

Think Local First for a Stable Economy

"Buy Local Week" Is December 1-7

(Toronto, Canada, November 24, 2008) The Local First movement, steadily gaining popularity in communities across North America, aims to give a much-needed boost to our local independent retailers and producers this holiday season.

Research on the benefits of Local First campaigns shows that they effectively increase market share for independent business. Across Canada and the US last year, many local store owners saw unusual and very welcome sales gains at Christmas as a result of joining with other independent business owners in their region to celebrate the benefits of thinking Local First.

"Some people think that local just means location, like the big box down the street," says Chris Lowry, director of a local, sustainable business network called Green Enterprise Toronto (GET). "But local is really all about local ownership that helps to keep regional economies strong."

"We encourage Toronto residents to support their local BIAs by shopping locally. By supporting our main streets, we maintain strong & viable communities," says John Kiru, Executive Director of TABIA, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas. TABIA consists of 68 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) representing more than 27,000 business and property owners.

"The Local First movement is catching on like wildfire in communities across North America, and now we are introducing it to Toronto consumers and retailers," explains Lowry. "More and more people understand that supporting independent businesses is essentially voting with your dollars for a healthy local economy."

Why? Independent businesses are more accountable to customers and the community, ensure the unique character of a neighbourhood, are more likely to support local charities and have greater direct control over the environmental impact of their businesses.

Supporting independent businesses creates local jobs, preserves economic diversity, safeguards the environment and contributes to a just global economy. "We are hearing a lot about the benefits of shopping for local food and local wines," says Lowry. "Many of us don't realize that the purchase of a VQA Ontario wine puts as much as 4 to 6 times more money back into the local economy of southern Ontario than an imported wine. That's astonishing information about consumer power. Now, the same economic multiplier effect also applies to the price of a locally-made Ninutik maple candy, a local jar of Kozlik's mustard, a locally made toy, or soap bar, local furniture, local clothing designs, a local Ecojot notebook, all kinds of excellent goods that are actually made here in the Toronto region. Essentially, you vote with your dollars to support your own local jobs and public services when you buy local first."

Locally produced goods and services mean less transportation. The less burning of fuel to get what you need, the better.

Money spent at locally-owned independent businesses goes around longer in the local economy. As local business people pay for all kinds of local services, spend their profits and pay taxes locally, *local businesses yield two to four times the economic benefit to you, the local resident, as comparable non-local businesses.* This means more local income, wealth, and jobs.



Big box stores are steamrolling their way into cities and towns throughout Canada, pushing down wages and forcing small, local businesses to close because they can't compete with these mega-companies' predatory practices. But there's something that every consumer can do. During the week of December 1 to 7, shoppers can vote with their dollars in favor of locally-owned, independent businesses.

A study in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood found that local businesses re-circulate 70% more money locally than chain stores do, per square foot occupied. The San Francisco Retail Diversity Study found that a slight shift in consumer purchasing behavior – diverting just 10% of purchases from national chain stores to locally-owned businesses – would, each year, create 1,300 new jobs in the city and yield nearly \$200 million in incremental economic activity.

Green Enterprise Toronto is a local network of The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, or BALLE, with local business networks in 65 communities in the US and Canada. BALLE, advances a new approach to sustainable community economic development based on increasing local ownership of community assets such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, green building, zero-waste manufacturing, and independent retail, building what it calls "living economies."

"There is now overwhelming evidence that local businesses are the key to pumping up local income, wealth, jobs, and taxes," says Michael Shuman, an economist who works closely with BALLE. "The more residents, businesses, and city officials support locally owned businesses, the greater the economic rewards."

- 30 -

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About TABIA: TABIA is a non-profit umbrella organization representing the City of Toronto's 68 Business Improvement Areas, who in turn represent more than 27,000 business and property owners. The organization's objectives include exchanging information among BIAs, encouraging joint initiatives and mutually beneficial projects and assisting in pooling resources to achieve the maximum benefit feasible. www.toronto-bia.com

About Green Enterprise Toronto: GET is a membership-based, not-for-profit organization. With its online directory, networking events and seminars, GET helps locally-owned businesses to thrive by being part of the 'green' solution. GET encourages consumers and businesses to buy goods and services based on their shared commitment to strong communities, a healthy environment, providing meaningful employment, buying local first and fair trade. GET is one of 65 independent local networks of BALLE, the international Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. www.greenenterprise.net

About NaberNet:

NaberNet is a website technology company specializing in the needs of community and member-based organizations, notably BIAs. It operates community-based websites including MyStClair.com, OnVaughan.com and MarkhamOnline.com. The company supports locally-owned businesses and has developed the 'Do It Smart - Do It Local' initiative (doitsmart-doitlocal.com), and is working with GET and TABIA to promote Buy Local Week. www.nabernet.com