

# Support PG – Community Collaboration in Action



BRIGHT IDEAS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## SYNOPSIS

A successful collaboration between 11 organizations is helping support Prince George businesses and residents in their time of need. The Support PG website and marketing campaign were created to help the community stay connected while COVID-19 keeps residents apart.

## ECONOMIC BASE

Healthcare & Social Assistance; Wholesale & Retail Trade; Manufacturing; Construction; Accommodation & Food Services; Educational Services; Forestry

## LOCATION

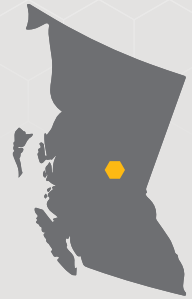
Prince George

## INNOVATORS

City of Prince George

## POPULATION

74,003 (2016)



## INTRODUCTION

The City of Prince George, in the geographic centre of B.C. is affectionately referred to as “PG” by locals, and is known for its optimism and community connections.

The city is lively, with a growing population and many small businesses. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the community came together with businesses and residents stepping up and working together to support each other through unprecedented levels of uncertainty and change.



## THE CHALLENGE

When the pandemic hit British Columbia, like every community there was an unusual tension and an overall eeriness in Prince George. The streets were empty while people stayed home, uncertain of where they could and couldn't go and what they could and couldn't do.

Knowing it was important for people to come together in a new way to support one another, a number of organizations with a stake in economic development came together to respond.

## THE STRATEGY

What do you get when business service organizations unite to work on a once-in-a-lifetime project? The answer is [Support PG](#), a website and marketing campaign with a commitment to provide businesses with important resources during a period of crisis, encourage residents to support local, share uplifting stories, and say thank you to essential workers.

## COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In March 2020, the Prince George Chamber of Commerce created a listing of businesses that were still operating after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic named Support PG and partnered with local media outlets to help spread the word.



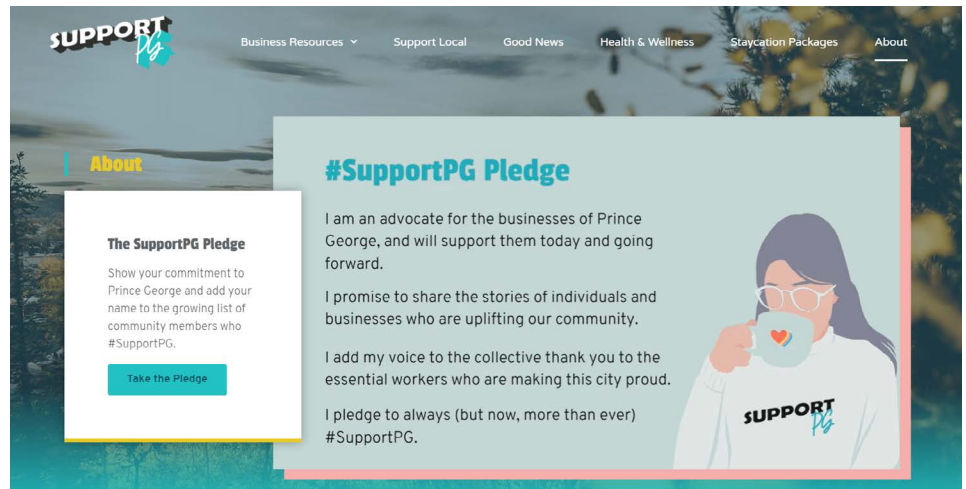
When Luke Hutchison of local design and web development firm Shift Creative Solutions offered to build a website for free to support local business during the pandemic, 11 organizations with a stake in economic development came together to work on the project.

They envisioned and rolled out a website and marketing campaign using the Support PG name, as it was recognizable and broadly promoted due to the Chamber of Commerce's open businesses directory.

These organizations include:

- [City of Prince George](#)
- [Prince George Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Tourism Prince George](#)
- [Downtown Prince George](#)
- [Community Futures Fraser-Fort George](#)
- [Prince George Airport Authority](#)
- [Women's Enterprise Centre](#)
- [Aboriginal Business Development Corporation](#)
- [College of New Caledonia](#)
- [University of Northern British Columbia](#)
- [Northern BC Tourism Association](#)

With the team assembled, it took just 18 business days from the start of the project to the launch on April 29, 2020.



## WEBSITE CONTENT

The directory started on the Chamber's website and was migrated to the new website due to its fit with the Support PG campaign.

From the beginning, the website was envisioned as a one-stop portal for COVID-19 related information for businesses and residents.

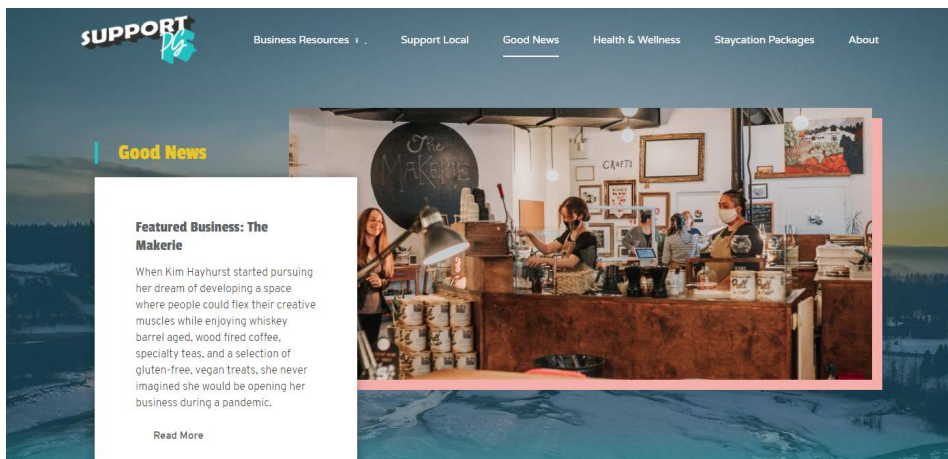
The goal was and still is to help businesses pivot and sustain their operations during the pandemic, as well as encourage residents to continue supporting local businesses. An equally important goal is to lift people's spirits through positive stories.

The website and Support PG social channels on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) were used to get all of this information out to the public to help drive consumers to the location and websites of businesses that are open to the public.

New pages, resources and ways to support were created, such as:

- Information for [how businesses can adapt their operations](#) in light of COVID-19
- An ["Open Now" directory](#) where businesses can let residents know what services they are offering and what safety measures they have put in place
- A [Personal Protective Equipment directory](#) for businesses to find the supplies they need locally to operate safely
- [Featured business stories and local shout-outs](#) about businesses going above and beyond
- [Staycation packages](#) that promote travel adventures within the city for residents to experience PG like a visitor
- Weekly #TakeoutDay contests to support local restaurants
- Weekly giveaways to frontline workers donated by [TC Energy](#) and [Coastal GasLink](#)
- Biweekly blog posts on various topics

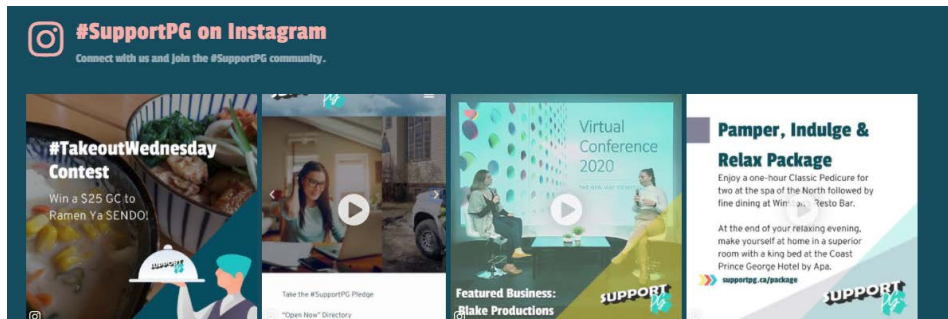




A unique feature of the website includes a call for residents to take the [#SupportPG Pledge](#). By taking the pledge, residents vow to be advocates for PG businesses and to support them as much as they can, especially during and after the pandemic. Hundreds of community leaders and residents have taken the pledge, and a list of signatures can be seen on the website, furthering Prince George's commitment to stand together, even when they're apart.

## SUCCESSSES

One of the most valuable outcomes from the project was from the collaborative effort that went into Support PG. With so many organizations coming together quickly with a united goal, a strong relationship of trust and teamwork formed that will continue.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- Talk to the project partners upfront about expectations and outline what funding and staff time each can contribute. When possible, document roles in a formal agreement.
- Assign a project manager to oversee, track and break up tasks. A project manager with a complete view of the project can streamline work and identify obstacles.
- Make sure you account for the time and effort it takes to write, review and publish the content pieces for your website.
- Start with less, add more later.

Other successes, as of the end of November 2020 include:

- Over 363 businesses shared their information on the website
- Support PG has 1,423 followers when combining Facebook and Instagram
- 2,158 #SupportPG tags on social media
- 69,446 total and 29,939 unique website pageviews in about seven months
- With close to 90% new visitors and around 12% returning visitors
- Eight Support PG staycations have sold. Businesses involved noted that the awareness generated through these packages and the website has also led to more sales
- Car and window decals for the Support PG campaign can be seen around the city

The owners and operators of Salmon Valley Campground, Bobbi and Frank Carpino, saw new customers and revenues thanks to the website:

*"Support PG has been an incredible advocate and resource for our seasonal campground... We had new visitors, more people interested in our campground, and local residents really understand the importance of supporting local."*

### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Christina Doll**  
Workforce Development Officer  
250-561-7633  
[christina.doll@princegeorge.ca](mailto:christina.doll@princegeorge.ca)



For more information, visit [gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment](https://gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment)

