

Green business certification program expands across British Columbia

February 23, 2023

VICTORIA, BC – The [Vancouver Island Green Business Collective](#) is expanding provincewide under the new name [BC Green Business](#) to help more businesses across the province take climate action. The sustainable business certification program, an initiative of non-profit [Synergy Foundation](#) and supported by Strategic Partner [Vancity Credit Union](#), has been helping small-to-medium sized businesses across Vancouver Island since 2013 to reduce their environmental footprint.

The expansion marks the program's tenth anniversary, over which time it has grown to include over 160 businesses. The collective impact of these businesses has amounted to over two million single-use plastic items avoided, almost six million kilograms of waste diverted (equal to the annual waste of nearly 4,900 households), 4,500 community volunteer hours, and over 15,600 tons of greenhouse gases reduced, the equivalent of taking 3,400 cars off the road for a year.

“When we think about the companies responsible for carbon emissions, people often focus on larger corporations,” says Andrea Harris, VP of Impact Strategy at Vancity. “But smaller businesses have a crucial role to play, and collectively, the power of local businesses can be immense. Our hope is this program will give small business owners the opportunity to forge the path to net zero, save money, attract new clients, and overall strengthen their business in the face of climate change.”

The certification takes a holistic approach to sustainability, incorporating social criteria such as volunteer hours for employees, action toward Truth & Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and donations to community charities and non-profits in addition to environmental practices to reduce waste, water, and energy use.

BC Green Business works one-on-one with each business member, focusing on practical and affordable ways to meet their sustainability goals. Each business completes an in-person or virtual site visit and receives a list of suggested actions to implement before they are certified as Silver, Gold, or Green (the highest level). Certification criteria is based on industry type, with seven sector-specific checklists available for Fleets, Grocery Stores, Offices, Restaurants & Cafés, Retailers, Spas & Salons, and Food & Beverage Processors.

The Food & Beverage sector checklist is the latest offering, launching in conjunction with the program's provincewide expansion. The new checklist is aimed at food and beverage processors including cheesemakers, breweries, and distilleries. Developed in consultation with industry partners such as [Gathering Place Trading Company](#), [Sheringham Distillery](#), and [Whistle Buoy Brewing Co.](#), the checklist rewards actions like offering customers refillable options, upcycling production by-products, and sourcing local ingredients.

BC Green Business offers approachable and affordable recognition and support for businesses who want to take action and be sustainability leaders. The expanded program will officially launch provincewide on February 23rd, 2023, with a celebration event at certified member business, [Vancouver Island Brewing](#).

Businesses who are interested in joining BC Green Business can visit [bcgreenbusiness.ca](#). As a proud partner of the certification program, Vancity is offering any of its members looking to certify with BC Green Business a significant discount – 30 per cent – off the certification cost. Vancity is also financially supporting the cost of certification for Indigenous-owned businesses.

Pictures – [linked here](#)

Quote

“By joining BC Green Business we now have a standardized way of measuring our sustainability practices and have created a great community of like-minded businesses who want to have a healthy impact on our environment.”

- Eli West, Victoria Retail Store Manager, [ecologist](#)

Member Stories

- [Pepper's Foods](#) (Grocery): Installed strip curtains on three walk-in coolers, saving them approximately 11,190 kWh of electricity per year
- [Sure Grip Controls](#) (Office): Replaced all single-use items in staff kitchen used by 55 full-time employees to reduce waste and installed seven low-flow aerators to their faucets, conserving 271 m³ of fresh water annually

BC Green Business

[BC Green Business](#) – previously known as the Vancouver Island Green Business Collective - is a certification program that supports businesses looking for practical and affordable ways to reduce their environmental impact and contribute to their local communities. Businesses can be certified as Silver, Gold or Green (the highest level) and, in eligible regions, can also be certified as an Ocean Friendly Business based on ‘[Surfrider](#) Approved’ actions that focus on direct and positive impact for our oceans. The program has over 160 members across the restaurant, retail, office, spa/salon, fleet, grocery, and food and beverage processing industries. BC Green Business is an initiative of [Synergy Foundation](#).

Synergy Foundation

Since its inception in 2013, Synergy Foundation has focused on innovative projects and programs that have pushed the envelope, supported hundreds of businesses, and turned great ideas into action. This Victoria-based non-profit focuses its programs on green business, circular economy, and food security. Their mission is to share ideas, spark innovation and activate change to steer our economy and communities towards a more regenerative future.

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