

MOTION

8. Creating Optimal Conditions for Small Businesses to Succeed and Thrive in the City of Vancouver

At the Regular Council meeting on January 16, 2018, Vancouver City Council referred the following matters to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on January 17, 2018, to hear from speakers.

MOVED by Councillor Affleck
SECONDED by Councillor De Genova

WHEREAS

1. Small businesses make up 95 per cent of all businesses in Vancouver and are the backbone, and an important driver, of Vancouver's local economy, fostering local entrepreneurship and creating jobs;
2. The central mission of Vancouver City Council and the City of Vancouver is to create a great city of communities, a city that cares about its people, the environment, and the opportunities to live, work, and prosper;
3. In June 2013, Mayor Gregor Robertson presented a motion to Council (title: "Support Local Small Businesses") - carried unanimously at the Tuesday, June 25, 2013 Regular Council Meeting - in which he called for the Vancouver Economic Commission to be asked "to work with City staff, Vancouver BIAs and the Vancouver Board of Trade to recommend immediate and long-term actions the City can take to support the retention and growth of locally owned small businesses, as well as identify opportunities to expedite recommendations within the Economic Action Strategy", and for the Vancouver Economic Commission to "report back to Council with a proposed scope of work, including involvement with the local small business community, by September 2013.";
4. Mayor Gregor Robertson's June 2013 motion (title: "Support Local Small Businesses") noted the following points:
 - Small, locally owned businesses are a crucial component of economic activity and job creation in Vancouver.
 - Businesses comprised of 1-4 employees make up 58% of all businesses in Vancouver, businesses with 5-9 employees make up 18%, and businesses with 10-19 employees make up 11%.
 - The retention and expansion of small, local businesses is a priority for Vancouver within the Vancouver Economic Action Strategy.
 - Small businesses are an integral part of the neighbourhood character in Vancouver's commercial areas.

- A wide variety of factors can impact small businesses, such as affordability, access to space, taxes and regulation, development pressures, transportation issues, and commercial leases.
 - The City has taken a number of steps to support small business and enable a competitive economic climate, such as moving towards a mobile business license, reducing the property tax burden for businesses as recommended by the Property Tax Policy Review Commission, reducing the number of business license categories from 636 to less than 200, and reducing the City's net debt by \$151.4 million in 2012.
5. Similarly, in November 2010, Councillors Woodsworth and Cadman called for Vancouver City Council "to establish a 'one stop shop' to provide a single destination for services and support for small businesses in Vancouver, including but not limited to advice, referrals, and permits.";
 6. At the Thursday, November 4, 2010 Standing Committee of Council on City Services and Budgets, Councillor Deal moved to refer Councillor Woodsworth's November 2010 motion back to staff as part of "the Vancouver Service Review", and to have it noted that "Council reaffirms its commitment to small business....";
 7. On Thursday, February 2, 2017, the City of Vancouver launched a "Commercial Renovation Centre" in response to various needs identified by the business community;
 8. The "Commercial Renovation Centre" aims to help new business owners navigate the process for licensing a small business or renovating a commercial tenant space by providing hands-on support related to regulations, permits and procedures;
 9. Despite the City of Vancouver's many efforts over the past decade to support and retain small businesses, there are numerous indications that the city's small business sector is experiencing significant stress related to widespread unaffordability and high property taxes, leading to the closure of numerous long-time Vancouver businesses (for example, West End kitchenware store, Chocolate Mousse, which will reportedly close in January 2019 after more than 30 years due to an almost 93 per cent jump in property taxes after the building's assessed value more than tripled from \$16 million to \$52 million);
 10. Councillor Louie (as Vision Vancouver's point person on city taxes and finances), is quoted in a recent Vancouver Sun article as stating, "What we have been focusing on is trying to figure out a way to support small business owners," and expressed his view that "punishing triple-net lease agreements made between small business owners and property owners", set against sky-high property assessments, are the "culprit" behind recent and widely anticipated future retail business closures;

11. Actions to date by the City of Vancouver to support the city's small business community - the backbone of Vancouver's local economy - have not been fully effective in achieving Council's small business policy objectives;
12. Vancouver City Council has established numerous agencies, boards, and committees that focus on particular subjects that have an impact on the City of Vancouver and its people, thereby harnessing the specialized expertise of the respective members of these bodies to advise Council and City staff, advisory bodies which variously include, among others:
 - Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee
 - LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee
 - Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
 - Renters Advisory Committee
 - Seniors' Advisory Committee
 - Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Inclusion Advisory Committee
 - Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee
 - Vancouver Food Policy Council
 - Active Transportation Policy Council
 - Arts and Culture Policy Council
 - Public Art Committee
 - Mayor's Engaged City Task Force
 - Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability
 - Mayor's Task Force on Mental Health and Addictions

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council direct City staff to conduct a systematic and comprehensive review of all existing City of Vancouver programs and policies designed to support and retain local small business and report back to Council within 90 days with recommendations for policies and strategies the City can implement, and actions that can be taken by the City, to create more optimal conditions for small businesses to succeed and thrive in the City of Vancouver, including, but not limited to, the creation of a Small Business Retention Program which could, among other potential actions, offer targeted property tax reductions to commercial property owners to help retain existing small business tenants.
- B. THAT Vancouver City Council establish a Small Business Policy Council with a mandate to advise City Council on strategic priorities relating to small business in Vancouver

FURTHER THAT the Small Business Policy Council terms of reference shall include, but not be limited to:

- Provide input to City Council and staff about issues of concern to the city's small business community.

- Consider any matters which may be referred to the Policy Council by Council or staff.
- Take positions on policy initiatives from other levels of government within the mandate of the Policy Council.
- Work co-operatively with other agencies whose activities affect constituent small business communities, including initiating and developing relevant projects.
- Act as a resource for staff coordinating public involvement processes and civic events.
- Exchange information with constituent small business communities and the general public about relevant programs and issues of interest.
- Engage in outreach to disseminate information and encourage participation from constituent small business communities.
- Produce an annual work plan with specific objectives by no later than April of each year, in consultation with Council and staff liaisons, for distribution to Council and civic departments for information.
- Submit an annual report to Council describing the Policy Council's accomplishments for the year, including reference to each objective set out in the work plan and any arising issues to which the Policy Council has responded.

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