

Welcome to the StellerVista Newsletter!

We've built this newsletter as a window into some of the important things going on at your credit union. This will be updated and sent out quarterly, and we'll even try to keep a few printed copies on hand in the branches, just in case ;)

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If there is any topic you'd like covered in an upcoming newsletter, let us know by emailing info@stellervista.com – with the subject line “Newsletter”.

Sharing Success: More Than Numbers

At StellerVista, one of our core values is proudly stated as “Sharing Success.” While there are plenty of ways we live this value, one of the most straightforward is by returning the credit union's profits back to our members and communities. This year, we're excited to announce that by year-end, we'll have returned more than \$650,000. We can sometimes get into the motions of “Banking”, as it is our core business—but it's things like this that show the real impact of banking like you live here.

Of the more than \$650,000 shared with members and communities this year, over \$200,000 has been donated to a wide range of local organizations, students, initiatives, and projects that truly make a difference. From supporting regional health foundations, food banks, and childcare programs to funding trail-building projects and unique community installations like wind phones, these contributions underscore your credit union's commitment to the well-being and vibrancy of the Kootenay/Boundary region.



On top of that, more than \$400,000 in Patronage Rewards and Dividends have gone straight back to members. Patronage Rewards are calculated on how members interact with the credit union—whether it's through interest paid on loans and mortgages, earnings from GICs, or even service fees. Sharing Success isn't just talk; it's proof of what banking local can do, especially through our cooperative model. Unlike the banks, what is earned here stays here, creating a cycle of success.

Our Castlegar Branch: A Fresh Look for a New Year

While digital banking and technology often steal the spotlight, we know that our local presence and in-person interactions are what truly set us apart from competitors. Being local, being present, and supporting our members face-to-face matter just as much as our digital offerings—and that's why we believe investments in our physical locations are just as important as those made in technology.

This year, we've undertaken renovations in multiple locations, but the transformation of our Castlegar branch stands out as a major project. Designed as a flagship location for StellerVista, this renovation reflects our commitment to the community and the vibrancy that local business can bring. Working with local contractors, this exterior renovation was completed in November.

With more to come for our physical locations in 2025, we are committed to investing in ensuring our members have the best experience possible when visiting a local branch.



Holiday Scams: Don't Let the Grinch Steal Your eTransfers!

In today's digital age, convenience is king—but so is vigilance. eTransfers are one of the most popular ways to send and receive money, but they've also become a target for fraudsters. Unlike traditional theft, eTransfer scams involve criminals tricking people into willingly sending their money online.

How Do These Scams Work?

Fraudsters may pose as legitimate companies, friends, or even government agencies. They often send convincing messages that create a sense of urgency, like claiming you've won a prize, need to pay a bill, or resolve a banking issue. These scams exploit trust and immediacy, and anyone using online banking can be a target.

During the holiday season, eTransfer scams tend to increase. Why? The surge in online shopping, holiday promotions, and digital gift-giving creates more opportunities for fraudsters. They know people may be more likely to act quickly without verifying details, especially during such a busy time of year.



Essential Tips to Stay Safe

- **Only Send Money to Trusted Contacts:** eTransfers should only be sent to people you know and trust. If you receive a request from someone unexpected, it's best to ignore it. Legitimate companies or friends will always communicate properly before asking for money.
- **Use Strong Security Questions and Answers:** When setting up an eTransfer, avoid easily guessed answers like birthdays or pet names.
- **Be Wary of Phishing Attempts:** Fraudsters often send emails or texts that appear to be from legitimate institutions. Here's how to spot them:
 - Look out for urgent language prompting immediate action.
 - Check for spelling mistakes or unfamiliar sender addresses.
 - Avoid clicking links that direct you to unknown websites.
- **Enable Auto-Deposit:** Auto-deposit is a secure feature that deposits eTransfers directly into your account, eliminating the need for security questions and reducing the risk of interception.
- **Monitor Your Account and Set Up Alerts:** Regularly review your account activity to spot unauthorized transactions. You can also set up MemberDirect Alerts to receive real-time updates via text or email about activity in your account.

Taking these steps can go a long way in keeping your finances secure. Stay vigilant, stay safe, and have a wonderful holiday season! If you wish to learn more about staying safe from modern digital hazards, click the link right here > www.stellervista.com/personal/banking/staying-safe

Canada Disability Benefit: A New Opportunity in 2025

Starting in 2025, the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) will provide critical financial support to eligible Canadians with disabilities. This new federal program is designed to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for working-age individuals with disabilities, offering them a much-needed financial resource.

It's important to note that this benefit is not automatic—it **must be applied for**. If you or someone you know might qualify, now is the time to start preparing.

For more details about the Canada Disability Benefit and how it works, [visit our resource page right here](#), where you can also book a time to chat further.

New Mortgage Rules: A Path to Smarter Homeownership

For young families and first-time buyers, homeownership can feel like an uphill battle. Rising costs and tight housing markets have made it harder than ever to take that first (or even next) step. That's why some of the more recent government rule changes and programs (like the First Home Savings Account - FHSA) are so interesting—they're creating new opportunities to make homeownership more achievable. While we'd love to be able to spell out the "answers" and a simple solution right here in this newsletter – it doesn't work that way, because as always, there are many variables to consider. But don't fret, our team is here for you.

One of the new rules involves the removal of requalification requirements for switching lenders. Essentially, it makes moving your mortgage from one place to another much easier – and so if even if you're not with us, our team can help. So yes – this rule is one we like. But, enough about us, let's get back to you!

Beyond transfers, there are a number of other updates making homeownership more flexible and accessible. Notably higher insured mortgage limits and extended amortization periods, just rolled out, give borrowers more room to qualify for a CMHC insured purchase. At the same time, government incentives for building rental suites (up to \$80,000) are opening doors for homeowners to add value to their properties while addressing the housing shortages in our communities.

Again – there is a lot to dissect here, and instead of trying to put it all in text, let's conclude by saying this is a very high-level summary. The government is trying to work with citizens, developers, lenders, and municipalities to ease the pressure we see in our housing markets. There is no single solution here, but there are increasingly more options – and our team can help you explore them. If you are (or anyone you know is) in need of assistance or information around housing affordability or debt management, don't hesitate to reach out to us any time.

Learn more @ www.StellerVista.com/mortgages