



CRANBROOK AND DISTRICT
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS SATISFACTION SURVEY:

REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO BUSINESS IN CRANBROOK

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE SURVEY RESULTS

December 10th, 2012

Submitted by:

Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce

Business Climate Committee

2279 Cranbrook Street North

Box 84, Cranbrook BC

V1C 4H6

T (250) 426-5914

F (250) 426-3873



INTRODUCTION:

At the 2012 Chamber board of directors' planning session, Mayor Wayne Stetski presented the board with the challenge: to highlight barriers to doing business in Cranbrook, and provide recommendations on how those barriers can be removed.

A volunteer committee was formed which consisted of representatives from the Chamber's Board of Directors and from local businesses. After much deliberation, the committee chose to accept the Mayor's challenge by undertaking a detailed on-line survey of businesses.

The survey was prepared after numerous meetings amongst the committee members and we wanted the questions to be centered on doing business in Cranbrook, with a focus on municipal, provincial and federal government agencies and departments, as well as asking for input on how to improve the business climate in Cranbrook.

We would like to point out that responses to these types of surveys are often skewed towards the negative, as those who might be critical or having had a bad experience are more likely to respond than those with a positive experience. It is not our intention to target any individuals, departments or Ministries. Our focus is on solutions and ways we can improve the business climate together.

THE RESPONDENTS:

There are approximately 1,500 business licences issued in the City of Cranbrook. The Business Satisfaction Survey received 295 respondents or a 20% response rate. We were very happy with this level of response to an online survey, and feel it gives us a very strong representative sample of the businesses in the community.

As can be seen from the attached summaries, over half of the respondents have been in business in Cranbrook for more than 10 years. There were a large percentage from the retail and service sectors, with a nice spread from all sectors taking the survey. The majority of businesses were unable to answer what their future plans of the business are. This may speak to the unsettled business climate not only in Cranbrook but in Canada and the world.

Respondents City

All were from Cranbrook except: one from Calgary, one from Fernie, one from Creston, and two from Kimberley.

Years in business

No Response	22
0-5 years	74
6-10 years	40
11-20 years	54
20+ years	99
No longer in business	4
Not started yet	2

Future Plans

No Response	139
Close or shut down	9
Downsize	9
Expand	19
Remain the same	69
Start	13
Unsure at this time	37

THE SURVEY RESULTS:

1. City of Cranbrook

We asked the respondents to indicate to us what experience they had with City departments, and their degree of satisfaction in those interactions. Respondents were requested to rate the City departments on a scale of 1 – 3.

1. Not satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Very satisfied

Upon tabulation of the results we then separated the approval ratings into either not satisfied (being a rating of 1) or satisfied (being either a rating of 2 or 3). Approval ratings for the six City departments were tabulated from the survey responses.

Approval Ratings for City of Cranbrook Departments

City Department:	Satisfaction Result:
Licensing and Permits	77%
Corporate Services	45%
Finance	81%
Engineering	44%
Public Works	74%
Economic Development	47%

We asked respondents for comments regarding each of the six City departments and then summarized those comments into several main categories or themes that seemed to come up in each area. Major themes included customer service and “red tape” as the most frequent theme with the departments. The cost of doing business, logistics of the departments, long-term planning, timeliness and staff knowledge were other themes that became apparent.



Survey Breakdown

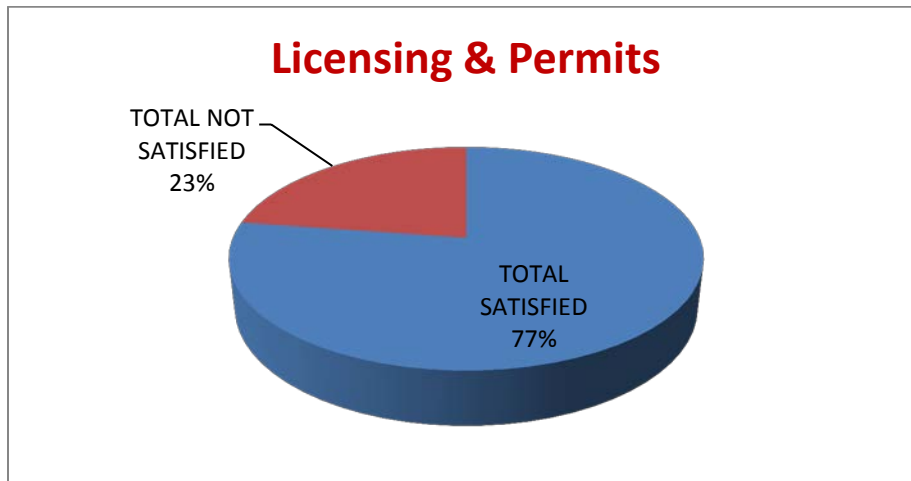
Below you will find breakdowns of the information that was collected in the survey. This information pertains to the City questions only – and is sorted by question as it relates to each department within the City. Each breakdown of each section contains two parts:

1. Total number of respondents that were satisfied or not satisfied working with a specific department
2. The total number of comments and break down of the context (categorization) of the comments.

The categorization of comments DO NOT include comments that were too broad, generalized or positive in nature; the only comments that were categorized into a specific area were ones that were specific enough to be useful in identifying a problem that could be rectified.

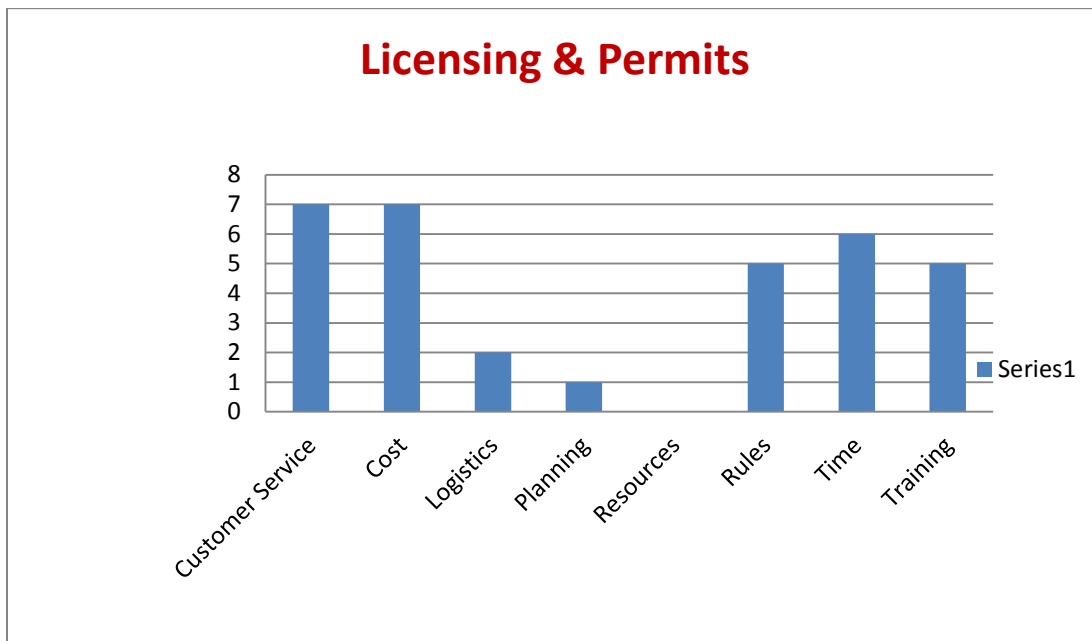
Comments category descriptions:

- **Customer Service:** Comments that relate to dealings where customer service was an issue.
- **Cost:** Comments specifically mentioning costs and pricing.
- **Logistics:** Comments that relate to the internal business operations at the City.
- **Planning:** Comments that had to do with long term planning (like roads, infrastructure etc.)
- **Rules:** Comments that relate to bylaws and “red tape” (i.e. Permits, signage, etc.)
- **Time:** Comments that have to do with timeliness and resources.
- **Training:** Comments related to staff training, knowledge or errors.



Satisfied	128
Very Satisfied	22
TOTAL SATISFIED	150
TOTAL NOT SATISFIED	44
Total Responses	194

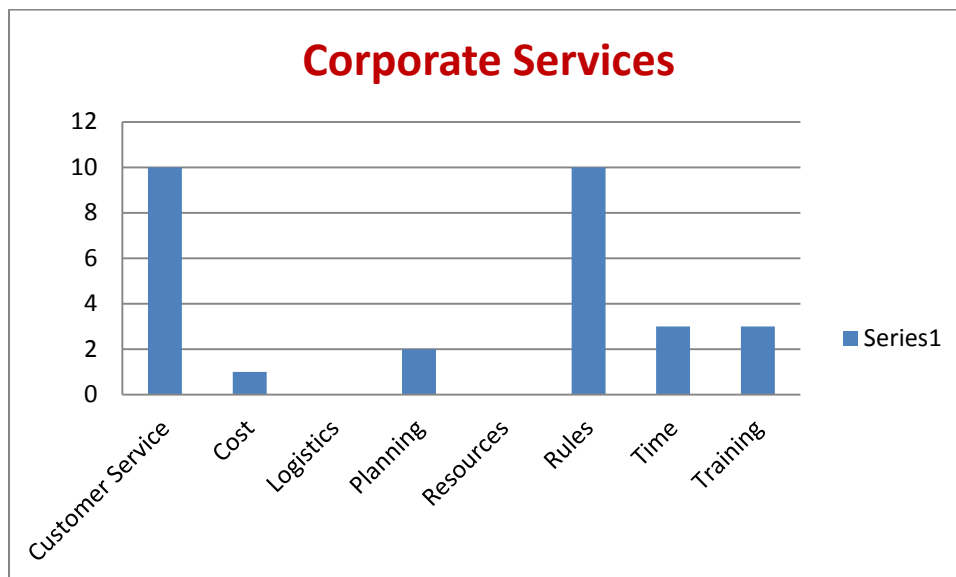
Comments

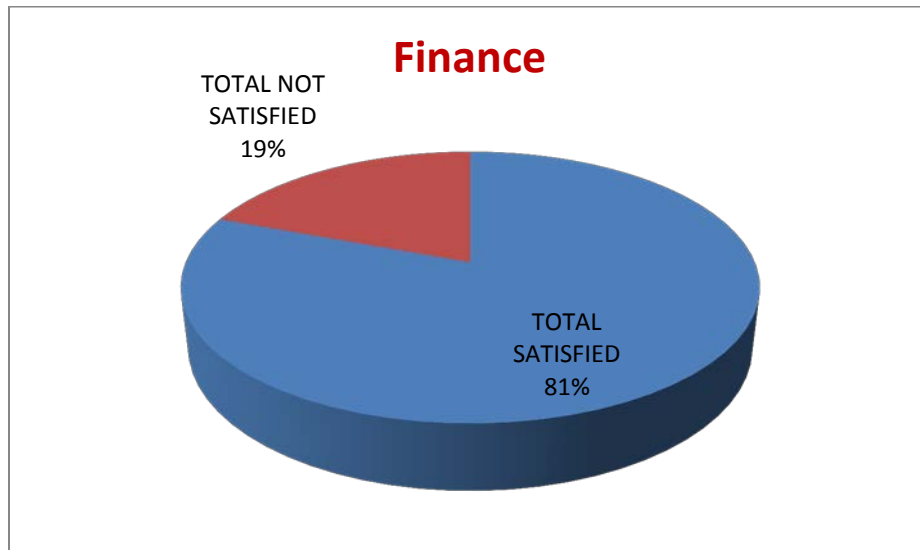




Satisfied	38
Very Satisfied	6
TOTAL SATISFIED	44
TOTAL NOT SATISFIED	54
Total Responses	98

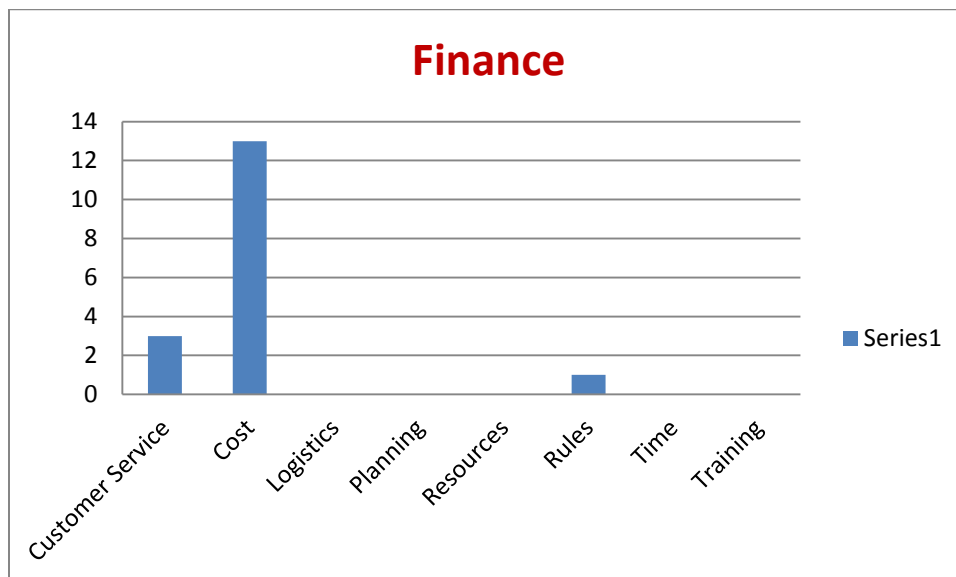
Comments

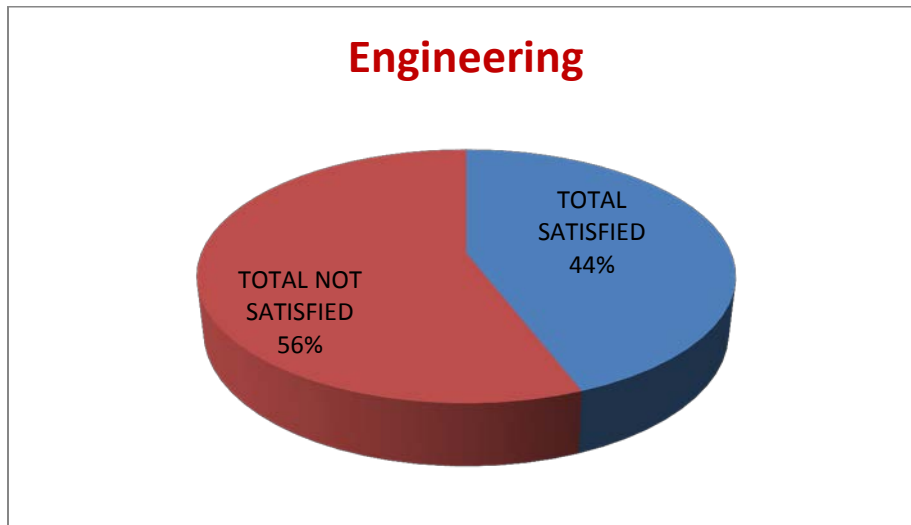




Satisfied	82
Very Satisfied	14
TOTAL SATISFIED	96
TOTAL NOT SATISFIED	23
Total Responses	119

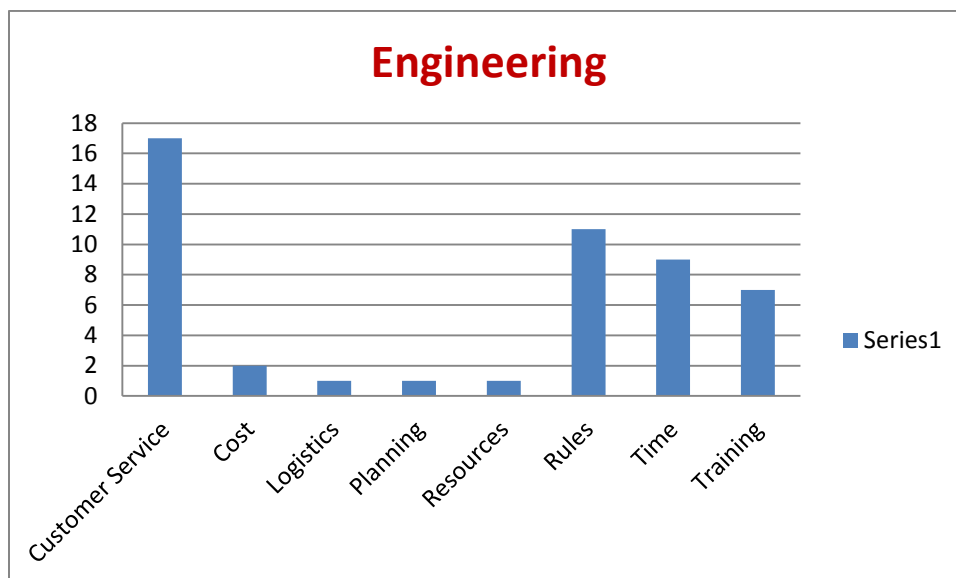
Comments

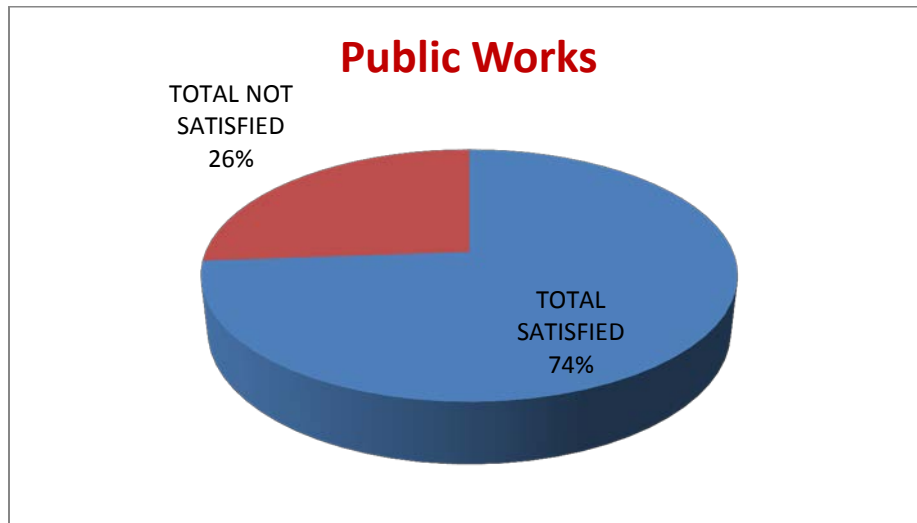




Satisfied	36
Very Satisfied	9
TOTAL SATISFIED	45
TOTAL NOT SATISFIED	57
Total Responses	102

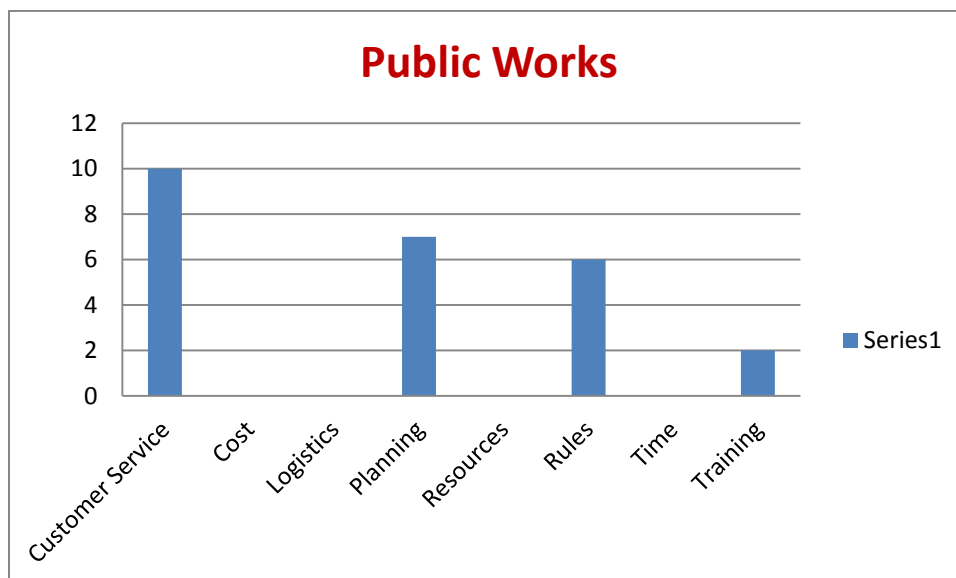
Comments

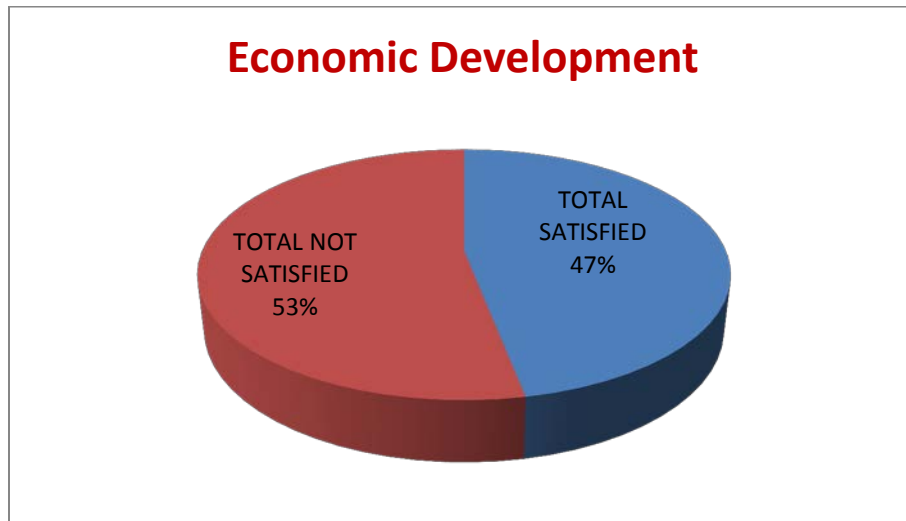




Satisfied	58
Very Satisfied	24
TOTAL SATISFIED	82
TOTAL NOT SATISFIED	29
Total Responses	111

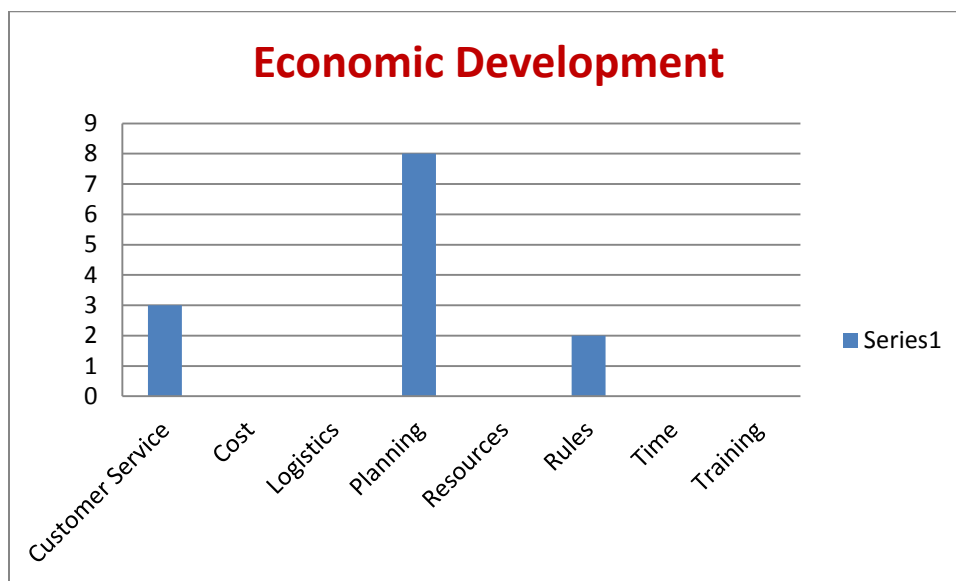
Comments





Satisfied	17
Very Satisfied	6
TOTAL SATISFIED	23
TOTAL NOT SATISFIED	26
Total Responses	49

Comments





Summary of Comments

A key part of the survey allowed respondents to provide detailed comments to accompany the numeric responses. Because we received hundreds of comments and because some focused on individuals or were inappropriate to publish, we decided to categorize the comments into key themes. These are described below.

A summary of the overall comments found within the survey indicate that businesses do understand the infrastructure challenges of the City. But there are challenges with City staff in the context of the degree to which they are helpful to business. Issues noted related to staff include: evasiveness; attitudes vary; there are specific areas of challenge for some specific staff members (not named here); but it should also be noted that there were staff members singled out as being very good and appreciated by respondents. There is room for improvement with regard to processes at City Hall.

There was a significant amount of input around our Economic Development Strategy, a focus on ensuring it is still relevant, the need to be more aggressive and focused in its implementation and that we track its results.

It became clear to us that the level of understanding about what City departments do, and which City functions are in which departments, are less clear to business than they probably should be.

Finally, there seems to be a sense that – in general – there is not a culture of being open to, and supportive of existing and new businesses.

THE SURVEY RESULTS:

2. Regional, Provincial and Federal Government Agencies

We asked the respondents to provide feedback regarding regional, provincial and federal government agencies relating to the level of support provided to business.

Key messages found in the results were:

Businesses found issues with child care licencing that is based out of Kamloops, primary issue being they were very slow to respond.

Rural business development in the surrounding Cranbrook area is a challenge. It can be difficult for business owners within the city to compete with similar businesses that are in the RDEK that may have different regulations because of their location.

Specific feedback was received regarding hurdles from provincial ministries. Ministries mentioned were: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Parks Department, and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. A significant amount of feedback was received regarding the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, with reoccurring comments on timeliness, inconsistency, and a lack of knowledge/experience amongst staff.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING BUSINESS IN CRANBROOK:

Respondents were given the opportunity to include comments on changes they felt to improve business opportunities in Cranbrook. Approximately 1/3 of respondents (94) provided feedback towards business opportunities in Cranbrook. A summary of the eight most common themes included:

1. Identify our retail gaps

Actively identify our retail gaps
Aggressively seek out new businesses to fill those

2. City and business community work together

Co-operation and collaboration with the goal of attracting new business to the community
Drive the economic development strategy more aggressively
Regular reporting of progress

3. Manufacturing, technology, service and value-added enterprises

Focus and encourage on new business in these areas
Review taxes, DCCs, and available land for opportunities and incentives

4. Tourism

Significant opportunity here
Needs a driver to create an organised approach

5. College of the Rockies

Develop into a local university
Link programs offered with our economic development strategy

6. Transportation

Become a transportation hub for the trucking industry based on our location in the province

7. Alternative energy

Co-generation plant opportunity
Pursue solar power possibilities
Possibly a link to the College of the Rockies

8. Buy-local

Develop a more robust “buy-local” program
Encourage citizens and business to keep their dollar in Cranbrook

REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO BUSINESS IN CRANBROOK

We reviewed the survey responses and came up with a number of proposed changes to be made in order to remove the barriers to business in Cranbrook

1. “Open for Business”

Develop an open for business culture in Cranbrook by creating higher levels of customer service both at City Hall and within community businesses.

2. Taxes/Fees

Because we are in competition for investments with other communities in BC (and elsewhere), we do need to ensure that our taxes and fees are competitive with those competitors. We need to ensure that a review is done so we know how commercial property tax levels, DCCs, and other city fees stack up against our competitors.

3. College to University

The community sees a need for a push towards the college becoming a university to ensure that there are more qualified, highly trained individuals available for businesses to hire in the coming years.

4. Clear Economic Vision

A number of questions arise relating to the city’s economic development strategy:

Is it still relevant?

Are we successfully implementing that strategy?

How are we tracking our progress?

How do we expand our tax base, not our taxes?

5. Business Liaison Role

An individual or entity whose focus is to assist businesses navigate the path-ways to success. The liaison will assist new or proposed business through the steps, agencies, departments, etc., while providing clear, concise information from City departments, provincial agencies, utility companies and offer, or arrange for, guidance towards the next steps in the process.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we found the City of Cranbrook should implement a number of the recommendations found within the survey.

1. Action plan inside City of Cranbrook

Develop a training program for staff to ensure:

Higher levels of customer service are obtained

Proper training for staff members on city policies

Educate the public on responsibilities of each city department

Review of city policies and procedures within staff to ensure consistent applications are given to queries from the business community

2. Business liaison employee hired

As previously discussed, an individual be hired to help businesses navigate the people and processes (municipal, regional and provincial) necessary to start or expand business in or adjacent to Cranbrook.

3. Aggressive approach on the economic development strategy

Focus on specific areas within the strategy where progress is possible, have the city work in conjunction with the business community to help achieve the goals in the strategy, and ensure progress on the strategy is reported on at least semi-annually.