



## BYLAW 39-24 BUSINESS LICENSE

### Purpose

The purpose of Bylaw 39-24 is to provide for a system of licenses, permits, or approvals respecting businesses, business activities, and persons engaged in business.

### Readings

This Bylaw is ready for three readings.

### Report, Analysis and Financial Implications

In response to feedback from the business community that it is difficult to do business in Okotoks, Administration provided a discussion report to Council on September 9, 2024. Based on an in-depth review of the current regulatory framework and Town processes respecting business licensing, this report discussed three (3) alternatives to adjust business licensing regulation and processes. The alternatives included:

1. Retain Business License Bylaw intent with minor bylaw and process improvements;
2. Remove requirements for business licensing and repeal the Business License Bylaw; or
3. Amend the Business License Bylaw to reflect the value of business licensing to Okotoks, streamline processes accordingly, and simplify the associated fee structure.

On September 9, 2024, Council passed the following motion:

"That Administration be directed to proceed with Option 3 to reflect the value of business licensing to Okotoks; review the current business license fee structure for inclusion in the 2025 Fees, Rates, and Charges Bylaw; and bring the corresponding Business License Bylaw amendments to Council before November 19, 2024."

In summary, Option 3 was recommended to Council as a balanced approach that enables the continuation of a simplified licensing system, and the collection of business data for the purpose of statistics and intentional economic development programs. Process amendments and amendments to forms continue to be developed and tested for implementation on January 1, 2025. Any changes, as adopted by Council, would be communicated with the business community by the Economic Development Team in December 2024 with further communication or workshop options to follow in 2025. Internal training would be facilitated throughout November and December 2024.

Draft Business License Bylaw 39-24 contains proposed amendments to Bylaw 21-23 as indicated in the redlined version attached and include:

- Deletions of definitions where terminology is not used in the body of the Bylaw;
- Removal of repeat provisions within the Bylaw;
- Revision and deletion of provisions that lead to "process stacking" in favour of process and permitting decoupling;

- Revisions to provisions that relate to furnishing proof of federal, provincial licensing;
- Revisions to provisions relating to business license conditions.

A legal review of the draft Bylaw was undertaken.

The revised fee structure for business licensing is included with the amendments to the Fees, Rates, and Charges Bylaw, recommending a reduced flat fee for Okotoks resident businesses licenses to better align with the provincial average fees.

Rather than amending Bylaw 21-23, Administration opted to write a new bylaw to better reflect the many amendments being brought forward and present draft Bylaw 39-24 for Council’s review and adoption. As noted above, the redlined version of the current Business Licensing Bylaw 21-23 is included to illustrate the recommended changes.

**Strategic Plan Goals**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibly Managed Growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrated Environmental Leadership
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strong Local Economy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced Culture & Community Health
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Organizational Excellence		

**Community Engagement Strategy**

A comprehensive communication strategy has been prepared to communicate the proposed changes the Business License Bylaw and licensing processes to the business community, supported by external advice to address current information gaps.

**Alternatives for Consideration**

Alternatives to the proposed Business License Bylaw Amendments were brought to Council in a report on September 9, 2024.

**CAO Comments**

I strongly support this Bylaw amendment. The Town of Okotoks has completed a significant review of business licensing to ensure that it aligns with the purpose of a municipality. The review highlighted that many of the functions required in the business license bylaw were not aligning with it purpose. These amendments to the bylaw realign function and purpose to streamline processing. The Fees, Rates, and Charges Bylaw has been amended to include the new standardized fee for business licensing.

**Attachment(s)**

1. Draft Bylaw 39-24 Business License Bylaw
2. Bylaw 21-23 Business License Bylaw redlined version

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 November 01, 2024