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# Red tape at city hall hinders small business: Chamber of Commerce



André Dumais, chair of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, presented 22 different recommendations to city council Sept. 28. The recommendations, found in the chamber's Municipal Red Tape, focused on making it easier for business to work with city hall.

Oct 04, 2010

By: Stacey Lavallie - Sudbury Northern Life Staff

Cutting through city hall's red tape is vital to increasing small business and keeping small business in Greater Sudbury, a report from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce warned.

The report, compiled after seven months of work, research, member polling and chamber meetings with city staff, presented 22 different recommendations to help business, especially small business, work with city hall.

Several of the recommendations revolved around key issues of reducing wait times, creating an improved customer service experience, a evening out of bylaws and training, and inter-departmental communication improvements.

Presenter André Dumais, chair of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce (GSCC) said the report and the research was not a finger-pointing exercise, and in many cases city hall was already working on some of the issues, or were testing implementations of suggestions at present.

City councillors were very receptive to the feedback in the report, and Ward 10 Coun. Frances Caldarelli noted the report would be "an excellent jumping off point" for new council. All councillors expressed concerns about the customer service experience business people were having when working with the city. Caldarelli noted that no one loves their job 100 per cent of the time, but there was no reason city staff should be anything but polite and courteous, and suggested having city staff undergo customer service retraining.

One of the points made by the report suggested abolishing the fair wage rule included in tenders. It requires all contractors attempting to win a tender request guarantee workers earn a fair wage. Ward 9 Coun. Doug Craig focused in on this specific point, asking why the chamber would want a standard that ensured workers were paid well eliminated.

"The concern we have with fair wage policy is the perception is gives for our city, the perception of interfering with business," Dumais answered. "You're not going to have a lot of people coming in here bidding on contracts paying slave wages. By implementing a policy or bylaw that says 'Thou shalt pay a minimum of this to be able to bid on our contract,' we're really sending out a message that council, or municipal council, has some authority over how you're going to run your business."

Dumais noted that while large corporations such as Wal-Mart and Shoppers Drug Mart have personnel assigned to its

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files to make it easier for the businesses to track its paperwork through the system, smaller businesses aren't treated to the same one-on-one treatment. This means smaller business people have to jump from department to department to track all their paperwork through the system.

In some cases, the turn-around time on paperwork can take weeks. Turn-around time on inspections were also noted to be too long. In one case, a final inspection took 15 months before being complete, Dumais said.

The city's customer service was targeted in the report as well, with Dumais stating that sometimes it felt as if city staff were being inconvenienced by those seeking assistance. The report recommended the city implement a customer service feedback procedure, so the city could pinpoint and address weaknesses in its customer service process.


The uneven nature of bylaws in the city, caused by the amalgamation of several towns, cities, and unincorporated townships 10 years ago is also a problem, he noted. While the city is working to create an even city-wide set of bylaws, Dumais noted bylaw officers aren't always aware of the bylaws in the area.


City inspectors did not escape the GSCC's report. In it, the report suggested ensuring city inspectors were up to speed on all standards, as there were irregularities between inspections.

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










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Bylaw Officers for any city should keep the by-law manual in their hands all the time. They should be up-to-date and be able to come up with answers when they are asked for assistance. Also, doing favors for someone and not following the bylaws is against the law and the bylaw officers who do this should be charged. I hear things all the time and wonder why bylaws are in effect and not followed....is their favoritism going on....who knows - it's all hush, hush.....

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