

# **What We Heard:** Clarity and Organization of the Proposed Business Licence Bylaw

March 31, 2021

**Business Licensing and Vehicle for Hire**

Email: [businesslicencepolicy@edmonton.ca](mailto:businesslicencepolicy@edmonton.ca)

Tel: 780-496-5244

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>METHOD OF ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
Headings and Table of Contents	4
Language	4
Business Category Names and Descriptions (Schedule A)	5
Application Requirements (Schedule B)	6
Fees (Schedule C)	6
Bylaw Offences and Penalties (Schedule D)	7
Additional Feedback	8
<b>NEXT STEPS</b>	<b>8</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Administration is in the final stages of developing a new Business Licence Bylaw to replace the current aging bylaw. In May of 2019, Administration presented the first report on the Business Licence Bylaw Renewal to the Urban Planning Committee with 23 recommendations for the framework and fee structure of the new bylaw. In October of 2020, Administration presented a second report to the Executive Committee which included 35 recommendations for licensing of specific types of businesses, along with a proposed outline and fee schedule for the new bylaw.

Based on these recommendations, Administration drafted the proposed new Business Licence Bylaw. In February of 2021, Administration invited the business community to review the proposed bylaw and provide feedback on its clarity and organization. This “What We Heard” report summarizes feedback from business owners and business associations as it relates to the headings, language, and schedules used in the proposed Business Licence Bylaw. The contents of this report will inform the final revisions to the proposed bylaw before it is advanced to the Urban Planning Committee and City Council for three readings and adoption.

## METHOD OF ENGAGEMENT

On February 15, 2021, Administration sent an email invitation to approximately 500 members of the Business Licence Bylaw Renewal stakeholder list, including business owners and operators, and representatives from local business associations and Business Improvement Areas. Recipients were directed to the Business Licence Bylaw Renewal project web site where they could watch a video presentation, review the draft Business Licence Bylaw, and provide their feedback via an online survey. The survey was open until March 5, 2021.

## RESULTS

In total 14 people responded to the survey, though not every respondent answered every question. A combination of quantitative and qualitative survey questions were used to assess the respondents’ perceptions of the headings, language, and each of the four schedules used in the bylaw.

*Quantitative results* showed the respondents have positive or neutral opinions about the clarity and organization of the bylaw overall.

*Qualitative results* were more diverse; however the majority of responses were constructive. No major issues were identified; however, many responses helped Administration to identify minor

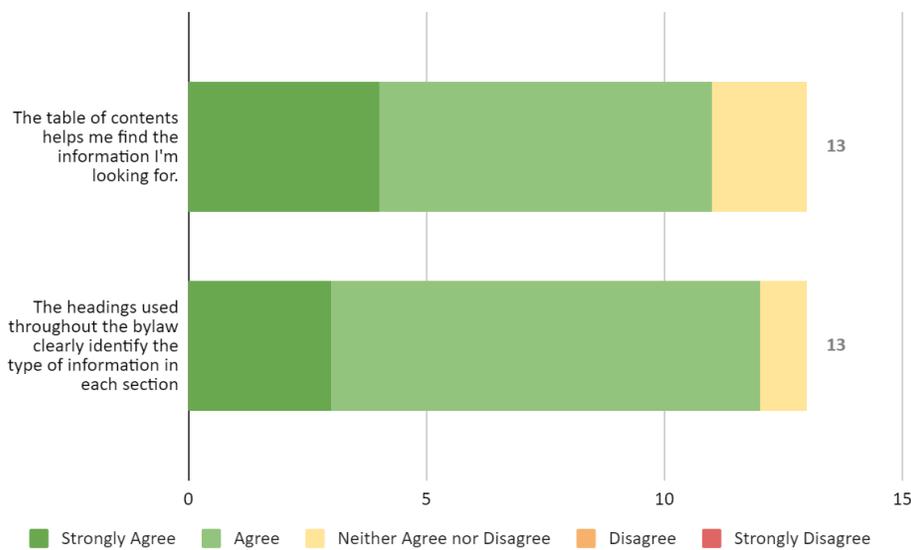
areas for improvement to the bylaw. Some responses were not aligned with the survey questions being asked, but were still useful in identifying opportunities outside of the bylaw to improve the clarity of business licensing information. A small number of responses were not relevant to this engagement or otherwise constructive, and are not discussed in this report.

### Headings and Table of Contents

79% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed that the table of contents helped them find the information they were looking for, while 14% neither agreed, nor disagreed.

86% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed that the headings used in the bylaw clearly identified the type of information in each section, while 7% neither agreed, nor disagreed.

None of the respondents disagreed with either statement.

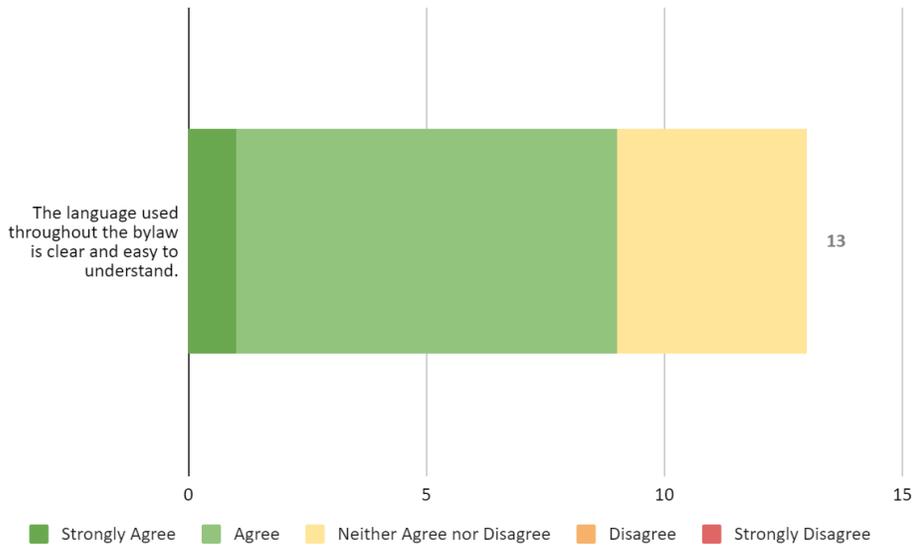


Respondents were asked what changes to the table of contents or headings would make the bylaw easier to use. One respondent identified a broken link in the headings and another indicated that no changes are necessary.

### Language

64% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed that the language used throughout the bylaw is clear and easy to understand, while 29% neither agreed, nor disagreed.

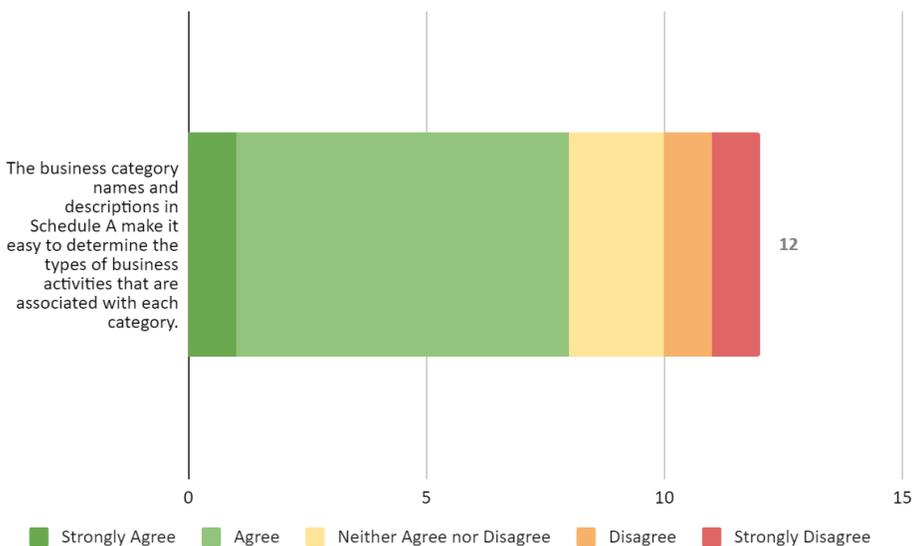
None of the respondents disagreed with this statement.



Respondents were asked what changes to the language would make the bylaw easier to use. One respondent suggested clarifying that sole proprietorships are included in the definition of “business”.

**Business Category Names and Descriptions (Schedule A)**

The majority of respondents (57%) agreed, or strongly agreed that the business category names and descriptions in Schedule A make it easy to determine the types of business activities that are associated with each category. 14% of respondents disagreed, or strongly disagreed with this statement. 14% neither agreed, nor disagreed.

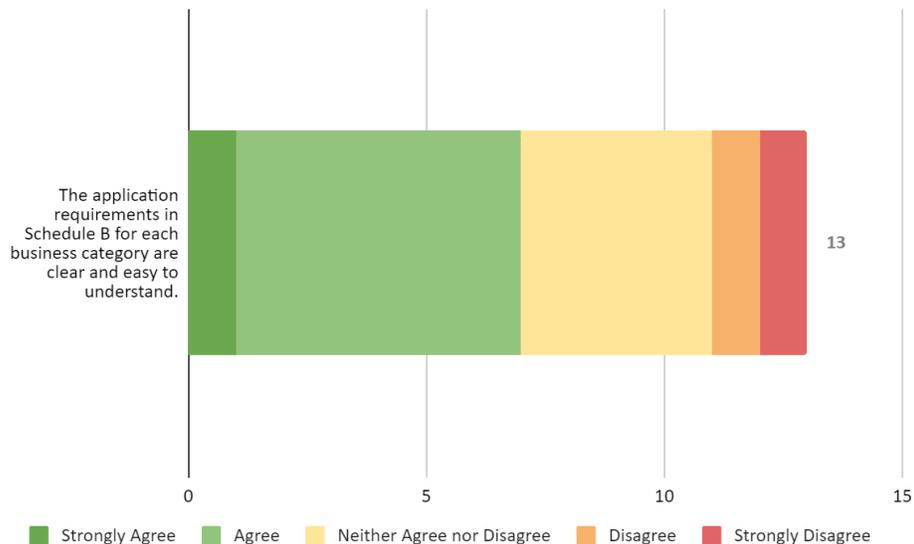


Respondents were asked what changes would make the category names and descriptions in Schedule A more clear. Responses are summarized as follows:

- It is not clear what businesses fall under the General Business category
- The correct category for consultants and IT consultants is not clear
- Categories do not include specific provisions for home-based businesses
- It is not clear if the Construction, Contracting, and Labour Service category includes residential home builders or not

### Application Requirements (Schedule B)

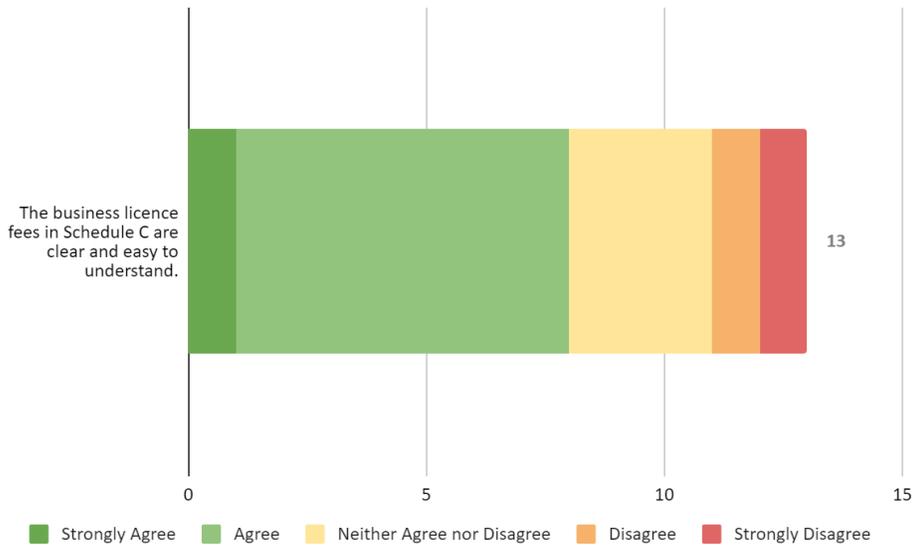
Half of respondents (50%) agreed, or strongly agreed that the application requirements in Schedule B for each business category are clear and easy to understand. 14% of respondents disagreed, or strongly disagreed with this statement. 29% neither agreed, nor disagreed.



Respondents were asked what changes would make the application requirements in Schedule B more clear. Responses indicated that provincial licensing requirements need additional clarification.

### Fees (Schedule C)

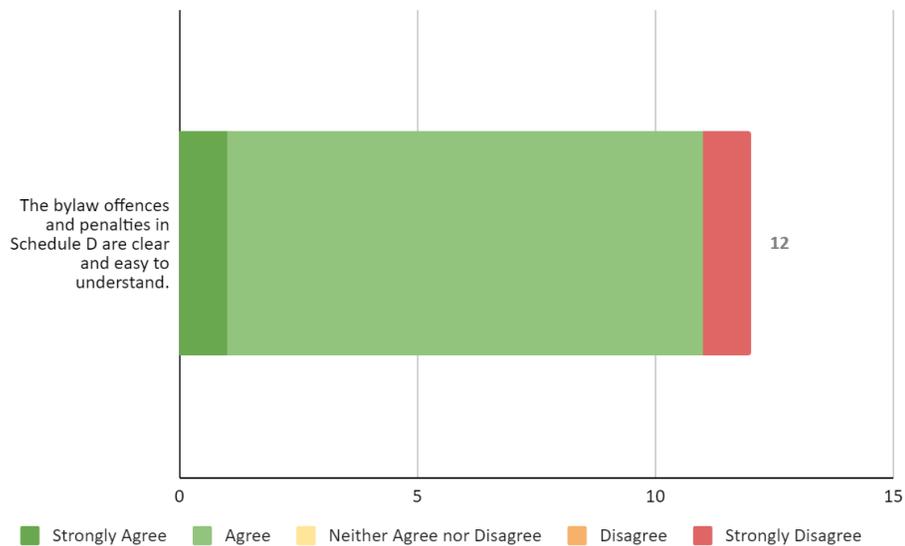
The majority of respondents (57%) agreed, or strongly agreed that the business licence fees in Schedule C are clear and easy to understand. 14% of respondents disagreed, or strongly disagreed with this statement. 21% neither agreed, nor disagreed.



Respondents were asked what changes would make the fees in Schedule C more clear. One respondent indicated that it is not clear whether businesses have the option to choose a one-year or two-year licence, or if the term of a licence is imposed by the City. Another respondent suggested that clarification to consultation requirements and related fees is required.

**Bylaw Offences and Penalties (Schedule D)**

The majority of respondents (79%) agreed, or strongly agreed that the bylaw offences and penalties in Schedule D are clear and easy to understand. 7% of respondents disagreed, or strongly disagreed with this statement.



Respondents were asked what changes would make the bylaw offences and penalties in Schedule D more clear. No relevant responses were provided.

### **Additional Feedback**

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked what else would make the bylaw work better for them. Some respondents also provided additional feedback in response to other parts of the survey where it was not relevant to the question at hand, but still within the scope of this engagement.

Respondents' additional feedback is summarized as follows:

- The operational plan requirement is open to interpretation and requires clarification
- Positive feedback on the lower renewal fee
- Some opposition to the business licence fee amounts, particularly for home-based businesses
- Privacy must be assured, particularly when photo ID is utilized
- Suggested improvements to the navigation of the document
- The proposed bylaw does not acknowledge the impact of the past year (i.e. economic impacts of COVID) has had on businesses
- The bylaw does not address some requirements such as storage or home-based businesses

## **NEXT STEPS**

Based on the respondents' feedback, Administration is considering numerous opportunities for minor improvements to the clarity and organization of the bylaw, including updates to definitions and business category names and descriptions, clarification of licensing requirements, and better navigational aids within the document. Final revisions to the proposed bylaw will be completed before it is advanced to the Urban Planning Committee on June 29, 2021.

Administration has also identified numerous opportunities outside of the bylaw to address areas that are unclear to businesses. Administration will seek to clarify these areas using other communication channels and resources, which may include websites and online services, forms and notices, and direct communication with businesses. This work will be aligned with other communications efforts that are underway to support implementation of the new Business Licence Bylaw.