BIABC Welcomes Support for Workers Affected by Tariffs and Global Market Shifts

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Vancouver, BC – The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) says today's announcement of funding to support workers affected by tariffs and global market shifts is an important step in helping communities navigate growing economic uncertainty.

Federal and provincial ministers today announced new support for workers and sectors impacted by global trade pressures – including those within the softwood lumber, steel and other directly and indirectly tariff-affected industries.

BIABC President Jeremy Heighton said that even though the tariff support program is primarily focused on larger industries and export sectors, the economic impacts inevitably ripple through local communities and small businesses – including forest dependent communities.

"Even when support is directed toward larger sectors, it matters deeply at the community level," said Heighton. "When major employers face trade disruptions, the effects are felt on main streets across British Columbia - in local restaurants, retailers, and service businesses that depend on strong local economies."

Heighton said measures that stabilize affected industries help protect jobs and household spending, both of which are essential to the vitality of commercial districts throughout the province.

BIABC has previously highlighted that tariff uncertainty continues to create significant pressure for small businesses, particularly through rising input costs, sourcing challenges, and broader supply-chain disruptions.

A recent BIABC survey of small businesses across the province underscores the need for a meaningful tariff response plan from the province, while also highlighting clear priorities from the small business community. An overwhelming 90 per cent of respondents said governments should take concrete steps to remove interprovincial trade barriers, identifying domestic market access as one of the fastest and most practical ways to reduce reliance on US supply chains. More than 57 per cent called for

expanded Buy BC and Shop Local initiatives to strengthen local and Canadian sourcing.

Heighton noted that while the province's participation in the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement (CMRA) represents a positive step toward reducing trade barriers, its success will depend on how effectively it supports smaller operators.

"Agreements like the CMRA have the potential to help local makers, manufacturers, and independent retailers who often don't have the administrative resources larger companies take for granted," he said. "But it will be important to ensure these initiatives translate into practical, accessible benefits for smaller businesses."

Heighton said today's announcement reinforces the importance of coordinated federal and provincial action to support economic resilience across all sectors.

"Tariffs and global trade shifts are not abstract policy issues - they affect workers, families, and businesses in every community," he said. "Supporting impacted sectors is an important part of ensuring our local economies remain strong and resilient."

BIABC says it will continue to work with both levels of government to ensure tariff-response measures translate into meaningful support for small businesses and the communities they serve.

About BIABC

The Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) is the provincial champion of strong, vibrant, and successful downtowns, main streets, and commercial districts throughout the province. Its members represent more than 80 business districts, employing hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office workers.

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