



## Report to Council

### From the Office of Councillor Steve Milani

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Date: July 13, 2020  
Subject: COVID-19 Related Business Licence and Permit Fees

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#### Purpose

For Council to consider amending relevant bylaws so that existing Port Moody businesses seeking to expand outdoors or occupy new commercial space in order to facilitate physical distancing in response to COVID-19 will not be required to pay additional licence or permit fees, aiding with their recovery and survival in the wake of the pandemic.

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#### Recommendation

**THAT Staff be directed to prepare amendments to relevant bylaws exempting current Port Moody businesses from paying any additional fees to the City so that they may expand outdoors, move into a larger space or add-on a secondary physical location, allowing for proper physical distancing to help combat the spread of COVID-19, as recommended in the report dated July 13, 2020, from the Office of Councillor Steve Milani regarding COVID-19 Related Business Licence and Permit Fees;**

**AND THAT any monies already paid out by businesses for COVID-19 related expansion, as stated in this report, be refunded in full.**

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#### Background

The purpose of this report is to help ease the financial burden incurred by local businesses as a direct result of having to implement physical distancing to help combat the spread of COVID-19.

#### Discussion

On Tuesday, March 17, 2020, the British Columbia government declared a provincial state of emergency to support the province wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most important ways to help slow down the spread of the disease is through social/physical distancing. However, adhering to recommended physical distancing guidelines can result in a loss of operational space for businesses, requiring them to seek additional space in order to ensure the safety of their workers and/or customers their ability to remain viable. This extra space is an added expense that was not factored into business plans, resulting in a direct loss of revenue and lessening the probability that the business will survive the aftermath of the pandemic.

The City's current business licencing Bylaw 3000, Section 5:10 (see below) describes how a business licence is tied to its physical location. This means that for a business to use a new larger or secondary add-on space, not only will they have to pay more towards rent, insurance and utilities but they will also have to pay the City for additional inspection and licence fees. While the value of these fees will vary, one local sewing business that is currently adding a

second physical location to allow for the proper physical distancing of those participating in their classes is paying approximately \$300.00 to the City in additional fees. These fees mainly go towards Fire and Building inspections. The goal is to eliminate the additional fees. The inspections will still take place.

The City has launched an assistance program to expedite the permitting process for the addition of outdoor patio space for restaurants, cafes, breweries, etc. so that physical distancing between customers can be achieved. However, a permit fee is still payable to the City, as was the case recently with a local pub. They recently added an outdoor patio space to increase their seating capacity so they could maintain physical distancing. While the owners maintain that City Staff did a commendable job expediting the process, the business was required to pay a Special Event Permit Bylaw Fee of \$211.00. No on-site inspections were required in this particular case. This hardly qualifies as a Special Event as the addition of this additional space is merely an attempt to survive during these trying times. Permits for the temporary use of outdoor space are only valid until October 31 of this year.

The City of Port Moody can help its businesses adjust to this new reality by eliminating 'additional' licence or permit fees that they are currently required to pay in order for them to expand into a larger space or add-on a secondary location during the reopening and recovery phase. Businesses will still be required to pay for their business licence each year.

Supporting local businesses during their reopening and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial to help ensure their viability moving forward during this unprecedented time.

#### Bylaw 3000

A Bylaw to provide for the licensing and regulation of businesses in the City of Port Moody.

5.10 All applications for licences shall give a full description in detail of the premises in or upon which the applicant intends to carry on a business for which he/she has made the application, and no person to whom the licence has been granted shall carry on a business upon any premises other than those set forth in the said application without first making an application under this section for a new licence, or for a transfer of such licence as provided in this Bylaw.

#### **Financial Implications**

Staff time to prepare the bylaw amendment(s). Loss of inspection, license, and permit fees.

#### **Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives**

There are no communications or civic engagement initiatives.

#### **Council Strategic Plan Objectives**

Assisting local businesses aligns with Council's Strategic Priority of Economic Prosperity. "Foster an environment where businesses can thrive..." "Be proactive in identifying and responding to emerging industries and recognizing challenges to existing industry."