

## 'Tis the season to think local

**By Jody Didier**

The BBIA would like to remind visitors and residents to think about the overall impact of shopping dollars and to support the businesses that benefit our common interest. By buying goods and services locally, you contribute to a tradition that was established in the mid-1800s and there's a profound benefit in keeping your money in town. Our communities depend on it.

Here are the top reasons you should buy from our local shops and businesses:

1. What goes around, comes around. When you buy local; more money stays in the community. The more you buy locally, the more those shops need supplies, upkeep, printing etc. and that puts money back into the local economy- fast. Local businesses are more than twice as likely to support local causes, sports teams, events and non-profits. Our local commercial business and property owners pay for the town's Christmas decorations, summer flowers, new directional signs, gateway signs, walking tour banners, Canadian flags, benches, garbage receptacles and so much more. The more we support them, the more they support us!
2. Maintain community character. Our local shops and businesses make our communities home and give us a distinct personality. A lot of our social interaction takes place at local businesses.
3. Encourage local prosperity and innovation. Local owners invest much of their life savings in their businesses and have a natural interest in the long term. When we support their businesses, they flourish and their inventories improve. When existing shops do well, more shops will open to fill gaps and meet the needs and demands of the community.
4. Reduce environmental impact. When you shop locally you don't have to wait for highway construction and traffic ? not to mention adding to pollution. Local stores help to sustain vibrant, compact, walk-able town centres.
5. Jobs. Small local businesses are the largest employer nationally and, in our community, they provide the most jobs to residents.
6. Get better service. When you shop local, the business owner is usually directly connected to every employee in the store. This leads to a personal approach that often means that any problem you might have will be taken seriously. Local businesses get to know the products you buy, the services you request and can tailor services to make your experience even better. When you shop local you can try it on, you can sample it and you can make special requests.
7. Buy what you want, not what someone wants you to buy. Small businesses select products on the basis of local customers' needs and interests. They're less likely to want to sell you on impulse. Giant stores have buyers that plan and choose what those stores stock. A small business owner is happy to take special orders.

Buying close to home is more than a feel-good, it's-worth-paying-more mindset. Think of it as a lifestyle change. Remember the positive, long-term benefits to shopping local and how they outweigh the lower cost and inconvenience of travelling to the city to visit a big box store. Each time we spend a dollar, we ought to weigh the full value of our choice and consider the future we want for our town.