

39. ENHANCED PUSH FOR INTERMUNICIPAL MOBILE BUSINESS LICENCE

At the 2006 Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Convention, the Government of B.C. challenged local governments to develop a single business license framework, to become the first jurisdiction in Canada where businesses could operate freely anywhere in their province. The Ministry of Small Business and Revenue was charged with leading the Single Business License Initiative, working closely with UBCM, the Ministry of Community Services, and key stakeholders, to develop a model that streamlined business licensing processes while retaining municipalities' powers to set local standards for businesses operating within their jurisdictions.

Following initial concerns expressed by some local governments over loss of revenue and autonomy, the province moved away from the introduction of a single business license and began to promote regional Mobile Business License (MBL) programs. Resistance has diminished overtime as MBL programs have demonstrated value and an increase in compliance.

There are currently 15 MBLs Programs in the province, encompassing 99¹ local governments:

- Central Vancouver Island (12)
- Cowichan Lake Area (4)
- Greater Victoria Area (13)
- Courtenay/Comox Area (2)
- Metro West Region (6)
- Fraser Valley Area (11)
- Tri-Cities Area (3)
- North Shore (3)
- Okanagan-Similkameen Area (20)
- Trail Area (5)
- West Kootney (6)
- North East (7)
- Sunshine Coast (3)
- Kimberly/Cranbrook (2): and
- Elk Valley (3)

To date, the established MBL projects have been positively received by participating municipalities and several local municipalities bordering existing programs have adopted the MBL model as well, thereby increasing the boundaries within which businesses can operate under one license.

In the absence of a single provincial business license, implementing regional programs is a more streamlined and cost-effective way for municipal governments in all of BC to operate in the short-term, and pave the way for the eventual goal a one province wide MBL.

While the Chamber has expressed concern over the lack of focus regarding a single business license for all of BC, we recognize the fact that regional MBLs still mark a significant improvement. The benefits to local governments, business, and residents of a regional MBL model have been supported by the feedback

¹ The City of Surrey is part of both Metro West and the Fraser Valley MBL Program.

and financial success of the Okanagan-Similkameen, Fraser Valley, and other MBL programs already in place. The Chamber believes that the benefits of these programs have been demonstrated and early concerns over loss of revenue and autonomy have been negated. The Chamber encourages the provincial government to continue the expansion of this initiative across the province, with the goal of eventually establishing a single, province wide licensing program for all businesses.

At this time the MBL program eligibility is limited to mobile businesses, defined as trades contractors or other professionals (related to the construction industry) that provide a service or product other than from their fixed and permanent location.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government works with municipalities to:

1. Proactively conduct data/revenue analyses for municipalities in defined regions to assist with implementation and creation of new Mobile Business License programs, as well as analysis of existing programs; and
2. Merge existing Mobile Business License programs, such as the four current programs in the Lower Mainland region, into expanded regional Mobile Business License programs; and
3. Explore an expanded list of eligible mobile businesses to provide access to a broader range of sectors.

Submitted by Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce

Supported by the Mission Regional Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Chamber of Commerce and Surrey Board of Trade