



Red Tape Survey Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

The Surrey Board of Trade supports, promotes, and advocates for commercial and industrial interests for Surrey businesses — the city’s economic drivers. With Surrey’s significance growing rapidly in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and across Canada, so does the importance of the Surrey Board of Trade’s role in championing a strong, vibrant business community, and instigating change at the different levels of government.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

Surrey Board of Trade is a powerful link between business, government, and community with a membership of 6,000 member contacts and 60,000 employees.

WHAT WE DO

Since 1918, the Surrey Board of Trade provides businesses and organizations with:

1. Economic opportunity
2. International trade
3. Government advocacy
4. Business connections

Members can further expand their client base with our numerous networking opportunities throughout the year. We provide multiple levels of opportunity for members to promote their brand through business-to-business engagement and thought leadership.

ADVOCACY

We are an independent voice of business that develops positions on relevant topics of concern to our members.

No individual can succeed alone, nor can any business thrive without colleagues and support. The Surrey Board of Trade is here to help. With our many connections to government representatives, we advocate on your behalf.

PURPOSE OF SURVEYS

The Surrey Board of Trade periodically implements surveys, either voluntary opt-in or scientifically rigorous, on a range of topics. Member participation is voluntary and anonymous; however, the data is an invaluable tool for advocacy and policy development.

We thank all those who gave a few minutes of their time to provide information and direction on Surrey Board of Trade surveys.

THE RED TAPE SURVEY

We advocate for red tape reduction, defined as excessive bureaucracy, routines, rules, or complexity, which results in delays or unreasonable costs for business. Filing forms and applying for licenses are a part of doing business, however, we want to ensure that it isn't onerous on our members.

This is the fifth Red Tape Survey that captures member experiences from which the Surrey Board of Trade can measure improvement over time. Several emails introducing the survey were sent to the membership from the end of August to early October. The results are presented at the annual Surrey Development Industry Forum, in conjunction with a press release of a summary of findings.

The Surrey Board of Trade conducts the Red Tape Survey annually to track improvements where they occur and identify concerns as they arise for our members. Specifically:

- To gain a deep understanding of our members' regulatory burden;
- To determine any actions, recommendations, or policies that may be required; and,
- To add to our body of knowledge that will lead to better regulation and lower costs for businesses and taxpayers.

This year's Red Tape Survey also included questions pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many businesses have experienced hardship because of the economic shutdown. Understanding how COVID-19 has impacted business operations, and the confidence in recovery will provide insight whether government's current policies are perceived as being beneficial or negligible.

The Red Tape Survey was inspired by both the Surrey Board of Trade's Finance and Taxation Policy Team and the Development and Land Use Policy Team.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 51% of respondents identified as employers. 84.1% of Surrey Board of Trade member respondents found regulatory requirements of all levels of government had a moderate to major impact on their daily operations, which is up from the 2020 survey (82%), and the 2019 survey (71.8%).

Below are recommendations made by the Surrey Board of Trade to governments. Given that our respondents are finding regulatory compliance to impede growth and innovation, it is reasonable to consider that it may likewise create disincentives for the broader business community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with what our members have indicated for all four of the previous iterations of the survey, the Surrey Board of Trade recommends:

1. Governments improve their instructions on regulatory compliance;
2. That all levels of government improve their online service portals and call centre services, using clear language for instructions and ensure relevant links are up to date and working; and,
3. Agencies share information and make sure there are no duplicate information requirements.

Impact of compliance	84.1% reported moderate to major impact on business to comply
Time away from business	The majority of respondents at 62.9% spend 0–5 hours per week complying with government regulatory requirements
Most costly stage of compliance	31.4% reported understanding the obligations in the first place to be costly 27.1% of respondents found preparing the information to be costly
Financial costs of compliance	72.2% respondents determined that overall costs have increased in the last 2 years
Time taken to fill out forms	80% respondents found the time taken to comply has increased in the last 2 years
Filing taxes	35.9% now outsource income tax return filing 32.1% of respondents take between 5-50 hours to file taxes

Agencies with the most red tape

81.3% identified Canada Revenue Agency to have moderate to high levels of red tape
60.4% rated WorkSafeBC with moderate to high levels of red tape

Measures that would reduce red tape

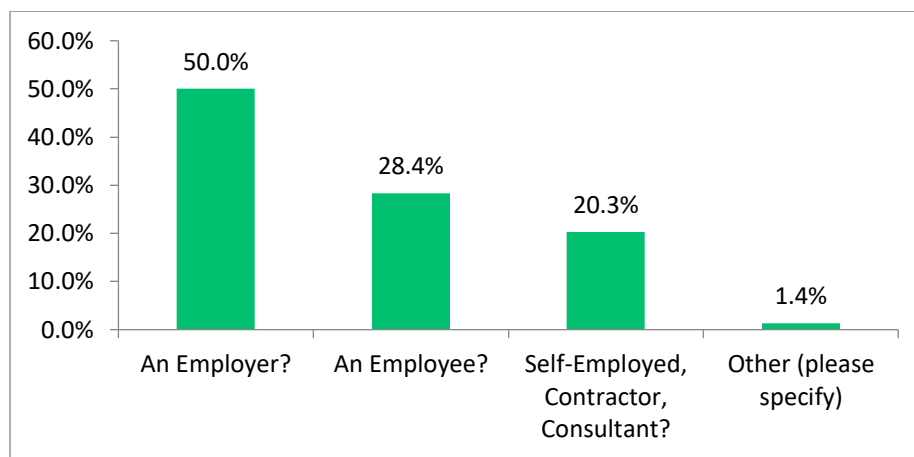
89.6% identified agencies sharing information and making sure there are no duplicate information requirements has the potential to help
87.5% suggested better communication and consultation with businesses when developing new regulations would help reduce time of compliance
87.5% indicated that improving accessibility of web-based reporting could reduce the cost of compliance

3. RESULTS SUMMARY

The responses from the respondents will be discussed in this section. There are some questions that will not be fully explored but are available in the appendix. Unlike previous surveys, which were released in late July to the Surrey Board of Trade’s membership, this survey released later at the end of August.

Question 1

Respondent’s role in the workforce

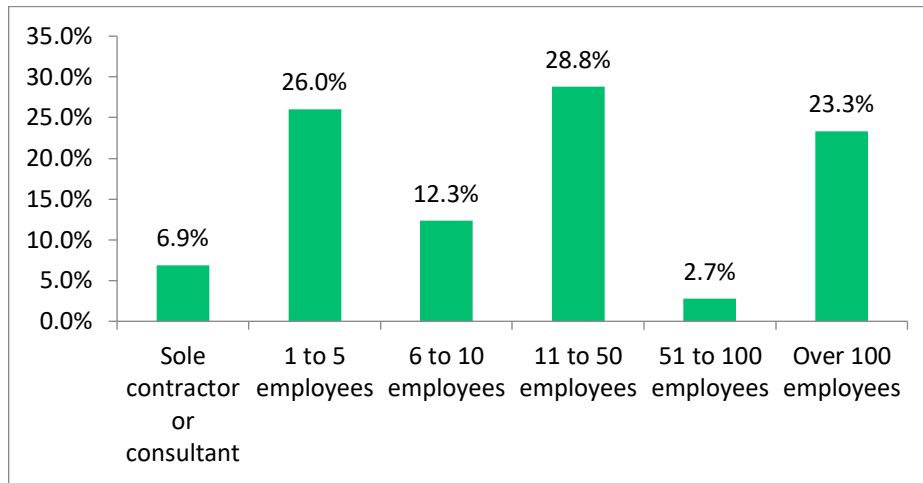


In each survey the Surrey Board of Trade releases, we initially ask a priming question to ensure that the results are indicative of the labour community. There are many businesses that are members ranging from sole contractors to employing hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

Question one asks whether the respondent is an employer, an employee, self-employed, or other. Those who select “Other” as a response indicated that they are retired or unemployed. It is apparent that the respondents are involved in the labour pool in some fashion and therefore qualified to answer the questions within this survey.

Question 2

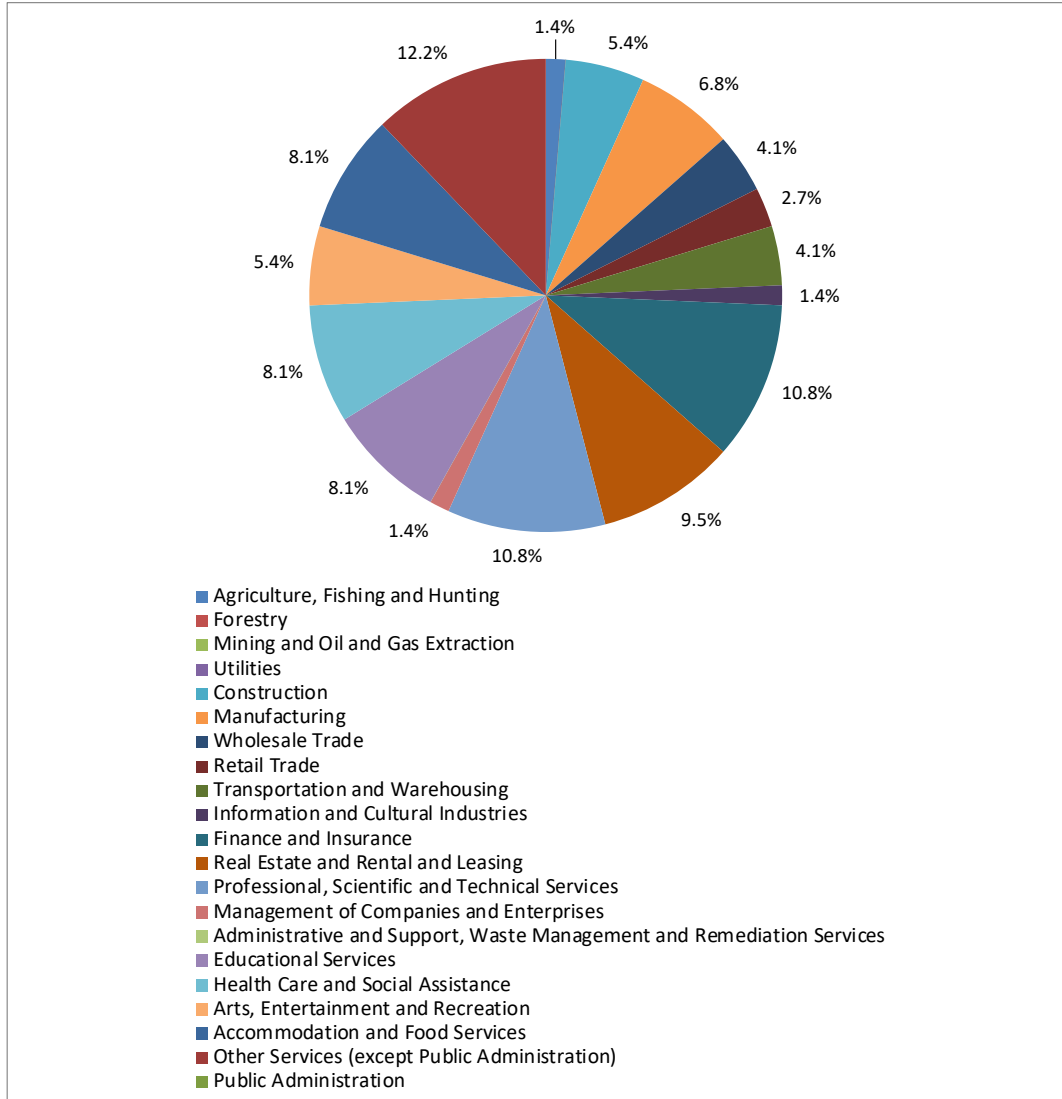
How many individuals are employed by your company?



The majority of the respondents belonged to organizations with 11 to 50 employees. This is indicative of the labour market within Surrey, and the Surrey Board of Trade's membership. Many businesses in Surrey are small to medium-sized businesses. These businesses include full time, part time, casual, temporary, and regular contractors.

Question 3

Which category would best describe your company?¹



The largest number of respondents at 12.2% indicated they fall in another category not listed.

The next highest respondents come from Finance and Insurance (10.8%) service providers and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (10.8%), which includes engineers, computer system designers, accounting and tax service providers, and payroll services, among other professions.

¹ NAICS based choices

Question 4 Impact of COVID-19 on business

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
We have experienced a decline in revenues/business or leads	9.6%	23.3%	17.8%	17.8%	31.5%
We have experienced an increase in revenues/business or leads	30.0%	22.9%	18.6%	20.0%	8.6%
Accounts payables for the months of March, April, May and June were higher than usual	8.5%	18.3%	32.4%	25.4%	15.5%
We had to adjust our pricing strategy	10.0%	8.6%	28.6%	38.6%	14.3%
Operating costs have increased	4.2%	12.5%	13.9%	37.5%	31.9%

With the impact of COVID-19 on their business in mind, we asked respondents to rate the above statements.

There were 69.4% of respondents who indicated that they agree or strongly agree that operating costs have increased. Additionally, 52.9% of respondents indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree that they have experienced increases in revenues/business or leads. This shows that the cost to do business has increase whereas revenue has not.

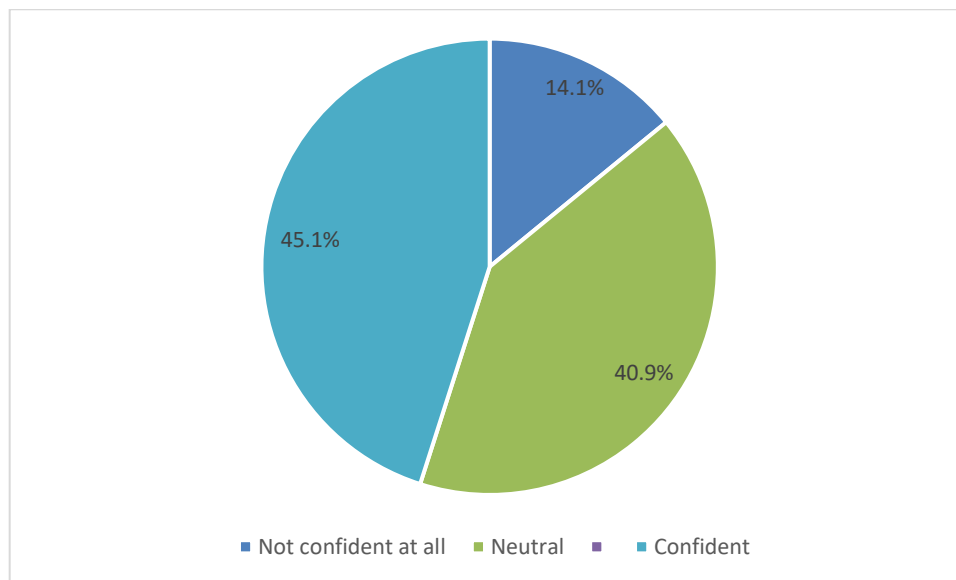
Accounts payables being higher for the months of March, April, May and June, which is when BC was ordered to go into an economic lockdown again, shows that costs were high.

The need to adjust prices depends on whether the business is still operable. Of those that responded to the survey, the majority adjusted their pricing. Some businesses had to raise their prices due to decreased traffic and increased overhead because of COVID-19, but others had to lower their prices to remain competitive.

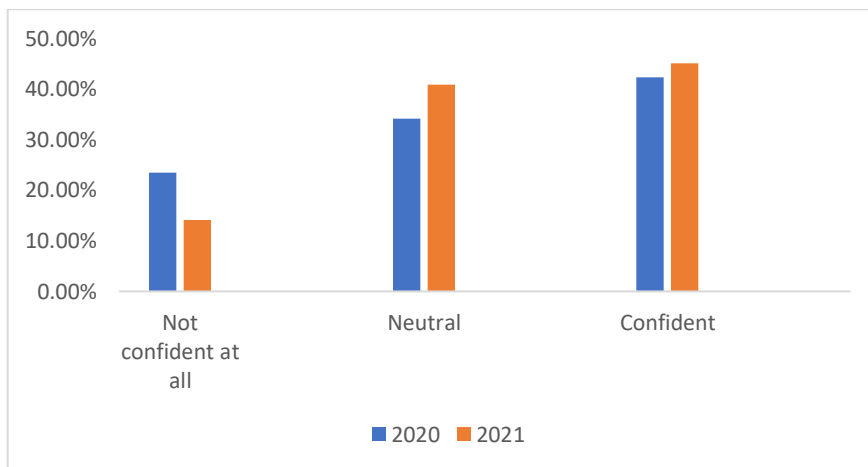
Overall, the impact of COVID-19 is significant. Over the past few months, many surveys have asked how COVID-19 is impacting businesses, and it seems that the trend of high impact remains. Although some businesses are thriving during the pandemic, the vast majority have struggled or ceased to exist.

Question 5

Confidence in future business and sales



With British Columbia’s pandemic response being internationally lauded as one of the most competent plans, it is no surprise that there is a feeling of confidence in economic recovery and resurgence. Additionally, job growth in BC has been higher than the rest of Canada.²

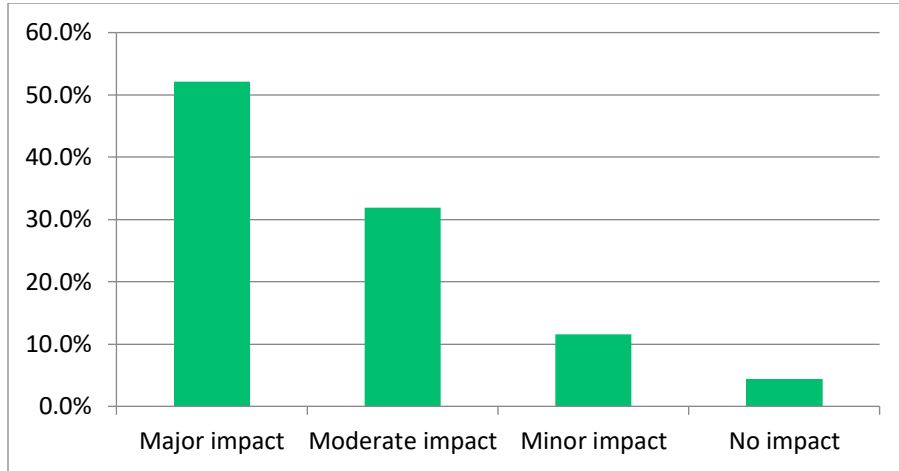


We asked this same question in our 2020 survey, and the confidence level is trending in an upward direction. Much of the province is now open, with the exception of the central and northern parts, and businesses and venues are opening up every month.

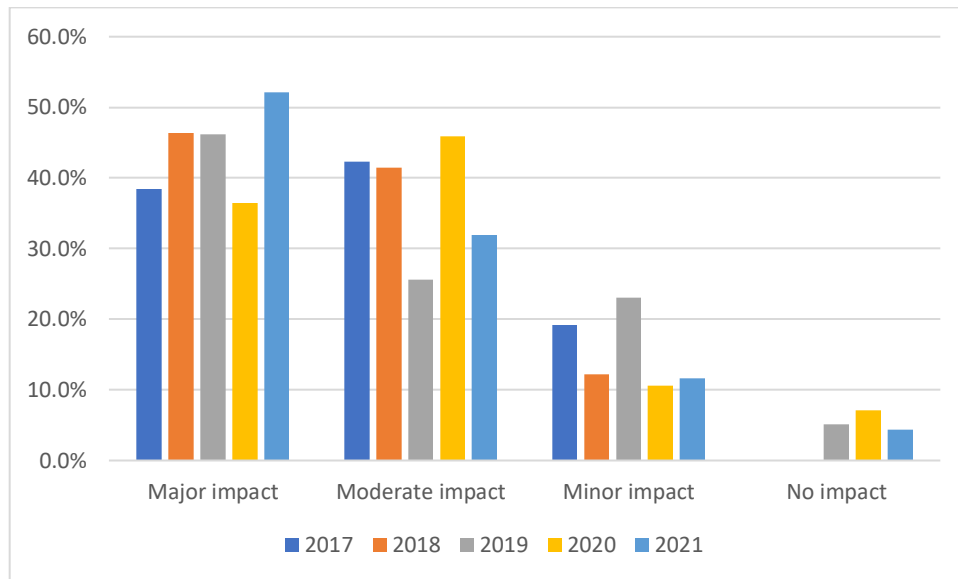
² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-leads-in-job-creation-numbers-but-more-work-ahead-says-recovery-minister-1.6205621>

Question 6

Impact on business of complying with government (federal, provincial, local) regulatory requirements

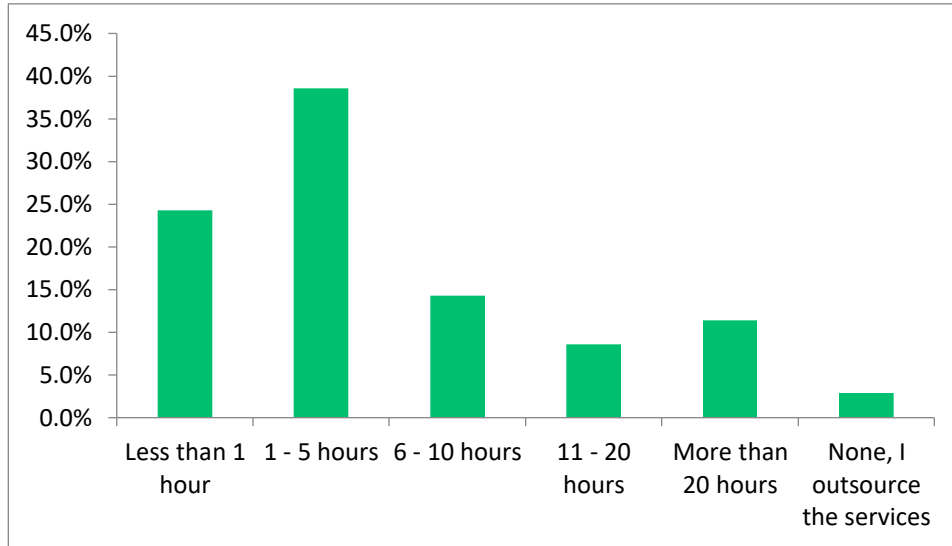


When respondents were asked to rate the impact of complying with government regulatory requirements, over 84.1% of respondents indicated a moderate to major impact. When looking at the previous year's impacts and comparing them to 2021, we see that complying with government requirements is having an increasingly major impact on business.

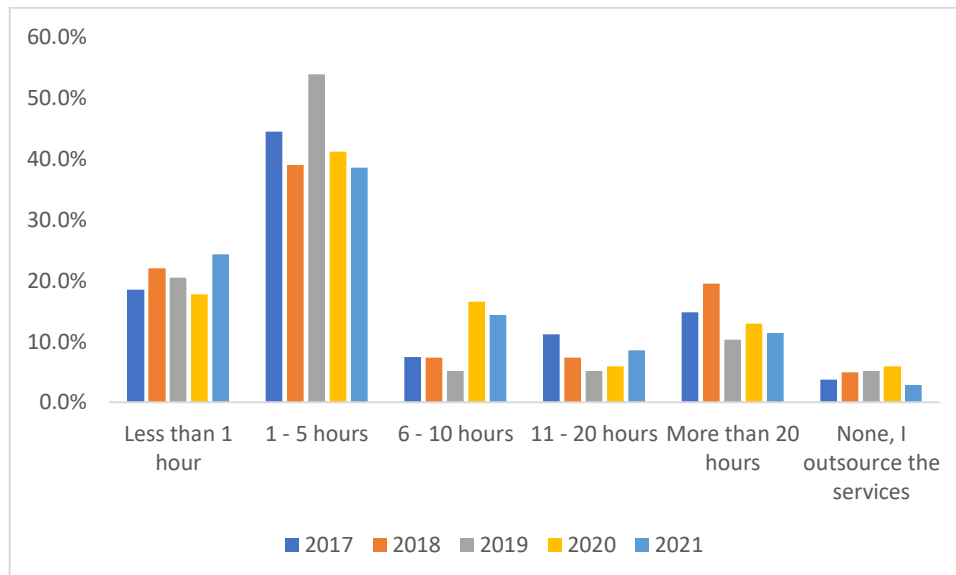


Question 7

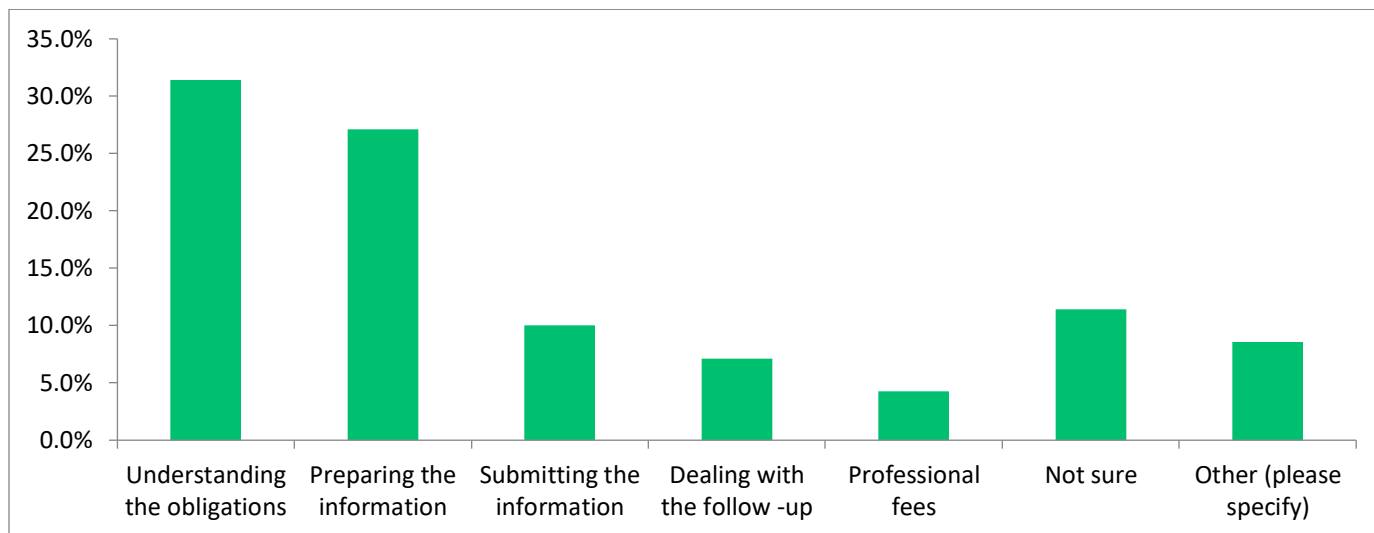
Time spent per week on complying with government (federal, provincial, local) regulatory requirements



The 2021 responses indicate that the time spent to comply with government requirements is between 0-5 hours (62.9% of respondents). When comparing these figures with 2017 – 2020, we see that it is consistent except for indications of spending between 6-10 hours, which rose in the last two years. This may be because the processes have not been streamlined enough to ensure that businesses can focus on growth and productivity. Respondents indicating that they outsource these services has dropped.

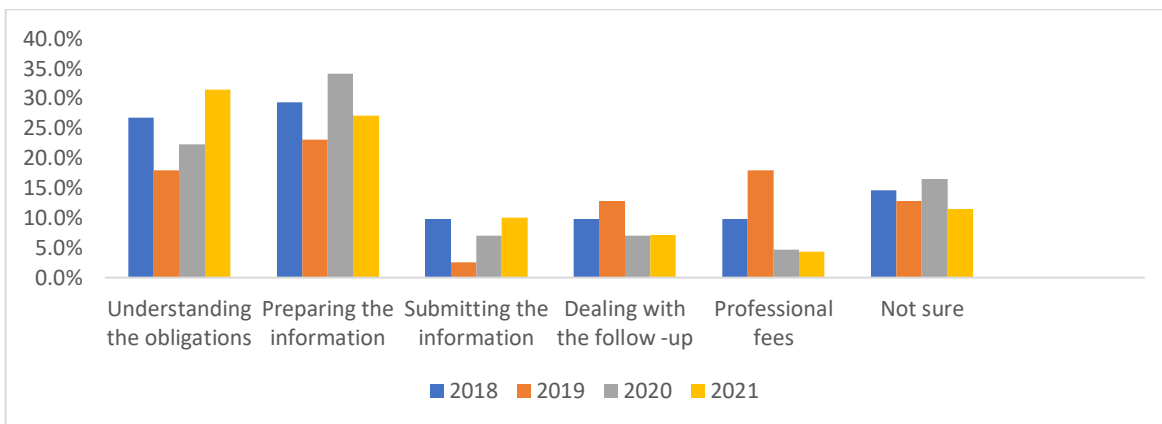


Question 8
Most costly stage of compliance



The costliest stage of compliance with regulatory requirements are understanding the obligations, followed by preparing the information. Of the 8.6% that chose ‘Other,’ respondents indicated the following:

- PPE and signage/retraining;
- All of the above³; and,
- Risk management/ IT compliance.

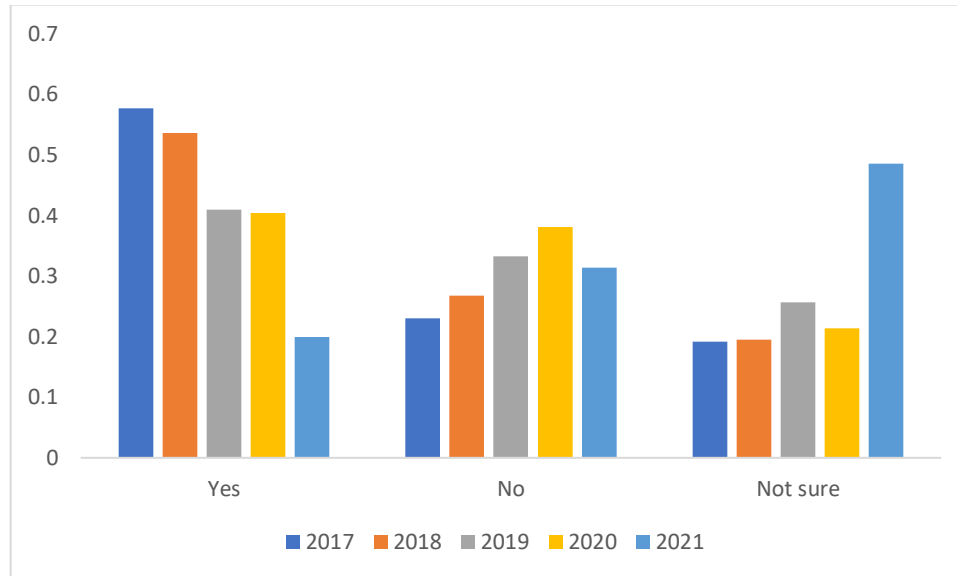


Between 2018 and 2020, preparing the information was deemed the costliest stage of compliance.

³ Two Respondents indicated that all of the listed requirements were equally costly.

Question 9

Do you report the same information to different government agencies?



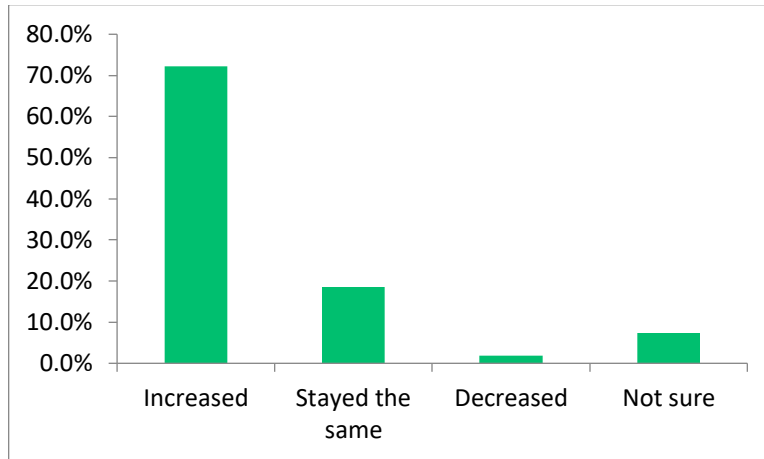
Over the years, it is apparent that fewer businesses are reporting the same information to different government agencies. The responses in 2017 show the highest indication of reporting the same information to multiple agencies, which has steadily declined since then. It can be inferred that government reporting has become somewhat streamlined and resulted in fewer overlapping requirements. This year we noticed that many businesses and members were unsure if they were reporting the same information to different government agencies.

We also asked those that indicated that they were reporting the same information to tell us what information is being re-reported. They indicated the following:

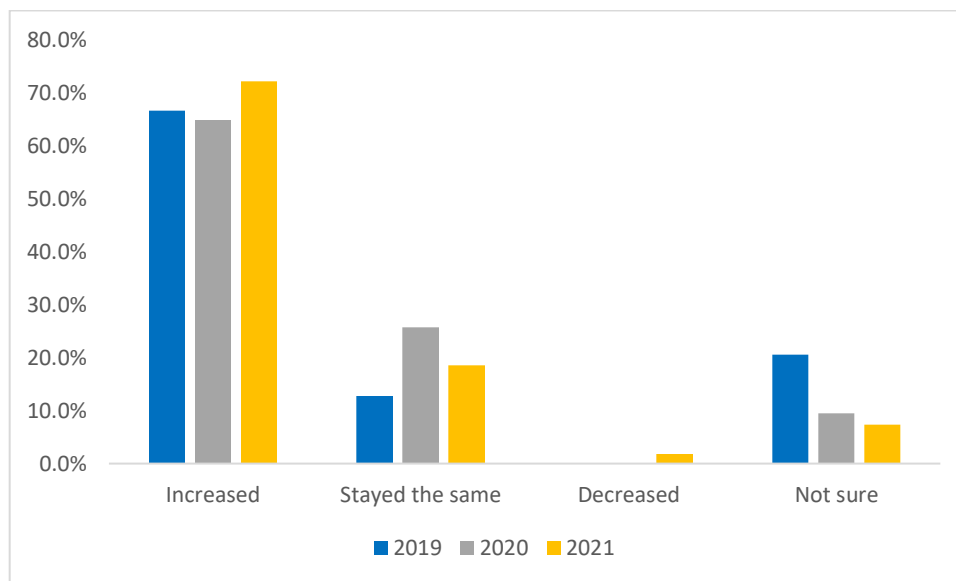
- Sales & employee information
- GST and PST are essentially the same information that is reported to both tax agencies
- Payroll to provincial and federal level
- Company name, sales, taxes, costs, employees, financials, tax forms from CRA, banking information, emails, contact information
- PTT and LOTR forms
- Licensing requirements
- Revenue
- Proper accounting of funds received
- Environmental/traffic data
- Business number

Question 10

Overall cost of compliance with government regulations in last 2 years



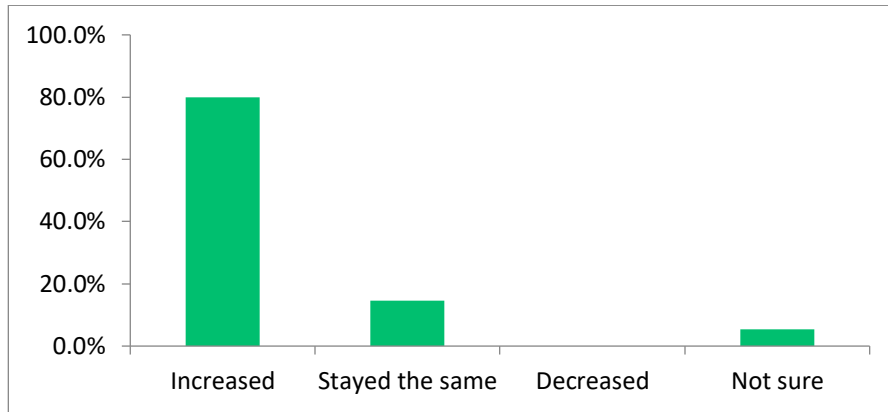
An overwhelming number of respondents indicated that cost of compliance has increased in the last two years. This is consistent with the surveys since 2019. There have been more regulations implemented ranging from permits, environmental assessment practices, consultation practices, and taxes. One respondent indicated that cost of compliance has decreased.



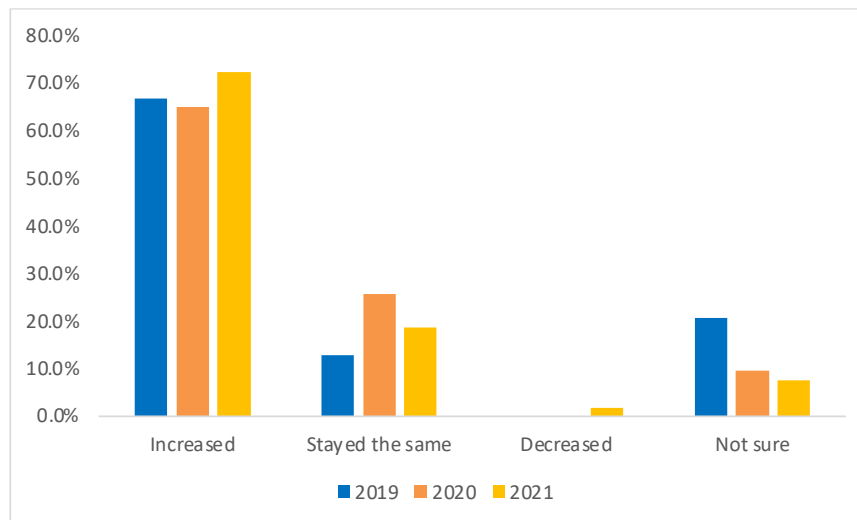
The cost of compliance is increasing, although one respondent did indicate that the cost has decreased.

Question 11

Overall time it takes to comply with government regulations in last 2 years



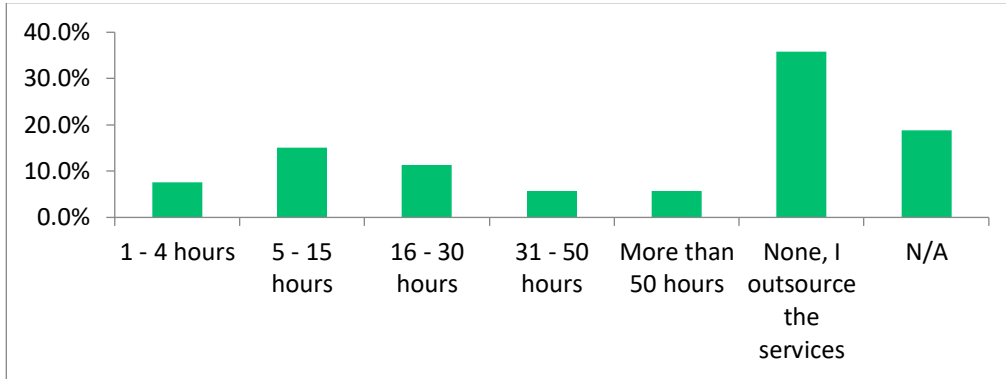
As with the cost of compliance, the time it takes to comply has increased, according to the membership. The business community is unable to innovate or scale up if they are continuously hammered with new and increasingly complicated regulations and red tape.



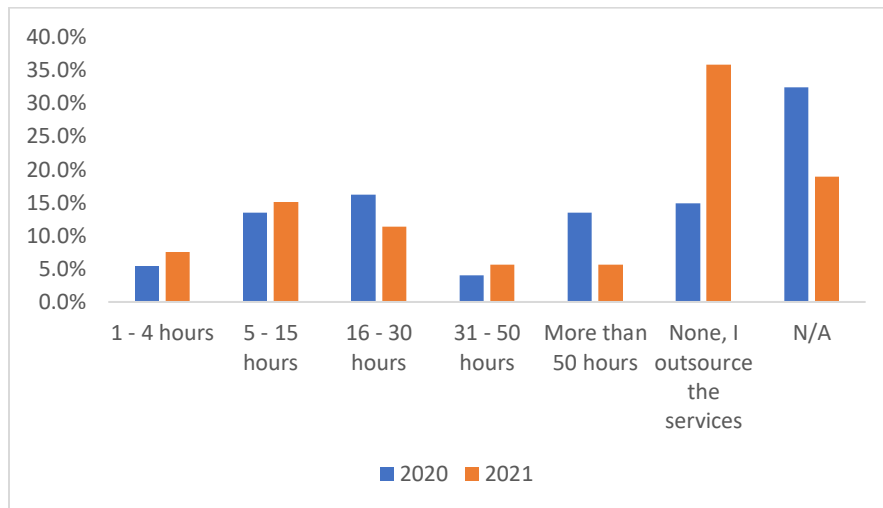
Over the last three years, the data shows the time it takes to comply with government regulations has increased.

Question 12

Time spent on last business income tax return

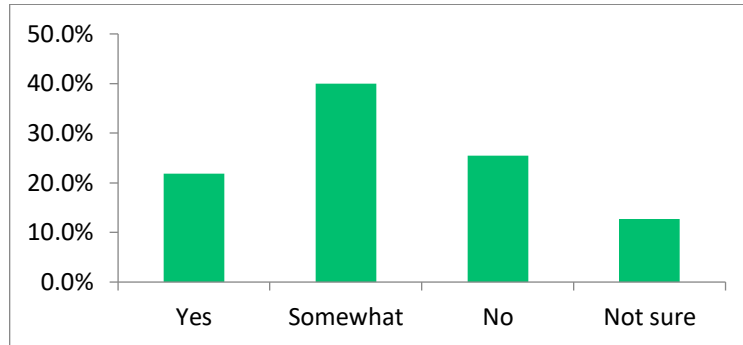


More than a quarter of the respondents (26.4%) spent between 5 and 30 hours filing their last business income tax return. Many of the respondents (35.9%) are now outsourcing the work to complete income tax returns, which is consistent with data from last year’s survey, although more respondents did not file their taxes as the various levels of government afforded businesses with extensions or deferment to 2021. This may be seen as a boon for the government as jobs are being created and time is being allocated to innovate and grow the business. There is, however, still a large portion of businesses that cannot afford to outsource – over 45% – that spend between 1-50+ hours completing business income tax returns.

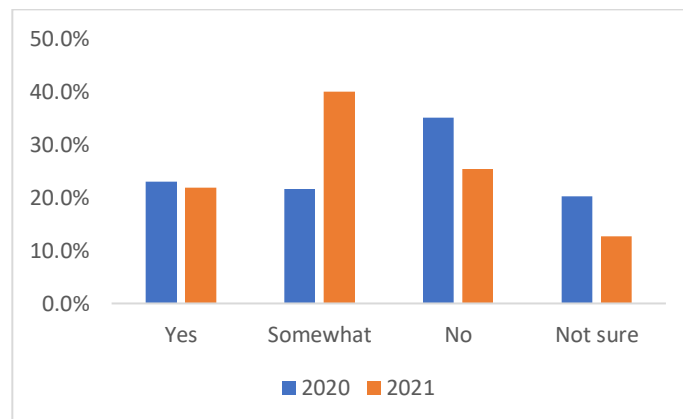


Question 13

Is compliance with regulatory requirements preventing your business from making changes to grow?



In this question, respondents were asked if regulatory requirements prevent their businesses from growing. An interesting result occurred this year; more respondents indicated that regulatory compliance is not impacting their ability to innovate and grow. There are many who indeed did indicate there is some impact – 61.8% stated that there is an impact.



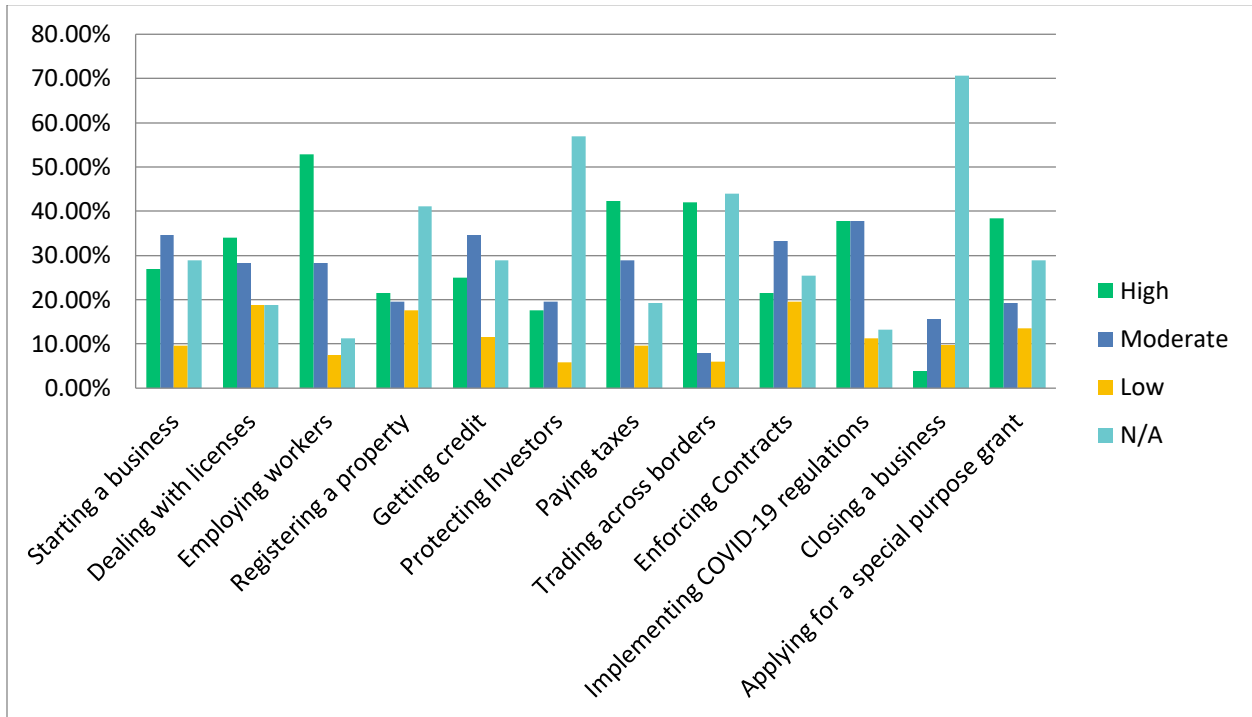
Although regulations are a necessary part of doing business, there is room for improvement. If regulations hinder growth, governments need to look at policy and assess whether the regulations can change so that Canada can maintain a competitive edge in a globalized market. Assessing our regulations against that of other countries is a necessary to drive global growth and investments.

We asked our respondents to provide us with an indication as to what regulations were impeding growth. The following responses were collected:

- We are unable to allocate time and resources to hiring more staff due to the time we lose on complying
- The cost of compliance - money going towards taxes and services I use to pay taxes - could be used for buying more properties, growing my company

- Our permitting process with the City of Surrey is such that we took 2 years to get our outdoor patio development permit approved and built. Repeated delays in city hall as the process is designed to waste time and money for architects, designers and engineers and cost us over \$40K to comply
- Time spent on all the regulatory requirements can be used to grow the business. We are always in favor of one window one tax system. Anything to do with business license at the federal, provincial and municipal environment should be dealt at one level.
- Budget revised to accommodate these expenses
- Value added products have more stringent requirements
- The Canada/United States border is a problem for us, we have essential items and the border officials deem our business non-essential, we can't move people properly between Canada and the United States
- Can't increase fleet size, can't offer competitive pricing
- Reduced numbers for events, events cancelled
- How to incorporate the new directives with our current vision/mission
- The staff required to comply are not looking to manage and grow the company

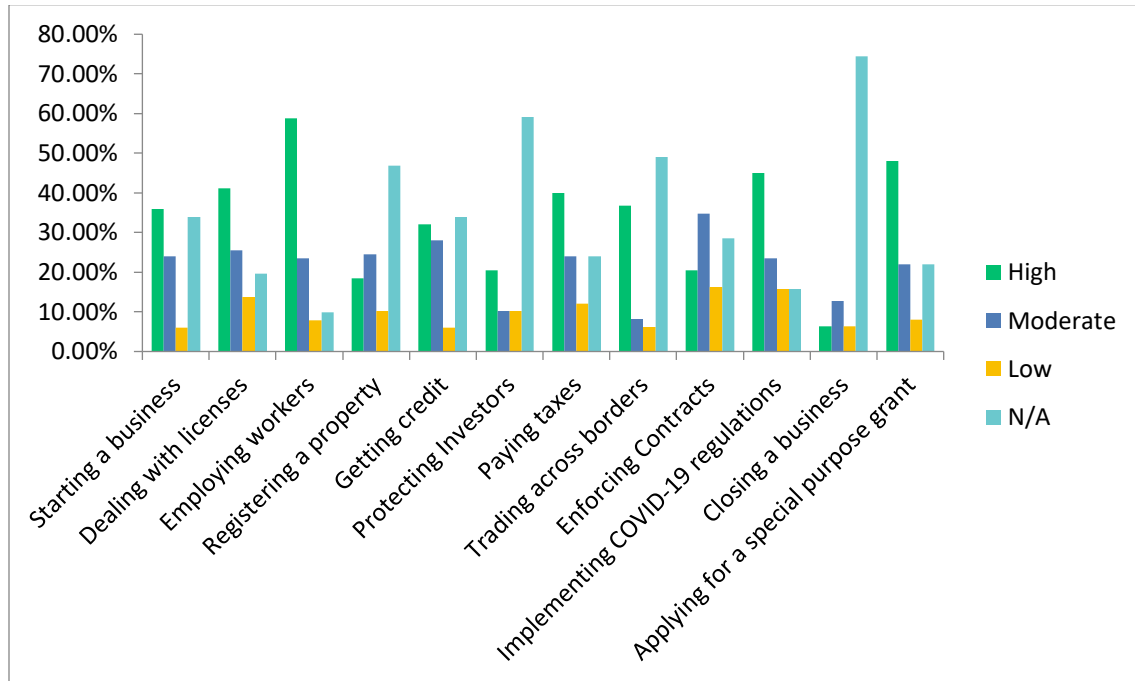
Question 14
Rating the cost of compliance



Respondents were asked to rate the options on how costly it is to comply. The options given were high, moderate, low, and not applicable. Respondents indicated that employing workers and implementing COVID-19 regulations are highly or moderately costly in terms of compliance at 81.1% and 75.5% respectively. Businesses indicated that paying taxes is highly or moderately costly in terms of compliance at 71.2%.

Question 15

Rating the time it takes to comply

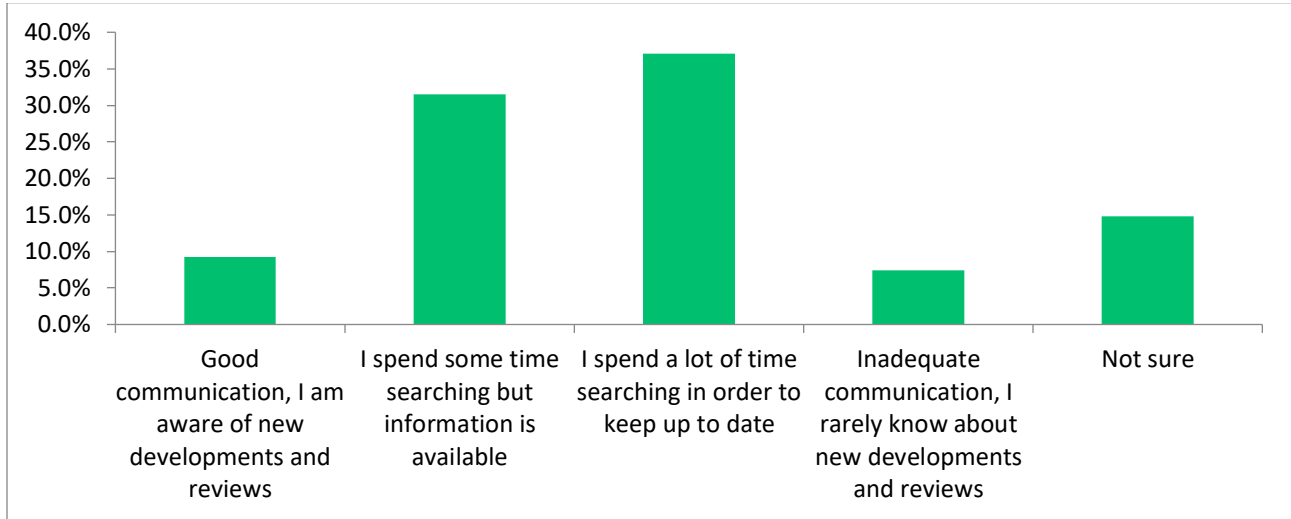


Respondents were asked to rate how long it takes to comply with the options listed from high, moderate, low, and not applicable. The respondents indicated again that employing workers takes the most time, with 82.4% indicating the time it takes is high or moderate.

There were 70% of respondents that felt that compliance for applying for a special purpose grant took a lot of time. Finally, 68.6% of respondents felt that implementing COVID-19 regulations took a high or moderate amount of time to comply.

Question 16

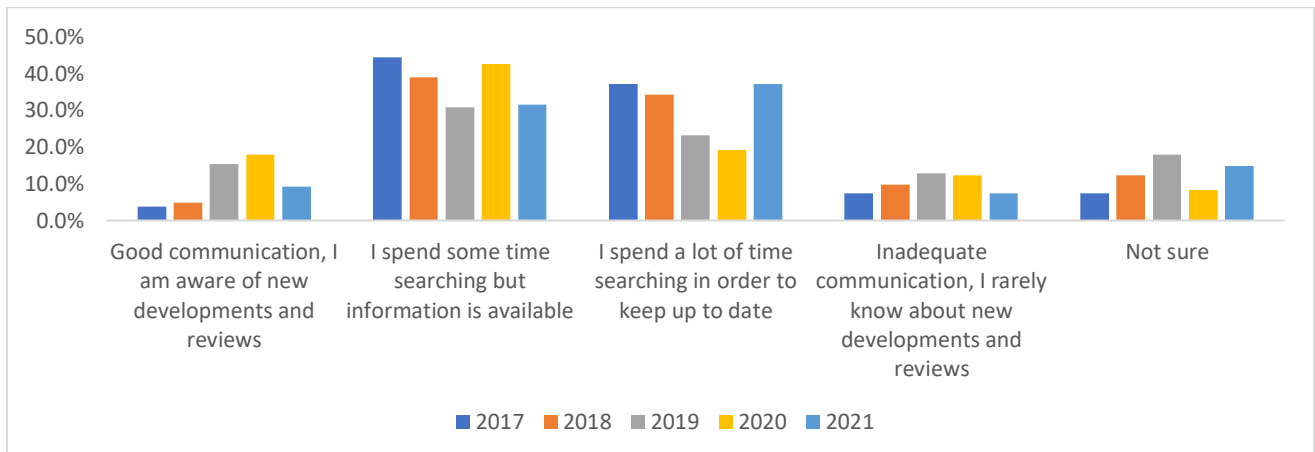
Communication effectiveness with federal government



The Federal Government is the best equipped to disseminate knowledge compared to local and provincial governments. The Federal Government has the most capital available to provide information to provinces and municipalities, that would then disseminate the information further using their own communication mechanisms.

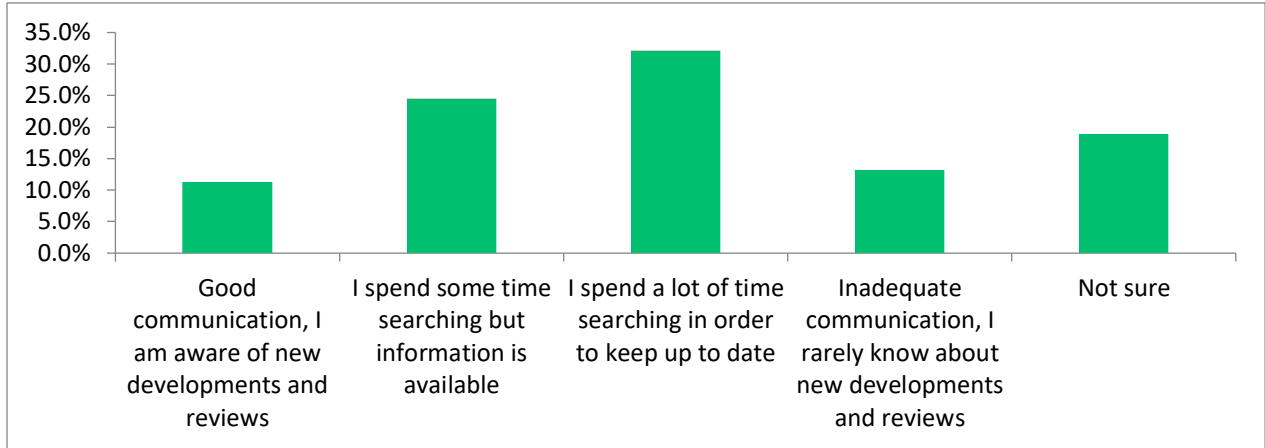
There are, however, shortcomings. The fact that over 44.5% of the respondents indicated that they spend a lot of time searching to keep up to date and that they rarely know about new developments and reviews reveals that the government still needs to improve their capabilities.

Communication effectiveness is getting worse. When comparing 2021 with the previous years, more respondents indicate that the communication levels are not great. COVID-19 has made many more people aware and wanting more information.

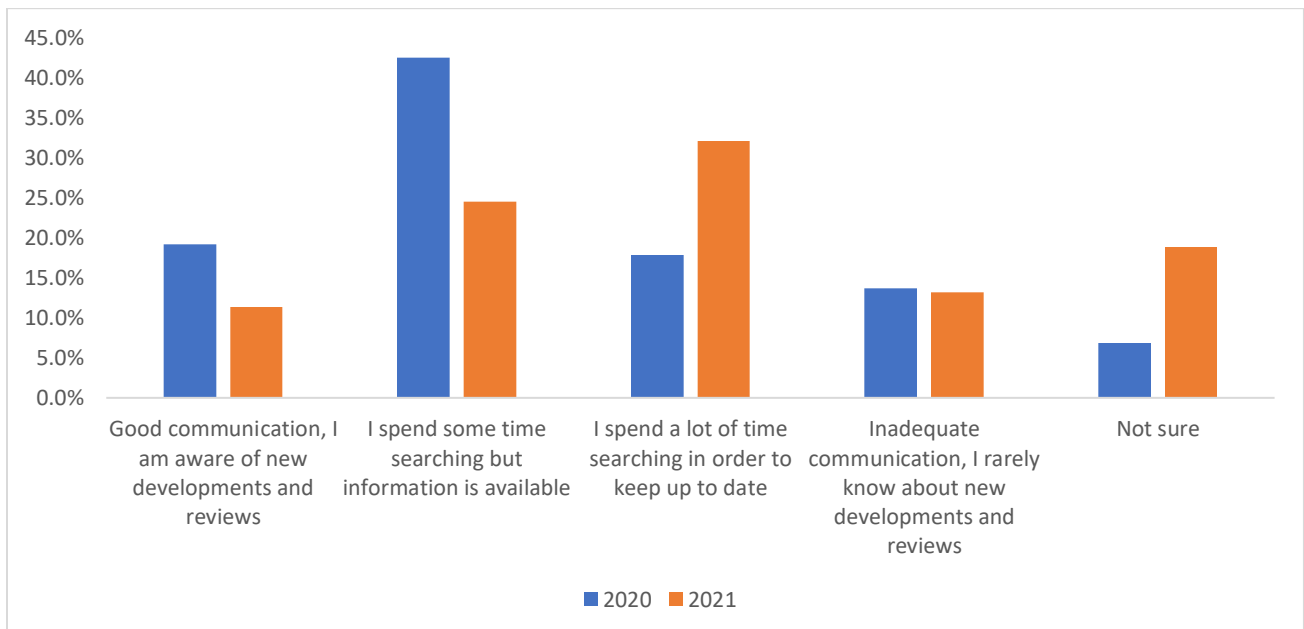


Question 17

Communication effectiveness with provincial government

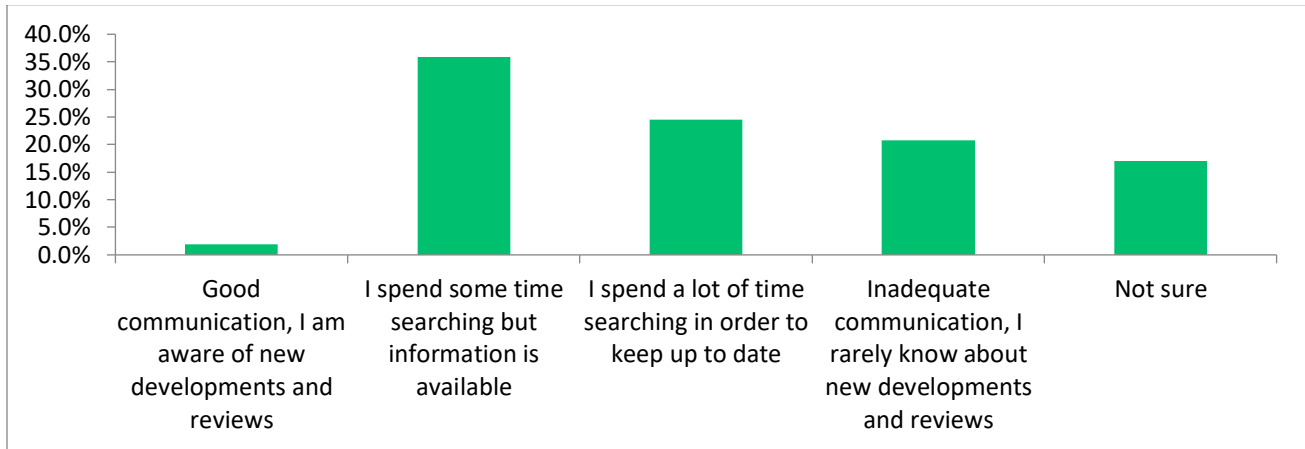


At the provincial level, a large majority believe the Government is relatively effective at disseminating information. Only 35.9% believe that information is readily available or that the Provincial Government is effective at communicating information. Over 45% of respondents indicated that they spent a lot of time searching for information or felt the government was inadequate in communicating information. The Provincial Government should continue to research ways to disseminate information broadly other than news releases that not everyone subscribes to or is even aware of.



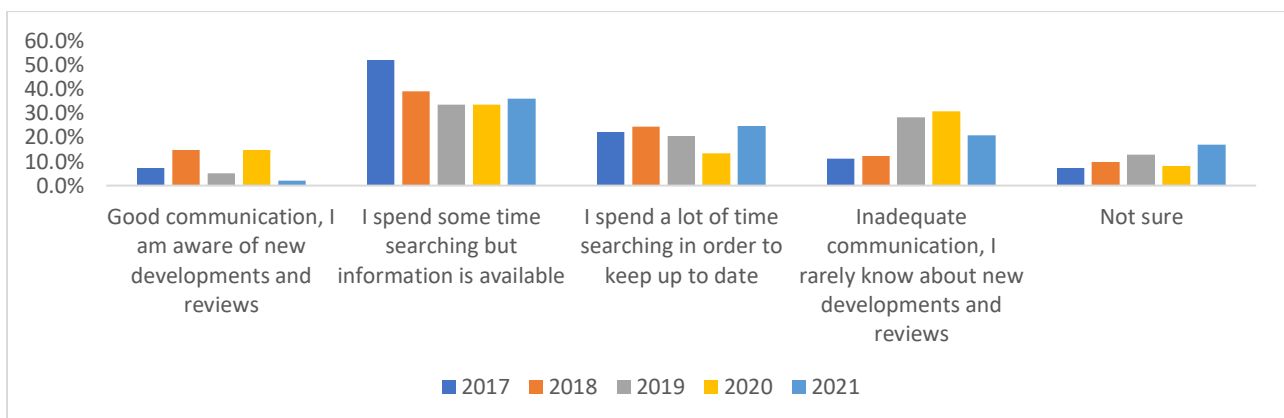
Question 18

Communication effectiveness with local government



While 37.7% indicated that the City of Surrey offers good communication, or only spent some time searching for information, 45.3% indicated that the information dissemination mechanisms are lacking (they spent a lot of time searching for information or found that communication was inadequate). The City of Surrey can become more effective in providing information to the public and the business community.

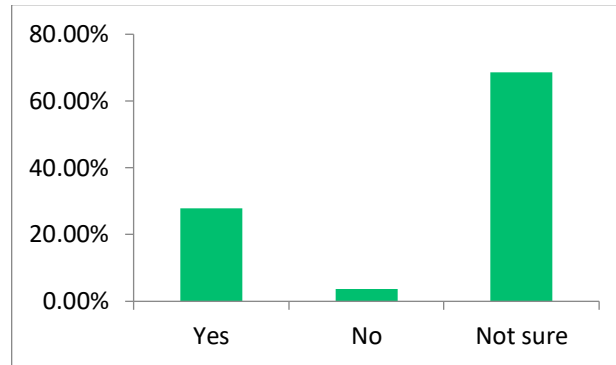
There are ways to relay information more effectively other than through email and the newspaper. The local government could utilize transformative information transfer processes such as signs along major highways and roadways. Many cities have large electronic billboards that display real-time information.



Historically, the City has not been consistent with their communications. When examining how many respondents chose that the City’s communication efforts are inadequate, there has been a rising trend, while those indicating that they spend some time searching for information has been steadily declining over the last two years.

Question 19

Opportunity to streamline reporting and make it less of a burden on business



Government has an issue with redundancy and inefficiency. There are many options to create efficiency. Such solutions include streamlining, utilizing technology effectively, and improving the lines of communication.

Over 27% of the respondents of this year's survey indicated that there is an opportunity to streamline reporting.

Interestingly, there were many (68.5%) that were unsure whether there was any opportunity to streamline reporting. This may be because there were some respondents who were employees and do not deal with the reporting aspect.

Question 20

Suggestions to streamline reporting

As a follow-up to the previous question, this year we asked for recommendations on what streamlining would look like to the respondent. Recommendations included:

- Authorities could share up-to-date information of your business
- CRA needs to be able to provide fax if they can accept faxed documents
- Technology improvements at all reporting agencies
- Permitting and licensing at the City need to be expedited
- There should be one window where you can do anything to do with business including: tax, payroll, GST, business license, environmental study, employment standards, hiring foreign workers, etc. Also, one tax and one tax rate. No GST /PST /payroll/ extra tax on payroll/ property tax, business licence, carbon tax
- All provincial documents could be filed as one (WCB, EHT, PST, possibly CRA and GST)
- Creating report templates is helpful, which helps our business understand exactly what information the government is seeking
- Remove the burden of monthly filing for certain aspects to annually if your revenue is under \$5 million
- Have the PST rebate program enhanced and reduce required reporting
- Make the information and requirements easier to find and understandable
- Businesses with business licences should receive regular email/newsletters from the City. We have two locations, Surrey and Vancouver and do not receive any information unless we subscribe. I recognize there are compliance issues i.e. PIPEDA regarding sending emails unless otherwise authorized but when you renew your business licence online, there should be an option to "tick" if you'd like to receive updates from the City of Surrey.
- If a company can provide key information, that can then be accessed across governmental organizations, versus often starting from scratch, it would help - with company permission and/or consent (to remove the privacy excuses) a lot of time could be saved
- Consistency with message and empower government workers to take calculated risk and reward if successful

Question 21

Greatest impact on reducing the cost of compliance

	Definitely!	Would probably help	Possible	Not really	No impact	Not sure
Reduce the frequency of reporting requirements to a minimum	50.0%	14.6%	14.6%	6.3%	4.2%	10.4%
Agencies sharing information and making sure there are no duplicate information requirements	45.8%	27.1%	16.7%	2.1%	0.0%	8.3%
Better communication and consultation with businesses when developing new regulations	52.1%	27.1%	8.3%	2.1%	2.1%	8.3%
Improving accessibility of web-based reporting	47.9%	27.1%	12.5%	4.2%	2.1%	6.3%
One agency which collects all required information	54.2%	18.8%	8.3%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%

Respondents were asked which of the above options would reduce the cost associated with compliance to regulations the most. The respondents were able to rate these options on a scale of definitely helping and having no impact. The respondents were also able to indicate if they were unsure of the impact.

Agencies sharing information and making sure there are no duplicate information requirements is key to reducing the cost of compliance, where 89.6% agreed that it would provide some sort of benefit. 87.5% of respondents indicated that better communication and consultation with businesses when developing new regulations would reduce costs of compliance. Coming in third, improving accessibility of web-based reporting would be effective in reducing costs.

A few respondents chose 'Other' as an option. These respondents indicated the following:

- WorkSafeBC, bylaw, and CRA should understand the industry they are monitoring, reviewing, auditing.
- WorkSafeBC can be paid through the CRA - reduces red tape and centralizes the payroll deductions.
- An incentive and disincentive system for government employees to innovate, take risks, and streamline the process.

Question 22

Level of red tape in dealing with federal and provincial regulatory authorities

	High	Moderate	Low	N/A
Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)	56.3%	25.0%	12.5%	6.3%
Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA)	27.1%	14.6%	8.3%	50.0%
PST	21.3%	23.4%	10.6%	44.7%
BC Business Registry	10.4%	27.1%	31.3%	31.3%
My LTSA - Land Titles Directory	10.4%	16.7%	12.5%	60.4%
BC Assessment	16.7%	20.8%	16.7%	45.8%
WorkSafeBC	29.2%	31.3%	22.9%	16.7%

Over 81.3% of respondents indicated that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has moderate to high levels of red tape at the federal level. The unnecessary audits, the time it takes to gather information, and the difficulty in getting answers from the CRA is a hinderance on business and economic growth.

There were over 60.4% of respondents that indicated WorkSafeBC as being overly onerous on businesses at the provincial level, ranking the agency as having moderate to high level of red tape.

We asked if there were other agencies that had excessive red tape.

Respondents indicated the following agencies:

- Licensing bodies
- Biggest issue is getting through to a live agent to talk to them
- Insurance Council
- Members of Parliament
- City of Surrey bylaw interpreting COVID-19 rules
- ICBC, National Safety Code, Passenger Transportation Board
- Ministries of Health and/or Environment

Question 23

Level of red tape in dealing with various local government regulations

	High	Moderate	Low	N/A
Building & Construction Permits - From submission to completion	63.8%	2.1%	2.1%	31.9%
Building & Construction - Inspections	53.2%	8.5%	2.1%	36.2%
Building & Construction - Fees	53.2%	10.6%	4.3%	31.9%
Building & Construction - Public Hearing Process	45.7%	4.4%	2.2%	47.8%
Bylaw & Licensing Forms - Business Licenses	48.9%	21.3%	19.2%	10.6%
Bylaw & Licensing Forms - All Others	38.3%	19.2%	12.8%	29.8%
Engineering Services - All	42.6%	12.8%	6.4%	38.3%
City Services (Sanitation, Waste, Water)	38.3%	10.6%	12.8%	38.3%
City Online Services	33.3%	15.6%	24.4%	26.7%
Property Tax/Payment Services	29.8%	14.9%	29.8%	25.5%
Complaints & Resolutions	31.9%	17.0%	8.5%	42.6%

The development and construction industry in the local economy has had chronic issues related to getting projects approved and completed. Due to COVID-19, the City of Surrey has made many innovative changes to streamline operations and moving towards online permitting processes. Unfortunately, there is still much to do for other business services the City provides.

The top three red tape choices for individuals when combining high and moderate level selections are:

- Bylaw & Licensing Forms - Business Licenses 70.2% (up from 60.3% in 2020);
- Building & Construction Permits - from submission to completion 66% (up from 55.6% in 2020); and,
- Building & Construction – Fees 63.8% (up from 50.8% in 2020).

The two options selected that had the least red tape are:

- Property Tax/Payment Services (29.8%); and,
- City Online Services (24.4%).

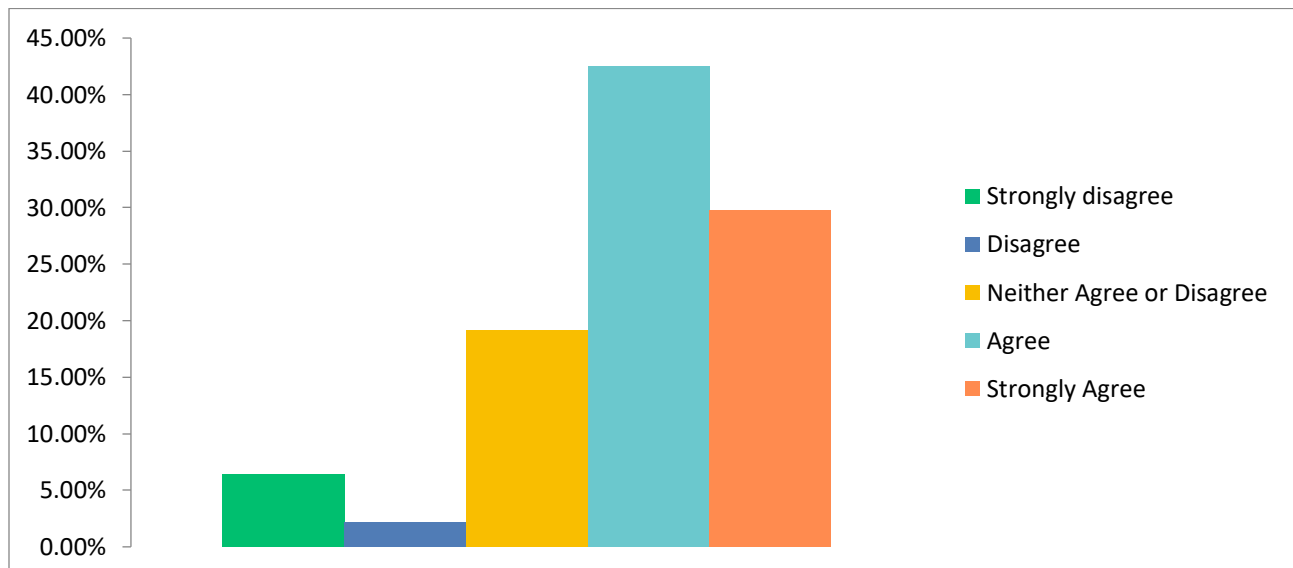
Overall, the red tape at the local level associated with building is leading to housing insecurity. Most of the results lead to high costs to build, which are then pushed onto the consumer.

	Moderate to High Levels of Red Tape	
	2020	2021
Building & Construction Permits - From submission to completion	55.6%	66.0%
Building & Construction - Inspections	52.4%	61.7%
Building & Construction - Fees	50.8%	63.8%
Building & Construction - Public Hearing Process	49.2%	50.0%
Bylaw & Licensing Forms - Business Licenses	60.3%	70.2%
Bylaw & Licensing Forms - All Others	57.1%	57.5%
Engineering Services - All	50.8%	55.3%
City Services (Sanitation, Waste, Water)	48.4%	48.9%
City Online Services	47.6%	48.9%
Property Tax/Payment Services	39.7%	44.7%
Complaints & Resolutions	53.2%	48.9%

Between 2020 and 2021, we noticed that the issues with the local government have increased. Building & Construction Permits - from submission to completion increased red tape in 2021, which is still the second highest. Building & Construction – Fees increased in red tape in 2021, which became the new third highest. Bylaw & Licensing Forms - Business Licenses increased red tape in 2021, which is still the highest reported burden.

Question 24

Change in cost of compliance or time spent on regulatory compliance since COVID-19



We asked respondents if they think the cost of compliance or time spent on regulatory compliance has increased since COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, the majority agreed with 72.3% stating that they agree or strongly agree.

Question 25

Top 3 local/ municipal red tape barriers to business

This year, at the request of the City of Surrey, we included a question that allows respondents to clearly indicate their top three red tape barriers to business. The table below indicates the respondents first, second, and third responses.⁴

First	Second	Third
Length of time for permits	Lack of communication between departments	Requirements that are not really necessary
City business license approvals	Development/improvement permit approvals	Lack of knowledge
High prices	Slow process	High taxes
Getting through to a live person who can correctly assist you	Sometimes not web based	Permits
Development approvals	Delay in processing permits	Lack of competency/ inconsistency in people you deal with
Land development - availability of industrial land	Any process at municipal level takes 5 times more than it should	Building permit should be issued in 1 week - development permit in one month
Getting proper information	Being made aware of changes effecting my business	Getting to the correct department in a feasible time
Licensing	Duplication of information	
Business licenses and zoning	Property taxes	Utility services (water)
Licensing	Insufficient responses to complex problems	Lack of transparency
Engineering & permit approval	Municipal taxes	Lack of transparency
People not able to define the person who can make decisions	Insufficient responses to complex problems	Lack of follow through to fix major issues
Building/renovation permit	Development approvals - environmental related	Duplicate reporting
Finding someone to call back	Finding someone who will listen	Finding someone who cares
Getting information about requirements	Having some way to ask questions	Getting access to the same answer from everyone
Land applications	Servicing contracts	
Processing applications	Response time	
Booking time for "inspectors" to come onsite to approve business license	Inspections	
Property tax related - relative to municipal involvement	Availability of funds to comply with item#1	
Building permits	Building division	
SSO directives		
Risk adverse/lack of ability to innovate with gov't employees		

⁴ Many responses were removed because they were not related to municipal barriers or did not answer the question fully.

Question 26

Top 3 provincial red tape barriers to business

We also included a question asking respondents to rank their top three provincial-level red tape barriers.

First	Second	Third
PST requirements are hard to understand	Lack of knowledgeable people	Length of time to get answers & differing answers from different people
Waste discharge	Taxes	No negotiation is available
Too slow for turnaround time	Not inclusive enough from business community; need fresh people	Lack of knowledge
High prices	Slow process	High taxes
Getting through	Not rewarding innovation	Getting to the right department in a feasible time
Inadequate policy making	Unfair treatment within the same industry	Access of information even the government employees are not clear about their own programs
Different kind of taxes PST/EHT - one window one tax would be a good idea	Information and requirements for different government programs: business, environmental, grants, WCB are very complex	Rewarding group thinking
Getting proper information	Being made aware of changes effecting my business	Recycling fees
Difficulty finding contact information for bureaucrats	Longer waiting hours when phoning agency	
Employee wages and benefits standards guidelines	Property tax related - relative to provincial involvement	
Staff working from home - delayed response	Time of process	
Useless MLA's that do not return calls or emails	Form letters with information you already know from the Ministry	
PST rebate program		
Not a level playing field		
Payroll reporting		
Permits		
Accessibility		
Environmental Regulatory Approvals Process to close a cleaned up contaminated site in BC - BC is the most expensive in North America, and most countries globally!		

Question 27

Top 3 federal red tape barriers to business

We asked about federal-level red tape barriers as well.

First	Second	Third
Length of time to get help	No explanations for reporting	No understanding of business
CEWS has been great	Its Covid. See above.	
Realign closer with local issues regarding hiring workers	Immigration policies take too long for approvals regarding students	Not in sync with provincial counterparts
High prices	Slow process	High taxes
Getting through	CMHC - even the employees who run the CMHC programs are not clear.	No clarity and proper flow of information on most of programs.
Inadequate policy making	Being made aware of changes effecting my business	No process for resolving issues within a reasonable time period
CRA - difficult and complex procedures on almost all programs	Export permits and documentation	Getting to the correct department in a feasible time
Getting proper information		
Difficulty finding contact information for bureaucrats		
Regulatory decisions on facility		
CRA		
Members of Parliament		
Licensing with Health Canada - the time and lack of communication		
Spending 4 hours on hold when account has been hacked		
Taxes		
Length of time to get help		

Question 29

Final thoughts

As we have in previous iterations of the survey, we asked if respondents had any further suggestions or comments that were not discussed in previous questions. Key themes emerged in the responses offered. They include:

- Regulatory branches and agencies should be honest with the wait times and time it takes for approval;
- Sole proprietorships and property owners that lease buildings have not been supported through the pandemic;
- One agency collecting information is best. But here in Surrey it takes a lot of time (weeks to months) for one department to get information from other department while working in the same office building; and,
- We must find new solutions to hold paid elected leadership officials accountable for their decisions and their actions.

3. CONCLUSION

Businesses in the Lower Mainland have struggled through the pandemic and require red tape reductions to help them to recover. Therefore, the Surrey Board of Trade concludes that local, provincial, and federal governments must reduce red tape. The business community is unable to innovate or scale up if they are continuously hammered with new and increasingly complicated regulations and red tape. The members that experience high amounts of red tape include the construction and the professional services sector, although the service sector (including restaurants, and others) has seen an increase in regulatory burden because of COVID-19.

Several respondents indicated that the cost of compliance has increased in the last two years. All levels of government need to reassess their policies and regulations to provide an economic environment that permits growth and innovation. Without drastic change, our job creators will shut down, economic prosperity will dwindle, and industry will seek greener pastures in less regulatory-intensive countries.

Over 30% of respondents spend between 1-30 hours on business income tax returns. The government must innovate the way that incomes taxes can be filed, and how data is collected as SMEs are suffering from this overburden. Governments can see that there is opportunity to increase growth and innovation in the business community by creating efficiencies in reporting and paying taxes.

Canada's competitive edge is dwindling. Considering an economic slowdown due to COVID-19 and a potential recession, Canada's competitive edge is only growing weaker. It is for this reason that the Surrey Board of Trade calls on the political leaders of the local, provincial, and federal governments to act and preserve the economy.

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