



# SOUNDING BOARD



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## New support for businesses looking to pivot to digital

**ECONOMY** | Businesses can receive up to \$1,500 to set up e-commerce operations

From how we study to the way in which we shop and socialize, COVID-19 has been a catalyst that has changed just about every aspect of our lives. For businesses this shift has been particularly pronounced as both employers and customers have turned to technological solutions in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

A recent GVBOT survey revealed just how big this shift towards digital has been. When questioned, four-in-ten businesses in Greater Vancouver said that they have increased their digital or e-commerce presence during the pandemic, with a further six-in-ten revealing that they plan further investments in this area.

### A major shift

What we're seeing is a major shift in our economy, and the mass adoption of digital practices that we previously thought were years away from entering the mainstream. As a result the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade has encouraged the Government to continue supporting businesses as they pivot to digital platforms and expand their digital presence and e-commerce capabilities.

Speaking at a special event for GVBOT members on February 16, the Honourable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation for the Province of British Columbia, spoke about the rapid change



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in the way in which businesses operate as a result of COVID-19. "This pandemic has accelerated the pace of change and the innovation it needed to adapt," he said. "Things we expected to happen five to seven years from now are happening right now.

The way that we work, the way we study, shop, communicate to each other is changing rapidly, forcing businesses to innovate to keep up. And we are here to support the efforts to innovate and pivot to a new normal."

That support has included the announcement of the new Launch Online program, which is designed to help over 1,500 eligible small- and medium-sized B.C. businesses adapt to changes in consumer behaviour and pivot to market their products online.

Launched in February, the program will see the B.C. government invest \$12 million to help businesses launch or upgrade an online store that will provide the platform they need to increase

their sales revenues, become more competitive and grow.

Part of B.C.'s \$1.5 billion Economic Recovery Plan, this new program is an example of the kind of support that the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade has been advocating for on behalf of our members. As we emerge from this pandemic our region is understandably focussed on economic recovery, but it's vital that businesses don't just get back to normal, instead now is the time to adapt and innovate so that Greater Vancouver can thrive well into the future. **SB**

For more information on the Launch Online program visit [launchonline.ca](http://launchonline.ca).

## Winners for inaugural Business Reinvention Awards announced

**AWARDS** | Recognizing excellence in innovation

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's Scale-up Centre for SMEs (SCS) has announced the winners of its inaugural Business Reinvention Awards.

The new awards recognize businesses who have reinvented, adapted, and shown resilience in the face of all challenges and barriers that we faced in 2020.

The winners were unveiled at a special virtual ceremony

on Friday, February 26, where the Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade and the Honourable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, delivered remarks before announcing this year's winners.

During the virtual ceremony, World Trade Centre Vancouver also presented the Trade Accelerator Program (TAP)

Export Plan of the Year awards, recognizing companies that have achieved significant international growth in the last year.

"Businesses have adapted, innovated and collaborated to not just survive the immediate impact of the pandemic, but to thrive in spite of it. We're delighted to recognise just some of those businesses through our new Reinvention Awards, and to celebrate the inaugural winners

whose spirit of reinvention and revitalisation is an inspiration to the entire region as we embark on our economic recovery," said Bridgitte Anderson president & CEO Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. **SB**

### Meet the winners

- **Reinvention Award:** Novo Textile Company
- **Excellence in Collaboration Award:** Vancouver Whitecaps

- FC and Ocean Wise
- **Healthy Workplace Award:** Innovior Construction
- **Environmental Leader Award:** Aisle
- **Domestic Growth Award:** Virtro Technology
- **Greater Vancouver TAP Export Plan of the Year:** Novo Textile Company
- **Regional TAP Export Plan of the Year:** MarineLabs Data Systems



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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## ENVIRONMENT | Sustainability Series returns for 2021

## Events get underway on March 4

Following the success of our inaugural events in 2020, The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade is bringing back its popular sustainability series later this month.

The series was launched in response to increased interest in sustainability in the business community and feedback from our members across the region, who have identified the environment as their one of their ongoing priorities. Due to the ongoing pandemic, 2021's sustainability series will look a little bit different. But even in spite of COVID-19, the subject matter hasn't lost its importance to Greater Vancouver businesses who understand that sustainability is a cornerstone of our region's future prosperity.

**Technology**

The series, which is presented in partnership with the Pacific Salmon Foundation, gets underway on March 4 with an event that focusses on the role that technology has to play in sustainability. This event will explore

how business across sectors are leveraging technology to adapt their operations, business models and strategies for better environmental and economic outcomes. Alongside a panel of experts, the event will also feature a keynote from The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who will speak about the Government of Canada's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and the role that technology will play in reaching that target.

**The business of blue**

The following month, the sustainability series will turn its attention to our waterways. In B.C., ocean and rivers are a critical element of our economic makeup, providing important resources and serving as transportation highways that unlock global markets for Canadian goods. However, our ocean and waterways are far more than levers for economic growth for our region, rather they are the linchpin of our long-term environmental, social and



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economic resilience and prosperity. Taking place on April 14, this event will explore how industry can be part of the solution and the local initiatives that are protecting and fortifying one of our most important resources.

**Environmental, social, and governance factors**

Known simply as ESGs, environmental, social, and governance factors are becoming an

increasingly important aspect of business strategy. Studies have found that businesses with higher ESGs have higher profitability and lower volatility, so it is perhaps no surprise that these kind of investments have flourished during the pandemic as investors double down on responsible practices.

But, as investors, customers, and partners increasingly expect businesses to incorporate ESGs, SMEs must learn how they can

Greater Vancouver businesses understand that sustainability is a cornerstone of our region's future prosperity



begin introducing some of this thinking into their businesses to build back up, grow and become more resilient. The final session of our sustainability series will focus on Greater Vancouver businesses that are leading the charge on ESGs and offer advice on how you can implement them for your organization. **SB**

Register today at [boardoftrade.com/sustainabilitytech](https://boardoftrade.com/sustainabilitytech).

## PEOPLE | One-to-one with Jean-Philippe Menard

We spoke to Jean-Phillipe to find out what he believes makes Vancouver such a dynamic place to live and work.

We spoke with Jean-Phillipe Menard, Senior Vice President British Columbia, North and Client Diversity at BDC. In our wide-ranging discussion, we discussed his first job at a gas station, the biggest challenge of his career and what he believes makes Vancouver such a dynamic place to live and work.

**What inspires you?**

Business owners. I am constantly inspired by their capacity to create and innovate, by their ability to bounce back and be resilient. It has been almost 25 years that I have been working at BDC - 25 years that I've been working with entrepreneurs. Hundreds, maybe thousands of business owners. I think entrepreneurs are some of the most fascinating people out there - it takes so much courage, work, and resiliency to keep going especially through tough

times, like we are going through right now.

**How do you relax?**

Since I was 18, I have been a minor hockey referee. It connects me to the present moment and helps me relax. In normal time, I would do around eight matches a month and I really enjoy it. I also read a lot: business, economy, politics. I mostly enjoy reading biographies and watching documentaries.

**What was your first job?**

I was a gas station attendant in my dad's business. Because I was the son of the owner, my dad wanted to show me what hard work meant. I didn't get a raise in three years and he always gave me the worst shifts - Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, so it made it very difficult for me to go out with my friends! It was a very useful and formative experience.



Jean-Philippe Menard, BDC

**What keeps you awake at night?**

The increasing pace of change and our ability to adapt and evolve. The pandemic has brought a new set of challenges that we have to deal with. Canadian entrepreneurs need to adopt new technologies, they need to improve their productivity and strengthen their global footprint. I am constantly asking myself how my team at BDC - Canada's bank for entrepreneurs - better support business owners

I am constantly inspired by their (business owners) capacity to create and innovate, by their ability to bounce back and be resilient.



through all this uncertainty and complexity.

**What do you like most about doing business in Greater Vancouver?**

The economy is so dynamic and diverse, and Vancouver is such an important tech hub. All this combined with the fact that work life


balance is ingrained in Vancouver's culture contribute positively to attracting talent from all over Canada and the world.

**Where do you see untapped potential in Greater Vancouver?**

For BDC, one of our biggest opportunity is to significantly increase our collaboration with different partners in the marketplace. When the members of an ecosystem work closely together, this has a hugely positive impact on entrepreneurs and the level of support they are getting. At BDC, we want to be at the heart of the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Vancouver and bring different stakeholders together for the benefit of business owners in the region.

**What is the most important lesson, business or otherwise, life has taught you?**

You need to listen and trust people. It is incredible how much people can give and achieve when they feel trusted and empowered. The sky is the limit when you have engaged teams. **SB**

A man in a dark cap and sunglasses is fishing on a boat. The background shows a sunset over a body of water with a forested shoreline. The text is overlaid on the image.

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