

RIDGE BUSINESS BUZZ

Department of Economic Development



Spring Edition - May

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

A fond farewell...

As many of you already know, I'm planning to retire from the City of Maple Ridge at the end of May and move across the country to a new home in Nova Scotia. Over the past two plus years, I've had the incredible pleasure of getting to know the people and businesses that make Maple Ridge such a unique place. We are incredibly blessed to live in this beautiful corner of the world, filled with passionate entrepreneurs, dedicated volunteers and innovative business leaders. While I'm excited to start this new chapter in my life, I'm sad to leave behind the many new friends and acquaintances I've made during my time in Maple Ridge. Although I will be continuing in my role (be it remotely) for the interim while the search for my replacement is undertaken, I'll remain accessible, as always, on my usual coordinates.

These past few years have certainly brought their share of social and economic challenges: a world-wide pandemic, global supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, a record heatwave followed by catastrophic flooding, growing inflationary pressures, steadily rising interest rates, and the devastating Russian invasion of Ukraine that threatens global stability and security.

Despite all of this, I do see an exceptionally bright future for this community. Maple Ridge continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in Metro Vancouver, attracting new residents with its combination of affordability and exceptional lifestyle. The City has a growing and diversified economy with identified strengths in the manufacturing, construction and business services sectors. Our office is also fielding a steady stream of inquiries from new businesses and entrepreneurs looking to set up shop in this growing market. After this long winter of discontent, green shoots are appearing everywhere and striving towards the sunshine of spring.

Maple Ridge's new economic development strategy has set the stage for continued economic growth in our community. The focus of this strategy is on attracting and supporting new and existing businesses, creating a vibrant Town Centre, supporting new entrepreneurs, and continuing to develop the growing tourism and film sectors in Maple Ridge. I'm also excited by our new and growing relationship with Kwantlen Polytechnic University; although it's still early days, I'm confident this relationship will be a game-changer for our community over the long term.

Although I'm not going to disappear just yet, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the incredible support and kindness you have shown to me during my time in Maple Ridge, and I wish you all continued success in the future!

Best wishes,

Wendy

BUSINESS

BC Leads Canada in Post-pandemic Employment Growth

According to a recent Labour Force Survey from Statistics Canada, the number of employed people in BC has increased by 3.2% since February 2020. This increase is the highest among all provinces in Canada, and BC now has 84,000 more jobs than when pandemic began. The Canadian economy added 337,000 jobs in February bringing the overall unemployment rate down to 5.5%, the lowest it's been since it was 5.7% in February 2020 just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economists believe this means the labour market is at, or very close to, full employment.

One avenue to address this shortfall in workers is to increase the overall size of the labour force by attracting new workers to the province. New data released by Statistics Canada shows that British Columbia broke a record for the number of people moving to the province in 2021. Year-end data shows that B.C.'s net migration reached 100,797



people in 2021, which is the highest annual total since 1961. This is an important step to expand the province's workforce and address labour shortages. Net migration is the number of people who moved to B.C. from another province or territory, or from another country, minus the number of people who left.

Of the people who moved to B.C. last year, 33,656 people came from other Canadian provinces or territories, which is the highest number seen since 1994 and the highest in Canada. This positions B.C. as a leader across the country in attracting new talent to fill an anticipated one million job openings over the next decade. Nearly 80% of these future job openings will require some level of post-secondary education or training.



Strong Job Growth Continues in Maple Ridge

Vicinity Jobs most recent Hiring Demand Report reveals the strong labour market demand for employees in Maple Ridge continued in the first quarter of 2022. The end of most COVID-19 restrictions has led to a resurgence of hiring in the hospitality, tourism and retail trade sectors. The majority (56.7%) of new job postings are for full-time positions, another sign of a strengthening labour market. The local manufacturing sector also saw a strong increase in job postings, showing an increase of 25.5% compared to Q4 2021. This sector consistently ranks in the top five of all sectors within the community.



How Online Shopping is Impacting Downtown Parking

Throughout the pandemic, there has been a remarkable increase in the adoption of e-commerce in all its various forms. Restaurant customers are ordering online for pick-up or using third-party delivery apps such as Skip the Dishes and Uber Eats. Online shoppers are placing orders for curbside or in-store pick-up. Even quick service restaurants are encouraging their customers to pre-order and pay online for quicker pickup.

An easily overlooked impact of the rapid growth of e-commerce is how it is changing the nature of parking in urban areas. One of the promises of e-commerce is convenience: your order will be ready when you arrive. This means that many customers are only parking for short periods often for only a few minutes which is leading to increased demand from businesses to provide short-term parking spots. This trend is evident in private parking lots as well as many big box retailers such as Save-on-Foods, Home Depot and Lowes who are reserving prime spots in their parking lots for customers picking up online orders.

TOURISM

Ecotourism and Sustainable Travel in Maple Ridge, BC

The economic development and tourism office, in partnership with community stakeholders, is producing a new ecotourism video to highlight the importance of treading lightly while exploring our mountains, trails, waterways and wildlife habitats. Also coming soon are an updated Maple Visitor Guide and an updated Tourism Strategy.

Current travel trends have brought Ecotourism and sustainable travel to the forefront in British Columbia. Especially following the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen an increased demand both internationally and domestically for experiential travel and volunteer experiences that can be personally transformative and empowering. Local Maple Ridge tourism destinations such as WildPlay Elements Park, Bell-Irving Fish Hatchery and Loon Lake Lodge and Retreat Centre all reported growth in numbers of bookings for programs about conservation and personal growth. There is a growing desire to escape crowded urban settings in order to explore the beauty of natural settings. Thornhill Trail Network, the North Alouette Greenway Dyke Network and Kanaka Creek Regional Park have all seen record high numbers of adventure seekers in our natural settings. Further, year-round demand for outdoor adventuring experiences such as hiking and camping at Golden Ears Provincial Park and backcountry touring with Sky Helicopter has grown considerably. It is now estimated that close to a million people visit Golden Ears Provincial Park yearly.



Take only photos, leave only footprints, and keep wonderful memories of Maple Ridge, BC

According to Destination BC, balancing the goal of increasing resident and community prosperity through tourism, an industry that contributes \$8.3 billion to the BC economy, with that encouraging people to sustainably explore the natural and cultural heritage of Maple Ridge, is a balancing act that must be considered for future tourism growth.

For ecotourism to be a tool for sustainable community development, it is important that visitors are reminded to tread gently on the land, and to explore our natural habitats and our cultural diversity without depleting or impacting the bio-diversity that makes our local area unique and special for generations to come. Mountaineering and hiking while viewing wildlife, cultural sites, waterways and landscapes can support the community if visitors (and residents) are provided with opportunities to learn and participate in environmentally-friendly activities that are sensitive to our rich cultural heritage, and our biodiverse nature, flora and fauna.

The new ecotourism video, a collaboration with school students, First Nations, environmental groups and local businesses will be launched in early June.



Second Annual Innovation Challenge

The City of Maple Ridge's Innovation Challenge recognizes and celebrates innovation in our community. We want to hear from businesses and organizations that have encouraged and nurtured a culture of innovation - tell us about the successes you have earned by supporting innovative thoughts and ideas from your staff.

Great leaders make smart decisions, but they also know they can't do it alone. Leading an innovation culture is as much about listening, mentoring, trusting and empowering your teams and creating a culture where every employee feels some level of autonomy to think independently and find new ways to solve problems. A culture of innovation actively encourages and supports creative, even unorthodox, thinking from their people, and allows innovation to flow through it.

The Challenge

To qualify for entry, you must represent a business/organization based in Maple Ridge with an active business license. The business must actively support and encourage innovation. The deadline for submission is July 31, 2022.

All finalists will be asked to submit a 1-2 minute video presentation that describes the innovative culture in their organization. Please see further details in the Guidebook which will help you with your submission.

FILM

Film Appreciation Night

The Downtown Maple Ridge Business Improvement Association and the Economic Development Department co-hosted the first Film Appreciation Night at The Ridge Studio headlined by presentations from Creative BC and the introduction of the new liaisons from Angus Film. The goal of the evening was to create an open dialogue between businesses in the Town Centre, Creative BC, Angus Film, and the City so they can actively work with one another when challenges present themselves.



The film industry is off to a slightly slower start in 2022 compared to its blistering opening in 2021, mainly due to film labour disputes in BC and the US. The Economic Development team has been busy working during this slower period to set the foundation for a busy summer of filming, as the industry will be looking to make up for lost time. Mark Wilmot, the City's new liaison with Angus Film, is actively engaging businesses in the community to ensure businesses and residents are aware of his services when productions come into town. He will be on-site when high impact productions come to Maple Ridge to ensure an open dialogue between the city and its residents and to proactively address issues that may arise during filming. The slower start to the season has allowed a nice build up for the new personnel, policies and procedures in place to flourish when the volumes increase.



Preventing Single-use and Plastic Waste in British Columbia

The Province is proposing a new regulation to reduce single-use and plastic waste by limiting or banning the use of certain single-use items. Several approaches are being considered in support of this strategy including a new regulation that would limit or ban the use of certain single-use items.

The regulation will complement and expand on the actions taken by **B.C. municipalities** and the **federal government** to tackle plastic waste and pollution. As part of this process, the province is conducting a survey seeking your input on other actions to reduce plastic waste and address materials that are difficult to reuse or recycle. Take the **survey** for retailers, restaurants and small businesses. The online survey is available from April 22 to June 21, 2022.

Learn more about this project

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