
OPINION-EDITORIAL

Making things easier, one regulation at a time

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March 2nd marks the first-ever Red Tape Reduction Day in British Columbia. It is a day to reflect on some of the ways that we can make things easier for small businesses in this province by cutting red tape and streamlining regulatory requirements.

As part of these efforts, restaurants now have greater flexibility for customers who want to enjoy a cocktail as restaurants are no longer required to provide a separate lounge area. Plus, we've created an online guide that makes it easier for prospective restaurateurs to find information at one convenient location about the various agencies, steps and requirements involved in opening a restaurant. B.C. wine, beer and spirit producers are now able to sell their wares at artisan markets, like craft fairs, throughout the province. We've also simplified the Request for Proposal form and reduced the paperwork burden for small business owners who can now quickly and easily bid for government contracts and increase opportunities to grow their businesses.

Our goal is to make provincial services easier to access and simpler to use. That's why as part of Red Tape Reduction Day we released our report on the public engagement we held this fall. We asked British Columbians for their ideas to reduce red tape and received more than 400 ideas, including over 100 ideas from small businesses. People shared their frustrations and their simple fixes to help cut red tape.

We listened. And we're taking action on your ideas. We are working to enhance the search process on government websites so that small business owners can find the contacts and the resources they need faster. We are also including small-business-specific content in the training curriculum for applicable front-line staff at WorkSafeBC. We are simplifying the business tax return process by expanding the Ministry of Finance's e-Tax platform.

These improvements would not have been possible if it weren't for the thoughtful and inspiring ideas coming out of this engagement. But this engagement on reducing red tape for British Columbians was just the start of a conversation. We heard from Brenda of Brenda's Bouquets, who thought that having a way to submit ideas all the time would be "a valuable tool for small business owners by giving them a quick 'point of contact' for any inefficiencies they encounter." We listened to people like Brenda, and today we launched a new suggestion button on the BC government home page – www.gov.bc.ca, where people can now submit ideas to reduce red tape 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

All of these actions will simplify processes so that business owners can focus on what they do best; running their businesses. We believe British Columbians are the experts when it comes to cutting red tape – so keep those ideas coming.

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