

COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council
From: Administration
Date: December 5, 2017
Subject: Business Engagement Results

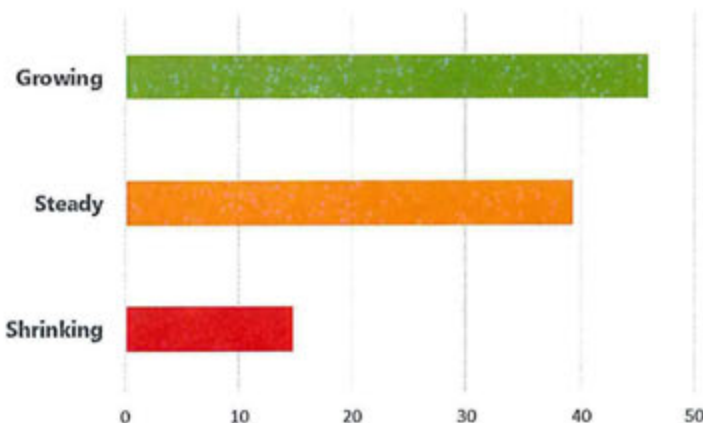
RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receives this report for information.

BACKGROUND:

On October 5, 2017 the District of Mackenzie, in partnership with the Province of BC, the Northern Development Initiative Trust, Mackenzie Chamber of Commerce, the College of New Caledonia, as well as Community Futures Fraser-Fort George, completed Mackenzie's first business walk exercise. Teams of elected officials, District staff, and the business service representatives visited store-front town and industrial site businesses for short interviews with business operators to identify ways we can help business thrive here in Mackenzie. By taking the time to answer our questions, business owners provided valuable information that the District and our business support agencies will be able to use to develop programs and services that will better assist our local businesses. The exercise was successful in reaching 62 businesses that day and the following feedback was obtained:

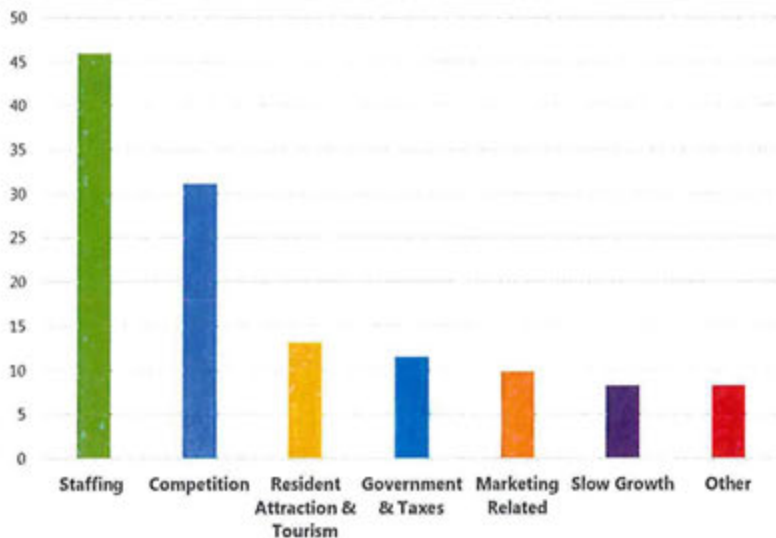
Compared to last year, businesses feel like...



Business is good

85% of businesses surveyed say that their business is either steady or growing, with 15% saying their businesses are shrinking.

The greatest challenge businesses face in Mackenzie is...

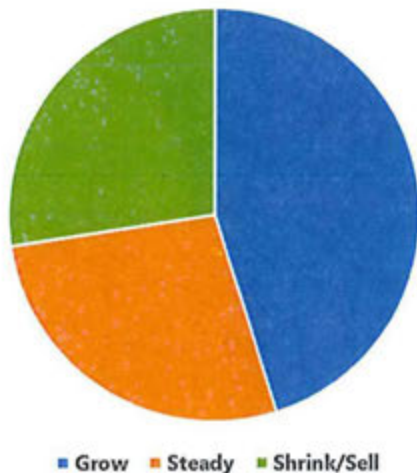


Staffing

45% of businesses say that the biggest challenges facing them is the availability of staff. 31% cite competition with alternative shopping in larger centres, online, as well as at other local establishments. Lastly 36% cited other community growth, taxes and government regulations, as well as marketing as major challenges.

*Businesses were allowed to list more than one.

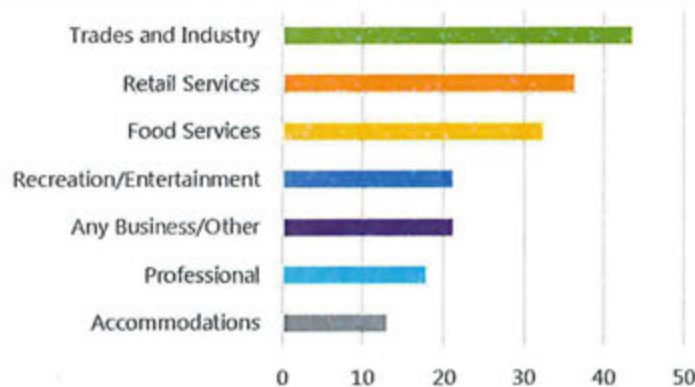
In the next 5 years, business expect they will be...



Growing

45% of businesses are optimistic their growth over the next 5 years, while only 27% believe their business will shrink or are planning to sell.

Owners have said these types of businesses would benefit their operations...

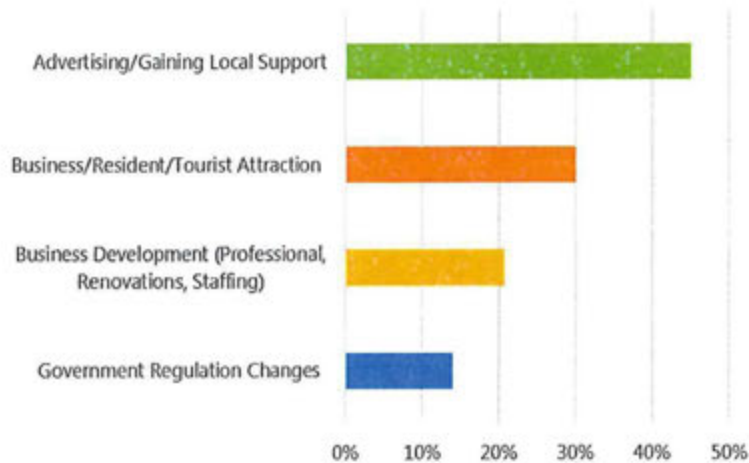


Trades & Industry

43% of businesses felt that recruiting more industry and trades or service stations would benefit their operations.

*Businesses were allowed to list more than one.

Businesses said this would help them grow in Mackenzie...



Shopping Locally

45% of businesses felt that gaining the support of the local residents and advertising their services more effectively would greatly benefit their business. Business, Resident, and Tourist attraction activities were also mentioned as key activities that 30% of business owners felt would help grow their businesses and benefit the community as a whole.

*Businesses were allowed to list more than one.

2017 Business Program/Services Statistics

- **268** active business licenses were obtained from the District.
- **\$15,000** in matching funds was provided local businesses through the business façade improvement program.
- **35** independent and locally owned businesses are participating in the Love Mackenzie program.
- **72%** of eligible licensed industrial businesses are members of the Supply Chain Connector program.
- **24%** of the District licensed businesses are members of the local Chamber of Commerce.

Next Steps in 2018

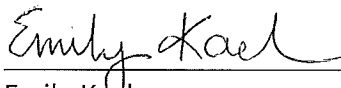
Early in the new year, staff will contact business owners that requested a follow-up conversation tailored to connect them with additional resources, services and programs that could benefit their operations. Staff will also share our findings with the business support services in the community and work with them to help improve and promote the business programs available that meet the specific needs voiced by business owners.

COUNCIL PRIORITY:

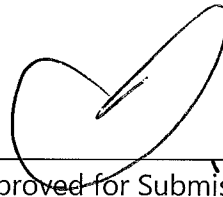
Economic Vitality:

- Develop business and investment friendly policies and initiatives
- Strengthen our industrial base and support economic diversification
- Invest in the development of strategic partnerships locally, regionally with First Nations, governments, industry, and the business community

Respectfully Submitted,



Emily Kaehn
Legislative Clerk/Executive Assistant



Approved for Submission to Council