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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Dear Business Link Readers,

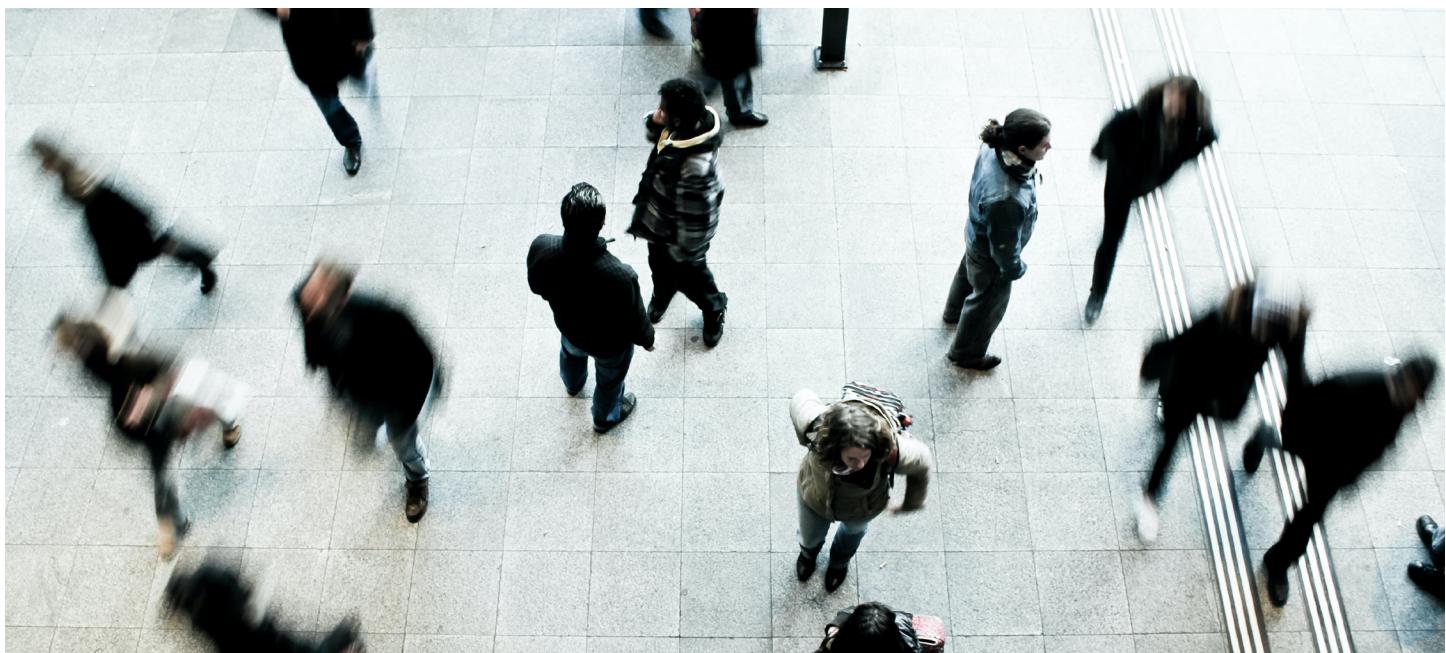
Looking back to April last year, we issued a special publication 'Hearts of Solidarity – Local Hotels and Casinos Shining'. All Niagara residents, Canadians and the World shared a common thread, fighting to save lives. After fighting the Covid-19 pandemic for a year, we are happy to see that the public is more calm, flexible, and scientific in dealing with changes in the pandemic. We are very excited to witness the birth of the vaccine that brings hope and changes to people's lives.

Knowing the achievements and contributions of our community last year, we are so proud to see our community members put their efforts to bring us to back to the new normal or even better. We at Business Link, for our part, worked hard to be able to hold the 2021 edition of the Niagara 40 Under Forty Businesses Achievement Awards Ceremony that is scheduled in June.

It's an honor that we can see all this is happening. We hope all readers can also look forward to our new business leaders in Niagara Region.

Yours in business,

Marilyn Tian M.B.A
President & Co-publisher
Business Link Media Group



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2021 WHO'S NEXT

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THE CLASS OF 2020 WINNERS



THE CLASS OF 2019 WINNERS



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01

THE FUTURE TREND OF NFT
AND ITS APPLICATIONS

by Duke Mallick

NFT

FUTURE

Since 2020, the tokenization of non-identical or unmeasurable assets/services has been the biggest trend in blockchain technology. The process saw the emergence of non-fungible tokens to solve the challenge of value representation or fractional ownership in sports, agriculture, fashion, and others. The trend (NFT) has made celebrities such as Grimes, and Elon Musk millionaires.

What Future Holds for NFTS?

The future looks bright for this fast-spreading wonder technology. It has made inroads in agriculture, real estate, sports, and is warming up for the fashion industry. We are looking at their future applications in various sectors, where they can be used for tracking, and authentication of talents, products, brands, and other rights. In return, this would be a great financial gain to the owner or the investor in the long term. Remember, NFTs are digital assets that carry unique features and cannot be duplicated. The asset can come in the form of audio, image, service, product, or video. This point to a future where counterfeits will be a thing of the past if NFTs are embraced in every sector. Nobody can access the blockchain system and generate a counterfeit. Therefore, through authentication, and tracking a trader will be able to know the production date, producer, price, real distributors if any, and all relevant information by a click into the Blockchain database.

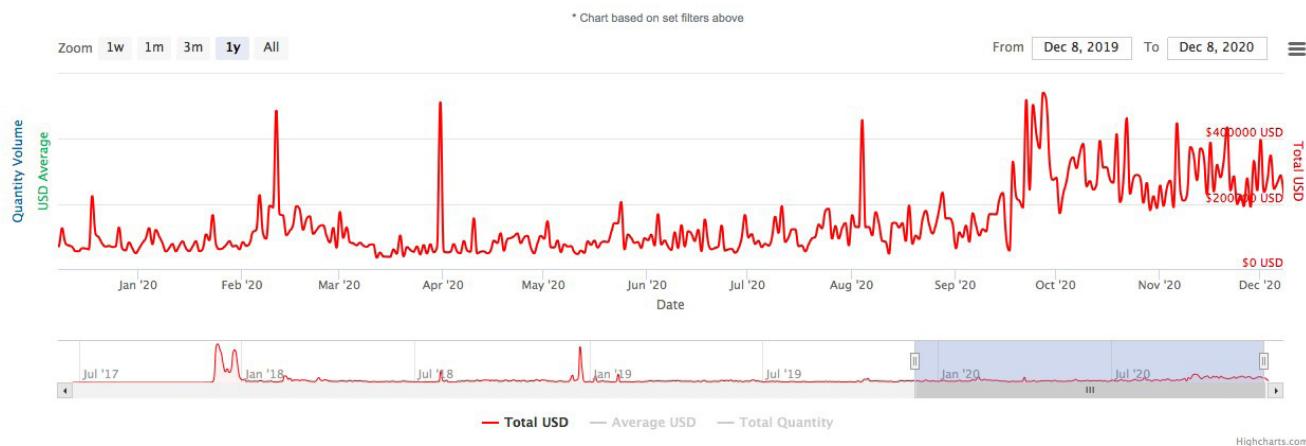
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PROJECT HISTORY CHART



Wait A Minute! How About NFTs' Growth?

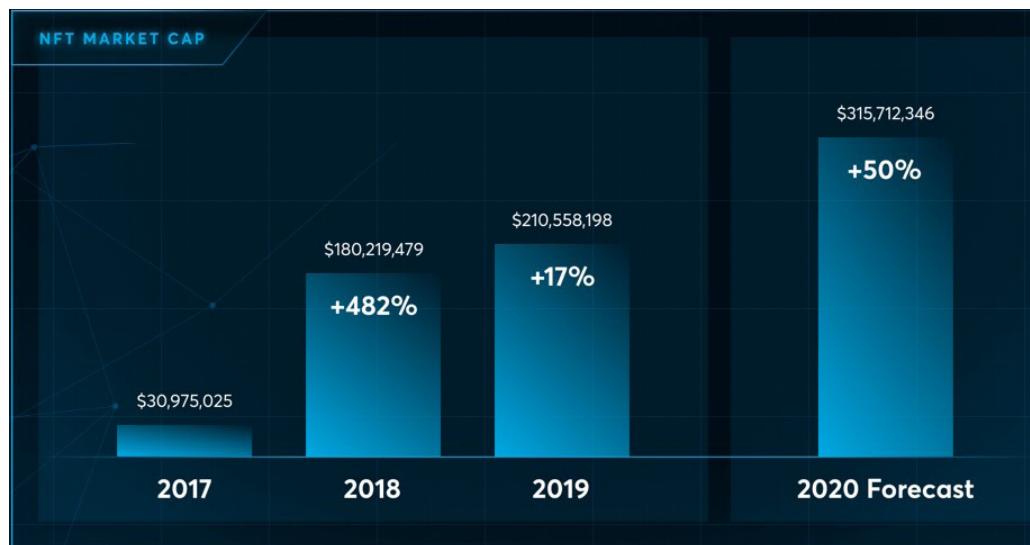
It is not a new concept as many would think, however, for the last few months, its fame has been overwhelming. The first NFT was born in 2012 under the name, Colored Coins or Bitcoin 2.x. However, it is from 2017, that it captured the attention of hawk-eyed businessmen. The attention capture came in 2017 when CryptoKitties boomed. The virtual cats pooled millions of dollars. The Dragon Kitty was the most valued at \$170,000 at that time. However, afterward, the NFT Market went numb for 2 consecutive years (2018 & 2019). 2019 was the year that prepared the comeback for the NFT. It was known as the year of consolidation and stabilization. Here are some interesting statistics from 2017-2020.

In 2017 the market cap was around \$30 Million. However, it is in 2018 that it rose to an amazing high of over \$180 Million. In 2019 it realized the smallest growth of 17% to reach over \$210

Million. By 2020, NFT started gaining ground again by over 50%.

What Is Happening Now?

Several activities have evolved in the recent months that have seen several projects making all-time high sales. The Bitcoin bred artwork has been sold for over \$130 and Kylian Mbappe also sold for approximately \$66,850. Many other NFTs have also sold well. NFT is becoming the technology to embrace. From artists, athletes, business people, gamers, fashioners to celebrities it is NFT. It is the term of the moment and in season for everyone ev-





erywhere. No much capital no much expertise, it is only the time, and patience that matters now.

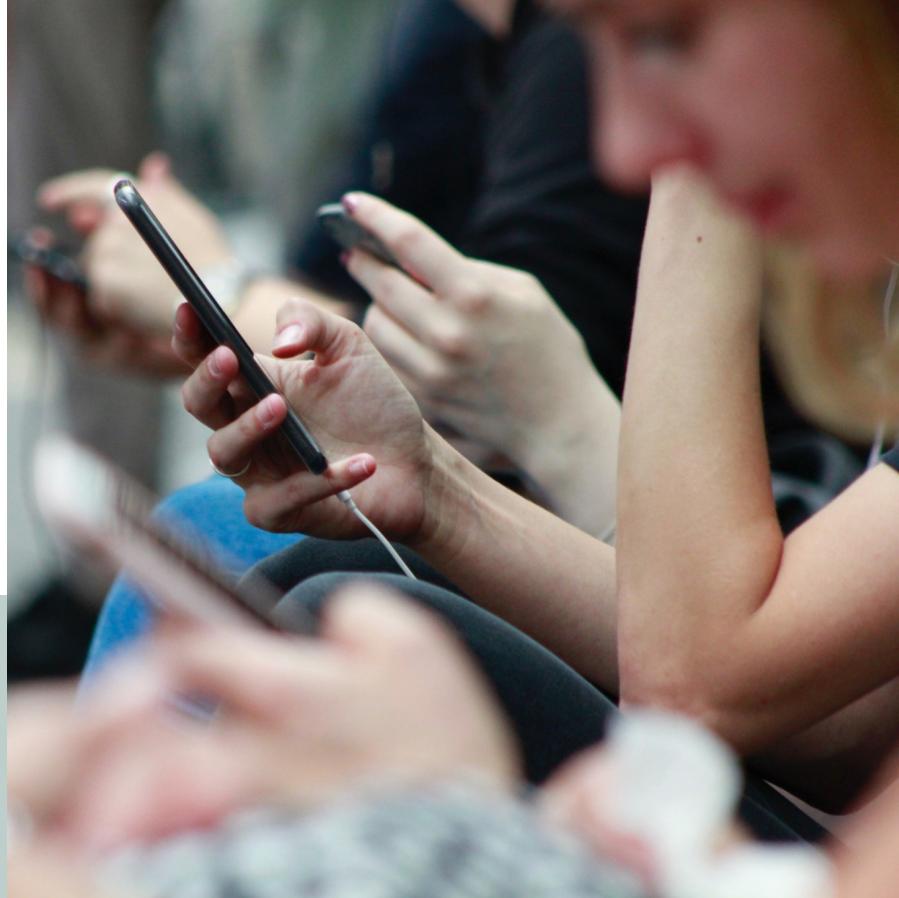
How is it Being Applied?

Most major firms, brands, and celebrities are now being involved in this new trending market. Some big brands have started making NFT-based Games, virtual worlds, and other collectibles. Some of these brands include NBA, UFC, Samsung, Nike, NFL, and Formula 1. These brands have opened doors for other users to adopt the NFTs through their favorite channels.

We are yet to see the best from this new concept. It is a matter of time before it floods the market as Cryptocurrency did. **BL**.

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Migration to digital media.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this migration process exponentially. With this trend, it is more important now than ever for Niagara Region businesses to be optimized on digital platforms.



Consumer expectations are becoming more and more complex as the world evolves. There has been an increasing migration to digital media such as social media, websites, videos, digital ads and more. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this migration process exponentially. With this trend, it is more important now than ever for Niagara Region businesses to be optimized on digital platforms.

Given the current situation, many businesses need a resource to unlock the potential business growth that the digital landscape provides. A digital marketing agency that oversees all services from branding to fully customized digital ads on Google & Social Media creates a seamless way for businesses to enter into the digital landscape.

Dynamic North Digital Marketing is a full scale digital marketing agency founded by Lyle Dekker & Cameron Law, two fourth year BBA Co-op students at Brock University. It is Dynamic North's mandate to provide local businesses with the opportunity to take advantage of the digital landscape and all of its expansive benefits.

Through various co-op placements, experiential learning projects, and online courses, Lyle and Cameron have continually developed their expertise in the Marketing field and continue to do so. As Co-op students at Brock University, Lyle and Cameron were provided the opportunity to join the Kick-Starting Entrepreneurship Program to further develop their skills and passion to launch a digital marketing agency. The program provides entrepreneurs with weekly workshops and the chance to network with like-minded individuals. The workshops tackle topics including legal ad-

vice, best sales practices, registration of a business, and more helpful knowledge.

"Throughout the KSE program, Lyle and I were able to make valuable connections with multiple industry professionals that encouraged us to take the steps needed and are always looking to help out where they can" - Cameron Law

"The KSE Program was very helpful in our development of Dynamic North. We had questions answered and obtained extra advice that is essential to the success of any business. From specifics like legal advice to general knowledge such as best sales practices, we have been provided with a leg up. Overall, the KSE Program provided a secure environment to develop Dynamic North Digital Marketing" - Lyle Dekker

To learn more about Dynamic North, visit <https://dynamicnorth.ca> or follow them on all social media platforms
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Further Supports Needed for Ontario Workers and Business

Anxiety at all time high as further restrictions loom

SUPPORT



Rocco Rossi, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce released the following statement in response to further restrictions announced on April 16th by the Government of Ontario.

“Anxiety among Ontarians, business owners, and workers is at an all time high. In fact, this anxiety was felt loudly across all industries in anticipation of today’s announcement.”

“We are into the second week of our stay-at-home order, small businesses are struggling to stay afloat

amidst Ontario’s third lockdown, ICU rates are the highest they have ever been, hospitals have postponed elective surgeries, schools are now closed indefinitely, and just today, Moderna announced it will be reducing deliveries to Canada.”

“Public health and the health of our economy are interdependent. The business community is concerned about the rise in COVID-19 case counts. It is also extremely demoralizing for business owners who feel they have shouldered an unfair portion of the burden of restrictions.”



"We need an all-hands on deck approach from all orders of government and local public health units to get vaccines to Ontarians. We'd like to see the provincial government continue expediting the vaccination of essential workers who cannot work from home, and the federal government address supply issues and delays which may hamper the province's goal of vaccinating 40 percent of the population by the end of the stay-at-home order."

"In the meantime, businesses need support to confront the economic repercussions of these measures. New supports must be made available as custom-

ers are forced to stay at home and relief is needed for industries that have been left out of previous measures."

About the Ontario Chamber of Commerce

*For more than a century, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has been the independent, non-partisan, indispensable partner of Ontario business. The OCC's mission is to support economic growth in Ontario by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of its network's diverse 60,000 members. **BL.***

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Covid-19 Business Update

Federal Budget Announced



April 19th, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance, delivered the Government of Canada's 2021 budget speech. Highlights from the budget include:

Business

Budget 2021 proposes to:

Extend the wage subsidy, the rent subsidy, and Lockdown Support until September 25, 2021. It also proposes to gradually decrease the rates for the wage subsidy and rent subsidy, beginning July 4, 2021, in order to ensure an orderly phase-out of the programs as vaccinations are completed and the economy reopens. Companies that have relied on the CEWS will instead be able to access up to \$1,100 for each four-week period of a new employee's term. The cost of the CEWS extension is estimated at \$12 billion.

Extend the application deadline for support under the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund and the Indigenous Business Initiative until June 30, 2021.

Provide up to \$80 million in 2021-22, on a cash basis, for the Community Futures Network of Canada and regional development agencies, and to shift remaining funds under the Indigenous Business Initiative into 2021-22, to support an extended application deadline for the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund and Indigenous Business Initiative until June 30, 2021.



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Covid-19 Business Update

Launch a new Canada Recovery Hiring Program for eligible employers that continue to experience qualifying declines in revenues relative to before the pandemic. The proposed subsidy would offset a portion of the extra costs employers take on as they reopen, either by increasing wages or hours worked, or hiring more staff. This support would only be available for active employees and will be available from June 6 to November 20, 2021. Eligible employers would claim the higher of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy or the new proposed subsidy. The cost of this program is estimated at \$595 million.

Introduce a Canada Digital Adoption Program to assist businesses with a digital transformation. Eligible businesses will receive micro-grants to help offset the costs of going digital—and provide support to digital trainers from a network of up to 28,000 well trained young Canadians. Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$2.6 billion over four years, on a cash basis, starting in 2021-22, to the Business Development Bank of Canada to help small- and medium-sized businesses finance technology adoption.

Provide \$1.4 billion over four years, starting in 2021-22, to:

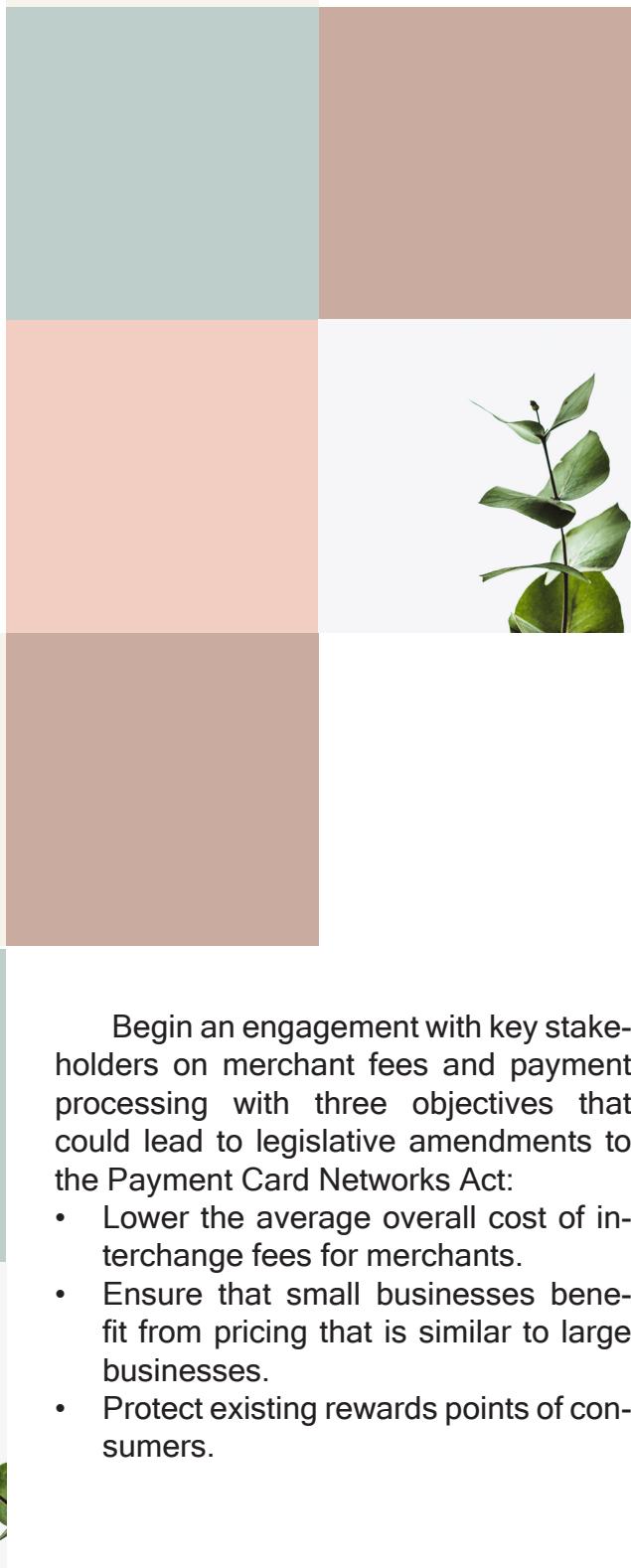
- Work with organizations across Canada to provide access to skills, training, and advisory services for all businesses accessing this program.
- Provide micro-grants to smaller, main street businesses to support costs associated with technology adoption.
- Create training and work opportunities for as many as 28,000 young people to help small- and medium-sized businesses across Canada adopt new technology.



Allow immediate expensing of up to \$1.5 million of eligible investments by Canadian-controlled private corporations made on or after Budget Day, and before 2024. Eligible investments will cover over 60 per cent of capital investments typically made by Canadian-controlled private corporations.

Improve the Canada Small Business Financing Program through amendments to the Canada Small Business Financing Act and its regulations. These proposed amendments are projected to increase annual financing by \$560 million, supporting approximately 2,900 additional small businesses. Proposed amendments include:

- Expanding loan class eligibility to include lending against intellectual property and start-up assets and expenses.
- Increasing the maximum loan amount from \$350,000 to \$500,000 and extending the loan coverage period from 10 to 15 years for equipment and leasehold improvements.
- Expanding borrower eligibility to include non-profit and charitable social enterprises.
- Introducing a new line of credit product to help with liquidity and cover short-term working capital needs.



Begin an engagement with key stakeholders on merchant fees and payment processing with three objectives that could lead to legislative amendments to the Payment Card Networks Act:

- Lower the average overall cost of interchange fees for merchants.
- Ensure that small businesses benefit from pricing that is similar to large businesses.
- Protect existing rewards points of consumers.



Allocate \$21 million over three years, starting in 2021-22, to:

- Work with provincial and territorial partners to enhance the capacity of the Internal Trade Secretariat that supports the Canadian Free Trade Agreement in order to accelerate the reduction of trade barriers within Canada.
- Advance work with willing partners towards creating a repository of open and accessible pan-Canadian internal trade data to identify barriers, including licensing and professional certification requirements, that we can work together to reduce them.
- Pursue internal trade objectives through new or renewed discretionary federal transfers to provinces and territories.

Business Update

Provide \$700 million over three years, starting in 2021-22, for the regional development agencies to support business financing. This would position local economies for long-term growth by transitioning to a green economy, fostering an inclusive recovery, enhancing competitiveness, and creating jobs in every corner of the country.

Provide \$500 million over two years, starting in 2021-22, to the regional development agencies for community infrastructure. These projects will stimulate local economies, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Provide \$960 million over three years, beginning in 2021-22, for a new Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program. Working primarily with sector associations and employers, funding would help design and deliver training that is relevant to the needs of businesses, especially small- and medium-sized businesses, and their employees. This funding would also help businesses recruit and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce. **BL.**

*For more information, you can visit GNCC official website:
<https://gncc.ca/daily-update-april-19th-2021/>*





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