

## COUNCIL MEMBER'S MOTION

# B.7

### 7. A Paradigm Shift in How We Partner With Local Businesses

Submitted by: Councillor Wiebe

#### WHEREAS

1. On January 16, 2018, Council passed a motion entitled “Creating Optimal Conditions for Small Businesses to Succeed and Thrive in the City of Vancouver”, to support the fact that 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. On June 25, 2013, Council passed a motion entitled “Support Local Small Businesses”, which 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;
3. 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”, which was part of the Vancouver Service Review;
4. On February 2, 2017, in response to various needs identified by the business community, the City of Vancouver launched a “Commercial Renovation Centre” aimed at helping 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;
5. On September 11, 2019, Council approved a new culture plan, *Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture, Making Space for Arts and Culture and the Vancouver Music Strategy*, that included an action to explore ways to help artists, non-profits and event producers to navigate regulatory requirements in partnership with the Commercial Renovation Center;
6. In 2020, the City of Vancouver quickly reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic by improving online small business resources, creating a dedicated business line and hosting small business roundtables; and
7. In response to COVID-19, staff in Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability, and Business Planning and Project Support, launched a temporary Business Communications and Support Office, as part of the

Emergency Operations Centre. This resource has been well used and provides a key platform to assist/receive information from local businesses through the recovery period and potentially beyond. In addition to consolidating government, City, and other business support resources, PDS staff delivered over 100 customized/ concierge type responses to local businesses.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to report back on the feasibility of a permanent Business Communications and Support Portal with the goal of a one stop shop for local business owners, local non-profits, social enterprises, and self-employed individuals including artists in Vancouver that:

- i) Consolidates and streamlines different city services;
- ii) Becomes a one stop online platform for all licenses, permits and fees associated with a business address, including but not limited to planning, engineering, fire, police, and waste management;
- iii) Supports a concierge system that allows business owners a single point of contact when working with the city;
- iv) Is more flexible, especially with respect to emerging businesses
- v) Will align with the support work of the “Business License Review Project”; and
- vi) Provides options for a scaled business licence system that provides incentives for business that meet our city priorities;

FURTHER THAT staff report back on the feasibility of an empty storefront registry to identify the availability of retail spaces and look at creative options to incentivize the use of these spaces for popups, art and culture, non-profits, social enterprises and business incubators;

FURTHER THAT staff consider and report back on establishing a Vancouver Business Advisory Taskforce, to build on the Mayor’s small business round tables and identify the needs of the broader business community;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to work with the Vancouver Economic Commission and other business associations to expand The City of Vancouver’s business network of support services.

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