIIF)

This program provides incremental funding to support innovation projects that increase the competitiveness of local businesses in traditional industries across Northern B.C. The program is also intended to support economic diversification and/or viability of businesses to mitigate the economic impact of the pine beetle epidemic.

### Community Futures Fraser-Fort George - Business Services

<https://cfdc.bc.ca/>

Community Futures provides business support to entrepreneurs in Prince George, Mackenzie, McBride, Valemount and the surrounding rural areas. Supports include business loans, business coaching, business start-up services, business growth services, and succession planning services.

### Small Business BC

<https://smallbusinessbc.ca/>

Small Business BC offers business resources and guides to help support and grow small businesses. Whether you are starting a business, or looking for new growth strategies, use their business startup checklists, expert programs, and specialized bookstore to build your business.



# RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS —

## **Business Benefits Finder**

[https://innovation.ised-isde.canada.ca/innovation/s/?language=en\\_CA](https://innovation.ised-isde.canada.ca/innovation/s/?language=en_CA)

Whether you're an entrepreneur, a business, or a not-for-profit organization, this site will assist in tailoring a list of programs and services, including funding opportunities to help your business grow.

## **Funding Opportunities**

### **Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP)**

<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canada-digital-adoption-program/en>

#### **Grow Your Business Online Grant**

Get up to \$2,400 to grow your business online and help with the costs related to adopting digital technologies.

#### **Boost Your Business Technology Grant**

Get up to \$15,000 to boost your business technology, includes software consolidation, and security tools.

### **South Peace Mackenzie Trust**

<https://spmtrust.ca/>

The purpose of the SPMTrust is to encourage and support economic development, diversification and stabilization in the Specified Area by creating new income-earning positions that are consistent with the recovery of the Southern Mountain Caribou herds.

### **Regional District of Fraser-Fort George Grants**

<https://www.rdffg.bc.ca/services/community/grants>

The Regional District of Fraser Fort George offers a selection of grants to support various community initiatives and projects within its jurisdiction.

### **Northern Health - IMAGINE Grants**

<https://www.northernhealth.ca/services/healthy-living-in-communities/imagine-grants#who-can-apply>  
IMAGINE Community Grants exist to support projects that address community-led health and wellness initiatives while improving the well-being of all Northern BC residents. Grants are available for a maximum of \$10,000.



# RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS —

## Funding Opportunities Continued

### McLeod Lake – Mackenzie Community Forest Grants

<http://mlmcf.ca/call-for-project-proposals/>

Two Funding Streams:

#### MLMCF Tenure Enhancement Stream

Funding supports for research, physical works, and other applied projects that are relevant to and enhance the Community Forest area, and support sound environmental and cultural stewardship, social values, and economic growth.

#### MLMCF Community Benefits Stream

Provides funding supports for local projects and services that benefit the communities of McLeod Lake Indian Band and Mackenzie.

### Iris Energy - Mackenzie Community Grants Program

<https://irisenergy.co/community-grants-program>

The Program will provide funding for local initiatives that benefit the community in the areas of community participation, sustainability, safety, technology and learning. Up to CAD\$100,000 of grant funding will be available each year.

### Community Gaming Grants

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/gambling-fundraising/gaming-grants/community-gaming-grants>

Community Gaming Grants provide \$140 million annually to not-for-profit organizations throughout B.C., to support their delivery of ongoing programs and services that meet the needs of their communities.

Grant Amounts:

- Local Organizations- up to \$125,000 per year
- Regional Organizations- up to \$225,000 per year
- Provincial Organizations- up to \$250,000 per year





# RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS —

## Funding Opportunities Continued

### Northern Development Initiative Trust - Other Grant Opportunities

<https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/>

#### Fabulous Festivals and Events Grant

<https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/community-development/fabulous-festivals-and-events/>

The Fabulous Festivals and Events program provides annual grant funding to support unique festivals and events throughout the region that contribute to service sector revenues in the local economy. The program supports festivals and events that promote Northern B.C. as a destination for tourism. Projects undertaken through this program aim to improve the sustainability and expansion of hosting capacity of festivals and events throughout the region, increase tourism revenues and improve community quality of life.

### WorkBC - B.C. Employer Training Grant

<https://www.workbc.ca/find-loans-and-grants/industry-and-employers/bc-employer-training-grant>

The B.C. Employer Training Grant provides funding to small, medium and large enterprises to support skills training for their workforces, including prospective new hires. The intent of this program is to help British Columbians access the skills training required to adapt to the labour market's changing job requirements, while also encouraging employer involvement in skills training. The Employer Training Grant helps employers pay for training, which in turn helps employees experience increased job security or move into better jobs. Employers can apply as often as they need and receive 80 per cent of the cost of training up to \$10,000 per employee, with a maximum annual amount per employer of \$300,000.

### CanExport SMEs

<https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/funding-financement/canexport/sme-pme/applicant-guide-requerant.aspx?lang=eng>

CanExport SMEs provides up to \$50,000 to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) registered in Canada for international business development activities. The program helps develop export opportunities for products and services in new international markets.

CanExport SMEs is not currently receiving applications. Please continue to consult their webpage for information on the next opening.



# RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS —

## District of Mackenzie - Business Support Programs

### Business Façade Improvement Program

<https://districtofmackenzie.ca/business-development/business-support-programs/business-facade-improvement-program/>

The Business Façade Improvement Program was developed in partnership with the Northern Development Initiative Trust to support local businesses with renovating, refurbishing and improving their business exteriors. The improvements may include accessibility improvements to the front entrance.

### Revitalization Tax Exemption

<https://districtofmackenzie.ca/business-development/building-development/revitalization-tax-exemption/>

The District of Mackenzie's Revitalization Tax Exemption program provides tax incentives to encourage the revitalization and development of properties within the district.

### Love Mackenzie

<https://districtofmackenzie.ca/business-development/love-mackenzie-program/>

In partnership with Love Northern BC, Love Mackenzie is our community shop local initiative supporting independently owned, non-franchise businesses. These companies are provided with an online presence, which includes a professionally written and designed web profile, professional photography sessions, free local and regional advertising opportunities, as well as numerous networking, business and professional development opportunities.

### Grant Writing Support Services

<https://districtofmackenzie.ca/government-town-hall/budget-finance/grant-funding/>

The grant writing support program is designed to help non-profit groups in Mackenzie apply for grant funding to enhance or support their service offerings in the community.



# RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS —

## District of Mackenzie - Grant-in-Aid Programs

### Permissive Tax Exemptions

<https://districtofmackenzie.ca/government-town-hall/budget-finance/grant-funding/>

The purpose of the District of Mackenzie's tax exemption bylaws are to excuse certain properties from paying all or a portion of municipal property taxes.

### Community Grants

<https://districtofmackenzie.ca/government-town-hall/budget-finance/grant-funding/>

Council has adopted a Community Grants Policy to provide financial and in-kind support to community associations and other community organizations. This support is in recognition of these groups as a valuable resource in assisting the municipality to provide a strong community focus.



# NEXT STEPS

---

## 1. Communicate Report Results

This report will be sent out to participating businesses, stakeholders, community organizations, and will be available on the District of Mackenzie website and Facebook page.

## 2. Follow Up

Businesses who requested further information on programs and supports mentioned in the survey will be contacted.

## 3. 2024 Budget Considerations

The data collected will be considered in the creation of the District of Mackenzie 2024 Budget.



WHAT'S  
NEXT?

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The District of Mackenzie would like to thank the businesses in our community for participating in the 2023 Business Walk.

This project was made possible by:



## **The District of Mackenzie**

1 Mackenzie Blvd, PO Bag 340  
Mackenzie, BC V0J 2C0  
<https://districtofmackenzie.ca>  
[ecdev@districtofmackenzie.ca](mailto:ecdev@districtofmackenzie.ca)  
205-997-3221

