



MEDIA RELEASE

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The Kelowna Chamber Believes Revised City Sign By-law Misses Mark

Kelowna: The Kelowna Chamber has mixed views on the City's most recent revisions to its sign by-law. The Chamber was pleased to see the City back away from what was going to be an initial ban on some types of signage and instead focus on regulating rather than prohibiting mobile signs.

Unfortunately, the Chamber's recommendation on taking a complaint-driven approach to enforcement was not heeded by the City. Now there are increased costs being passed on to business to pay for another by-law officer whose job will be to seek out offenders even when there are no complaints from the public. "That type of enforcement is extremely expensive," stated Chamber Past President Tom Dyas. "With the significant demands on limited city resources and ever-increasing costs of government, we continue to believe a complaint-driven approach to by-law enforcement is the most fiscally prudent way to go."

The Kelowna Chamber took part in consultation on the City's new sign by-law over the fall of 2017 after several members raised serious concerns over some of the revisions being considered. "The primary concerns that our members had with the original provisions centered around an immediate loss of business, unaffordable cost of new inventory, the subjectivity of new by-law provisions, and ongoing uncertainty around grandfathered uses of signage versus new by-law enforcement," said Dyas.

"The initial by-law revision included a complete ban on popular portable signage plus significantly increased fines and fees, so that an additional by-law officer could be hired to enforce the new provisions," said Brad Buchanan, President/Owner of Okanagan Portable Sign Rentals. "An online poll found 97% of respondents opposed hiring a new by-law officer to enforce the new provisions, rather than responding to complaints." Fee and fine information is incomplete but there could be increases from around \$40 to over \$250, an unacceptable 600% increase.

The plan to hire an additional by-law officer was attached to the final version adopted by Council on July 30. Less than half a per cent of all by-law complaints received by the City were related to signage, according to the City at an October 2017 workshop. "There are pressing problems in the City of Kelowna right now," said Dyas, "and the Chamber prefers to see complaint-based enforcement."

The Chamber continued to clarify what problems the City identified with certain types of signage, particularly portable signs and real estate signage and how the revision would address these perceived issues. The value of portable signs for small businesses is well-recognized, and in some cases, constitutes nearly the whole of the advertising budget for small businesses and nonprofit groups.

The Chamber is pleased the City moved away from its total ban on portable signs, and away from dictating signage colours, which would have been nearly impossible to enforce. The new by-law also mandates length of time of display, size, and distance between signs, among other restrictions.

For more information:

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