



A Community Story from Ladysmith

Stimulating Community Investment and Visitor Potential



Meet Kamal & Therese Saab.

When Kamal and Therese Saab took over the local kitchen shop in downtown Ladysmith, over six years ago, it was with a strong vision for the store.

"We wanted to create a destination place for visitors; a place that people would talk about, with supplies, products and gadgets people wouldn't normally find," says Kamal, who immigrated to Canada from Lebanon with his wife Therese over 30 years ago. "When we first started, the community didn't immediately grasp what we were trying to do. Now we know the whole town and have tons of support."

While Kamal and Therese both have lengthy backgrounds in the retail and hospitality industry in Canada and across the Middle East, their decision to settle into this "retirement project" on Vancouver Island came as a result of wanting to own their own business. When the space came up for rent, they jumped at the opportunity and made the move from Nanaimo to Ladysmith. Today, they own the building and are expanding next door, updating the windows and tiles, continually expanding their inventory, all the while maintaining the heritage look and feel of the space.

"Ladysmith is becoming a hot market, but prices are still in a range that people can afford," says Kamal, who worked in Toronto's tech industry before moving out West. "Just a few years ago, there were nearly a dozen empty buildings on this block. Today, everything is sold and the parking lots are full."

With the launch of the Town's new investment attraction tool, Kamal is keen to see how the app supports the adoption of technology within the business community and encourages more visitors and investors. This could provide big benefits to small businesses, like his own.

When we first started, 70% of our customers came from Nanaimo and local communities. Over the years, through our website, digital and local marketing, many of our clientele now come from all over Vancouver Island and across Canada, with the States and overseas tourists making us a destination," says Kamal. "It will be interesting to watch how the app adds even more value. Already it showcases the city, tourism, Chamber of Commerce and local stores in a business friendly way. This makes it a one-stop promotion of our community, which is important for everyone."