

**DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION**

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April 9, 2024

Dear Mayor and Council,

Re: Downtown Van support for Business & Economy Office

I am writing on behalf of the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (Downtown Van) to share our thoughts on the proposed mandate of the Business and Economy office dated March 12, 2024, and as recommended by city staff. Although Downtown Van is in support of the establishment of a Business and Economy Office, there are some specific areas of the proposed lines of service that we would like to comment on.

Firstly, for this office to live up to its full potential, its staff must be comprised of people with a robust baseline knowledge of the reality of the cost and logistics of diverse business operations. That includes, but is not limited to:

- The specific impacts that any regulation or policy will have on the broader market;
- First-hand knowledge of how delays in permit processing or applications can impact financing and development;
- How broader systemic issues affect labour attraction, retention, and business competitiveness; and
- How international businesses and investors perceive Vancouver's regulatory environment.

Moreover, for this office to meet the needs of the thousands of member businesses operating in the Downtown Van district, we would like to see tangible commitments to acknowledge and focus on the significance of the downtown peninsula as an employment, transportation and residential core of the city.

Downtown Van is a BIA representing 8000 member businesses in the central business district, where more than 130,000 workers work each day. Along with the Vancouver BIA Partnership, Downtown Van has observed increasing challenges for the storefront and retail sector over the past decade. However, it is still not a strategic focus of any order of government. The Business and Economy Office's pledge to be adaptive and flexible when selecting its workplan focus is therefore seen as a plus, and it is our hope that there will be more attention to these business types moving forward.

While proactive investment attraction may not be something this office intends to lead on, Downtown Van would like to see more from this line of service. It would be beneficial to ensure that our city remains a top destination for sectors that are not under Invest Vancouver's strategic portfolio, which includes – but is not limited to – retail and hospitality chains, hotel operators and investors in these areas.

We look forward to collaborating with the Business and Economy Office to ensure that downtown Vancouver and the central business district receives the support it needs to remain competitive and provide world-class offerings to residents, workers and visitors alike.

Sincerely,

Jane Talbot
President & CEO
Downtown Van