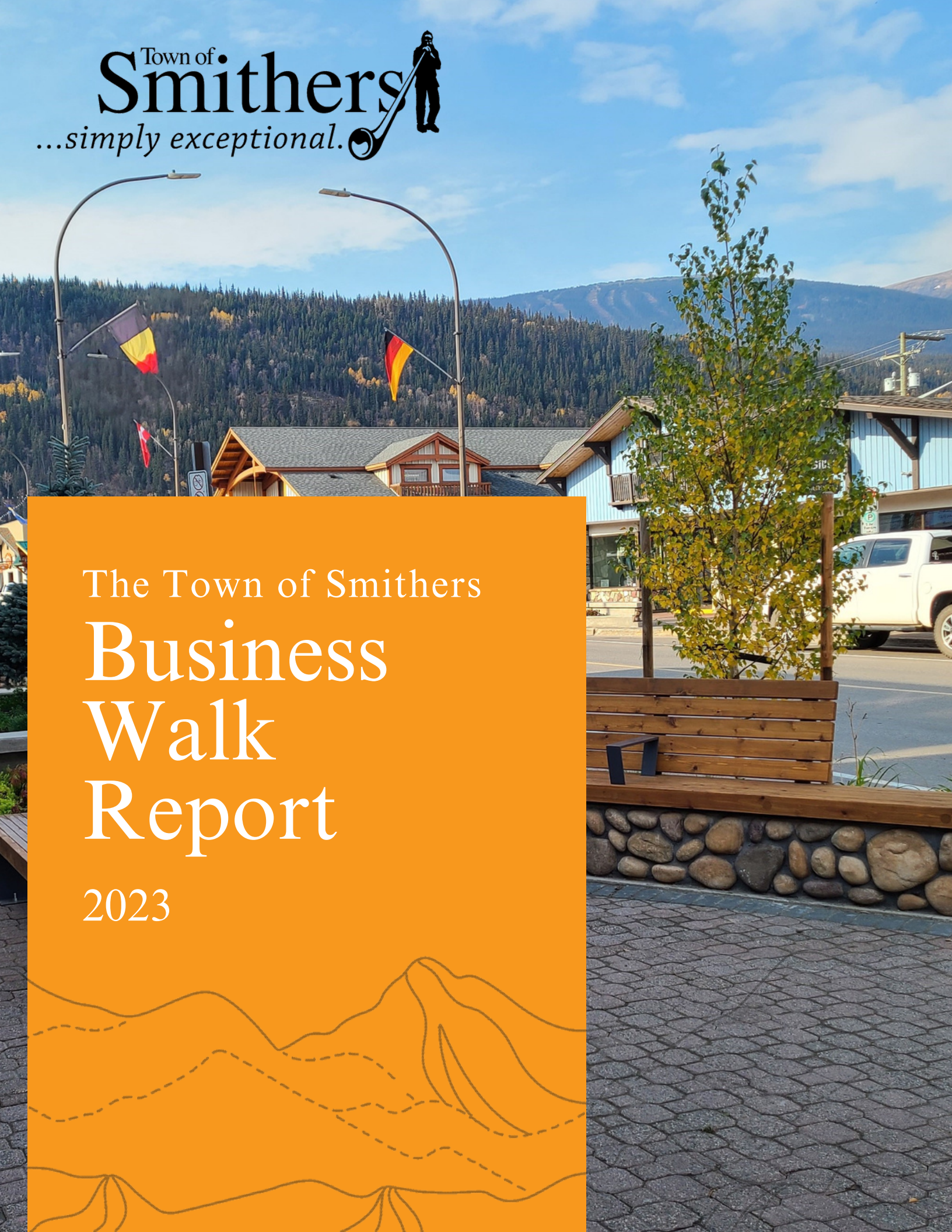


The Town of Smithers

Business Walk Report

2023



Executive Summary

The Town of Smithers completed the 2023 Smithers Business Walk Program on Monday, June 26, 2023.

150 Businesses across various industries were surveyed by Town of Smithers Council, staff, and business support organizations.

The Smithers Business Walk Program is an annual event to share business support resources and strengthen communications between the Town of Smithers and the local business community. Information gathered during the Business Walk helps to inform Town of Smithers bylaw and policy reviews, grant opportunities, and new business support initiatives.

Businesses across various industries were visited during the Business Walk to ensure the program reflects the diversity of business in Smithers. This report is the compilation of data provided from individual businesses in our community. This data provides a picture of the unique opportunities and challenges in the local economy.

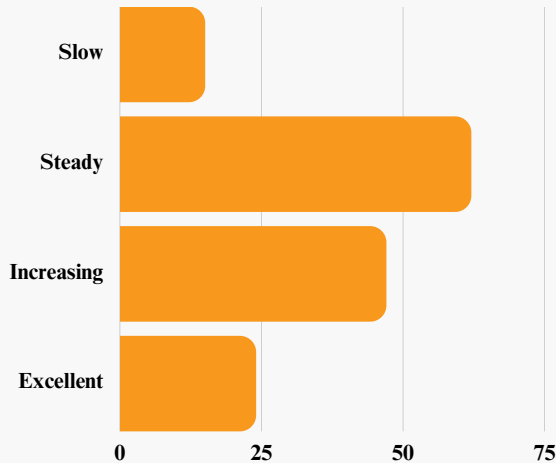
The 2023 Business Walk initiative was supported by:

Coast Mountain College
Government of Canada (Pacifcan)
Province of BC (JEDI)
Northern Development Initiative Trust
Regional District of Bulkley–Nechako
Kopar Administration (WorkBC)
Export Navigator
Community Futures Nadina
Smithers and District Chamber of Commerce
Smithers RCMP
Royal Bank of Canada
Bulkley Valley Credit Union

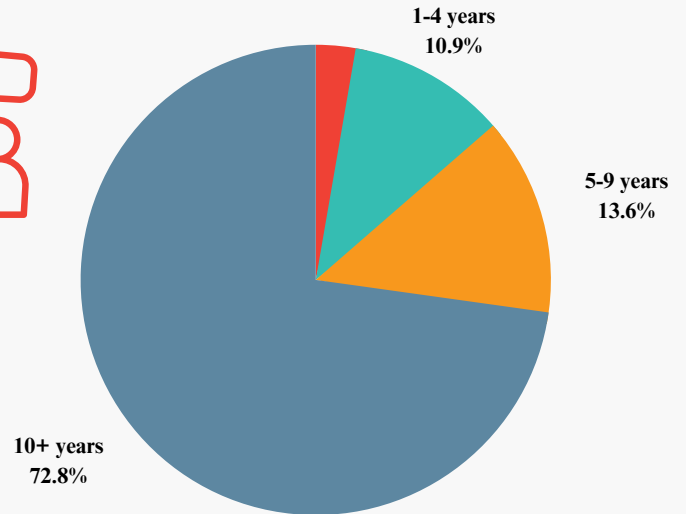
Highlights

Total Businesses Surveyed: 150

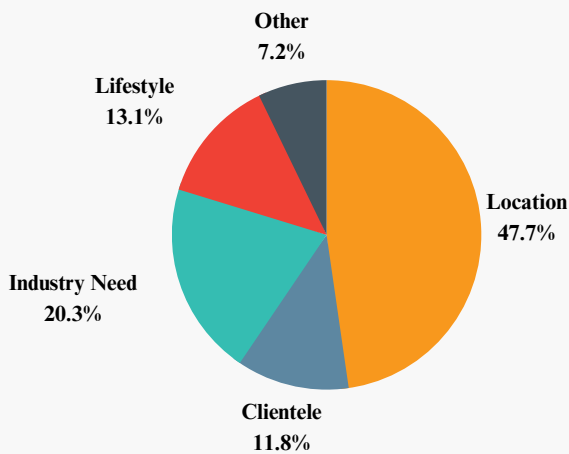
47% of respondents reported increasing or excellent levels of business.



Over 70% of businesses surveyed have been in businesses for 10+ years!



The local businesses surveyed employed a total of 3,507 individuals. **Staff Recruitment** and **Retention** are top challenges for businesses in Smithers.



Location was the main reason stated for doing business in the Bulkley Valley.

22% of businesses said they plan to sell or retire in the next five years.



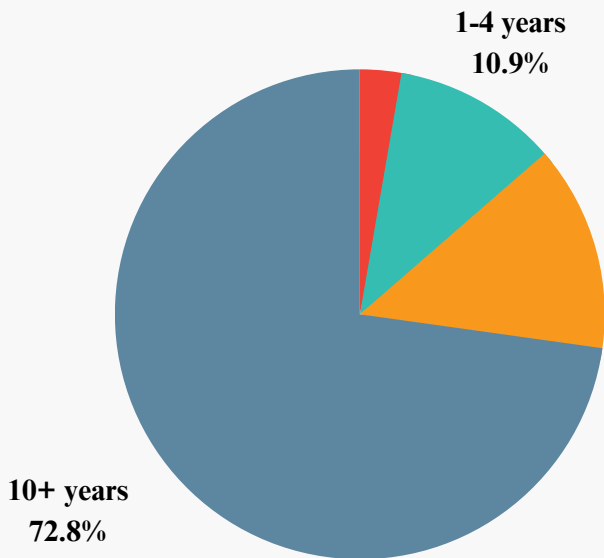
Business Climate



Total Businesses Surveyed: 150

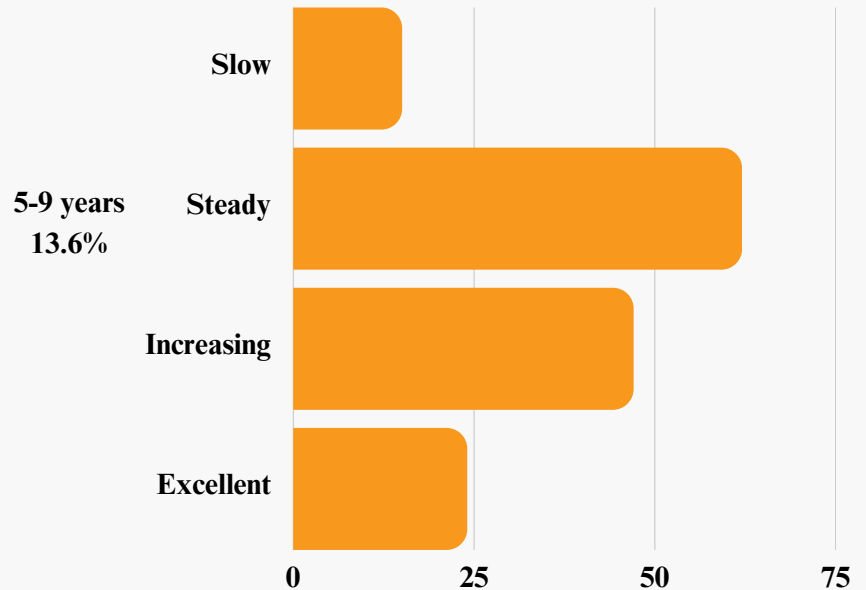
Years in Business

Of the 150 businesses surveyed, over **70%** have been in business for **10 years or more**.



How Business is Going

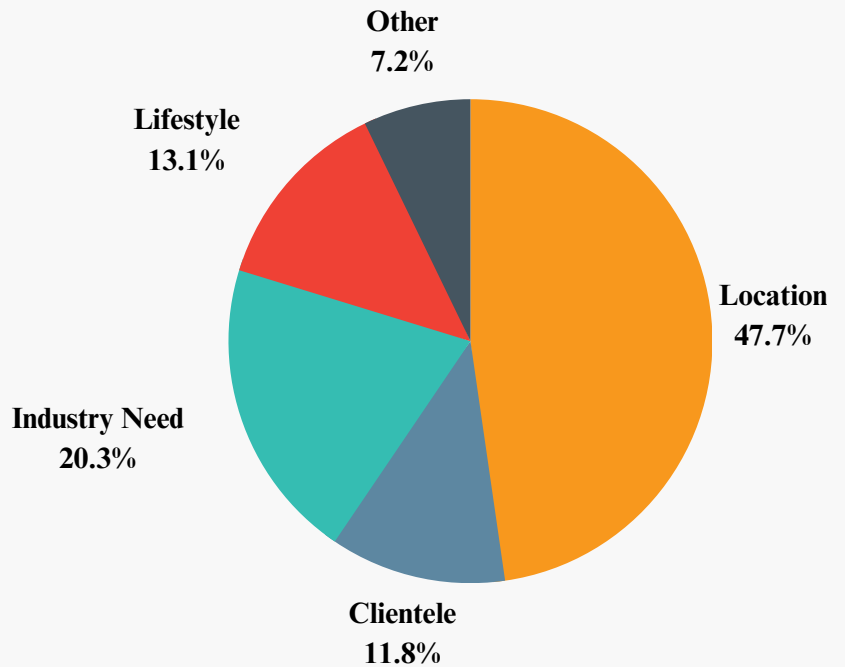
Approximately **90 percent** of businesses surveyed identified that business has been **steady, increasing, or excellent**.



Reasons for Doing Business



Location was the main reason stated for doing business in the Bulkley Valley. Many respondents mentioned that the Smithers area was their home and they enjoy the lifestyle the community provides, as well as being a hub for their industry. It was noted a need for their business services in the area made up for 20% of answers.

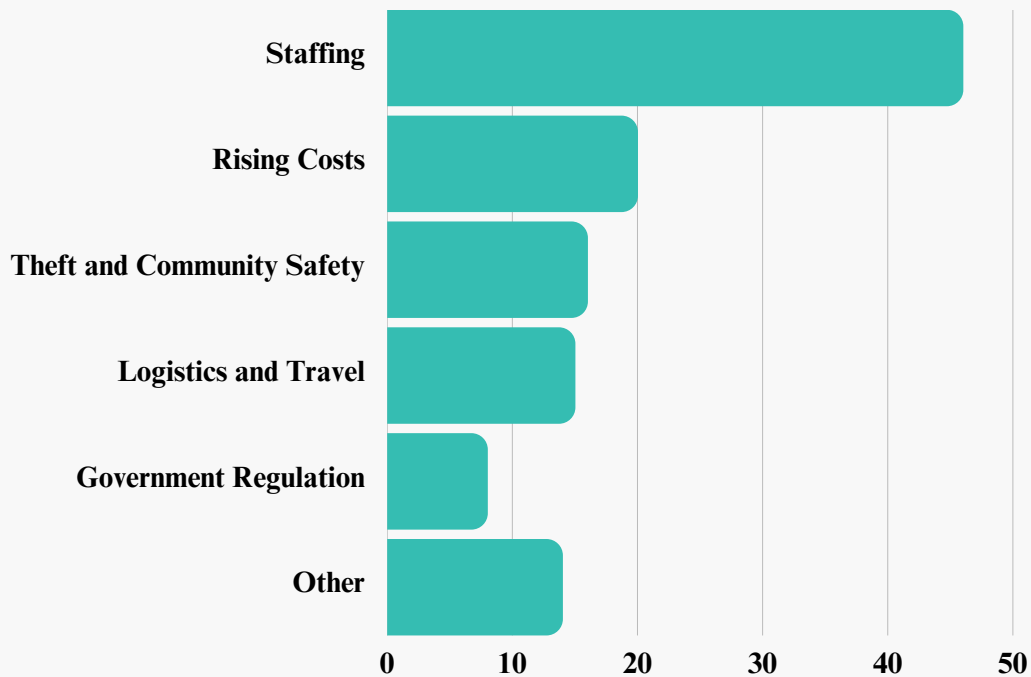


“Our business has been in Smithers for 60 yrs. Many businesses are growing and moving to the community.”
-Survey Respondent

Challenges



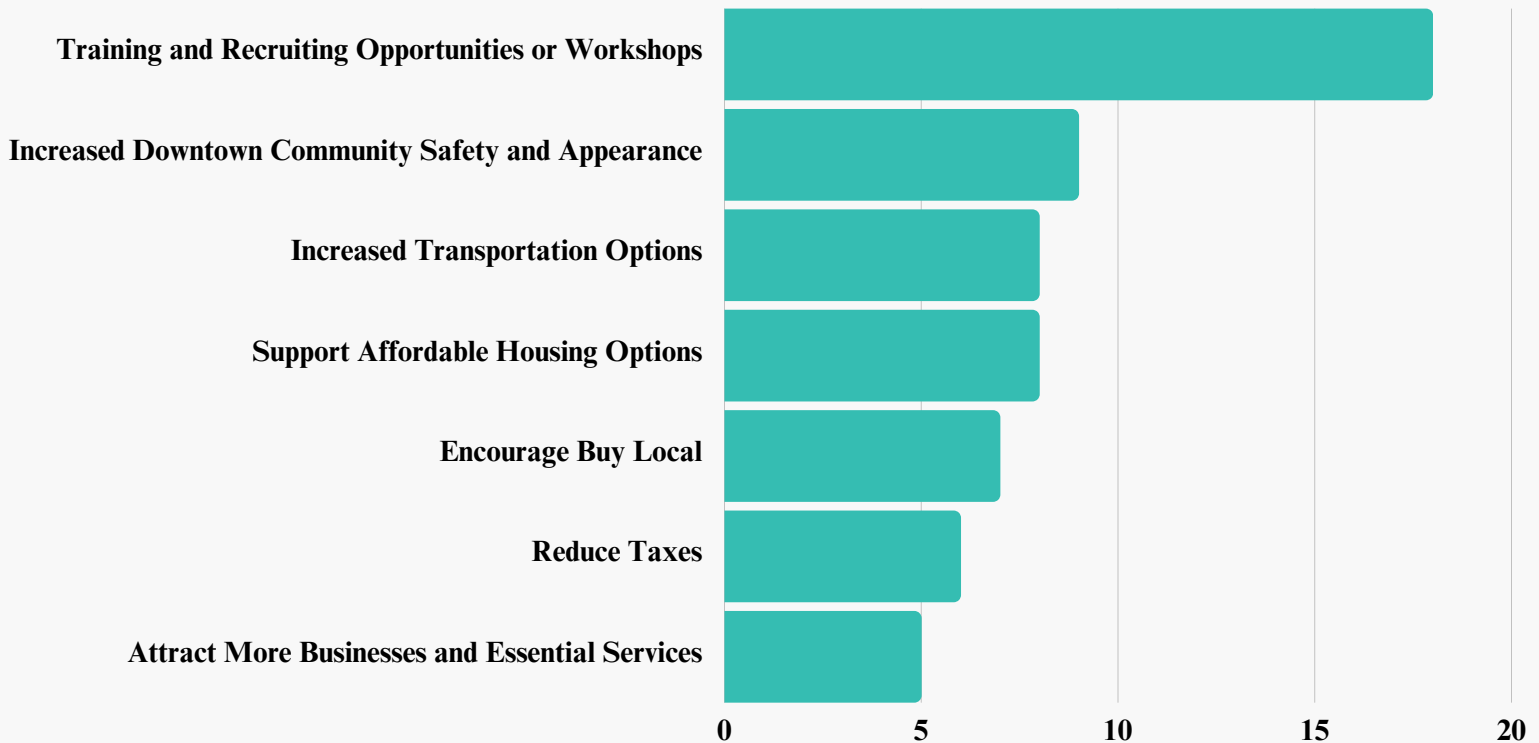
Staffing and recruitment were noted as the top challenge facing the businesses surveyed. **Logistics and travel**, overall **rising costs**, **government regulation**, **crime and community safety** including theft, vandalism, and the tent encampment, were identified as challenges for businesses operating in Smithers. Other mentions included **climate change**, **Covid-19 recovery** and **parking issues**.



Local Supports



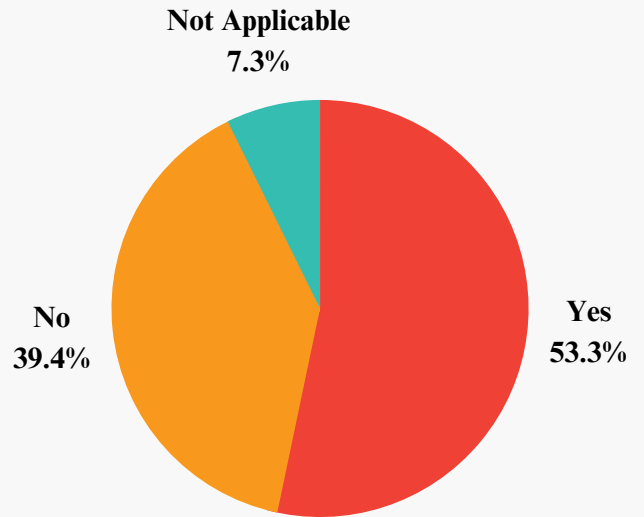
The top local resource respondents suggested that could help their business was assistance with **training, recruiting opportunities, and workshops**. Respondents noted that **increased transportation** options for **air travel and shipping** would help their businesses thrive. Other supports mentioned were to enhance the **shop local programs**, develop **affordable housing**, increase **RCMP support** in the downtown, **attract more businesses and essential service providers** to Smithers, and to **reduce business taxes**.



Business Disruptions

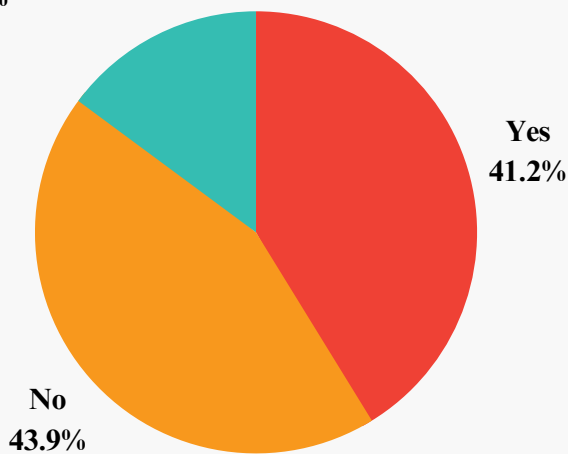
How have you or your business been affected by the reduction in air service to the Smithers Regional Airport?

Over **53%** of businesses surveyed have been affected by the reduction in air service to Smithers. Businesses found it difficult to schedule trips, arrange for temporary staff to travel to the community, and noted that the high cost of air travel is a challenge to their business.



How has the Houston Canfor Mill temporary closure impacted your business?

Not Applicable / Not Sure
14.9%

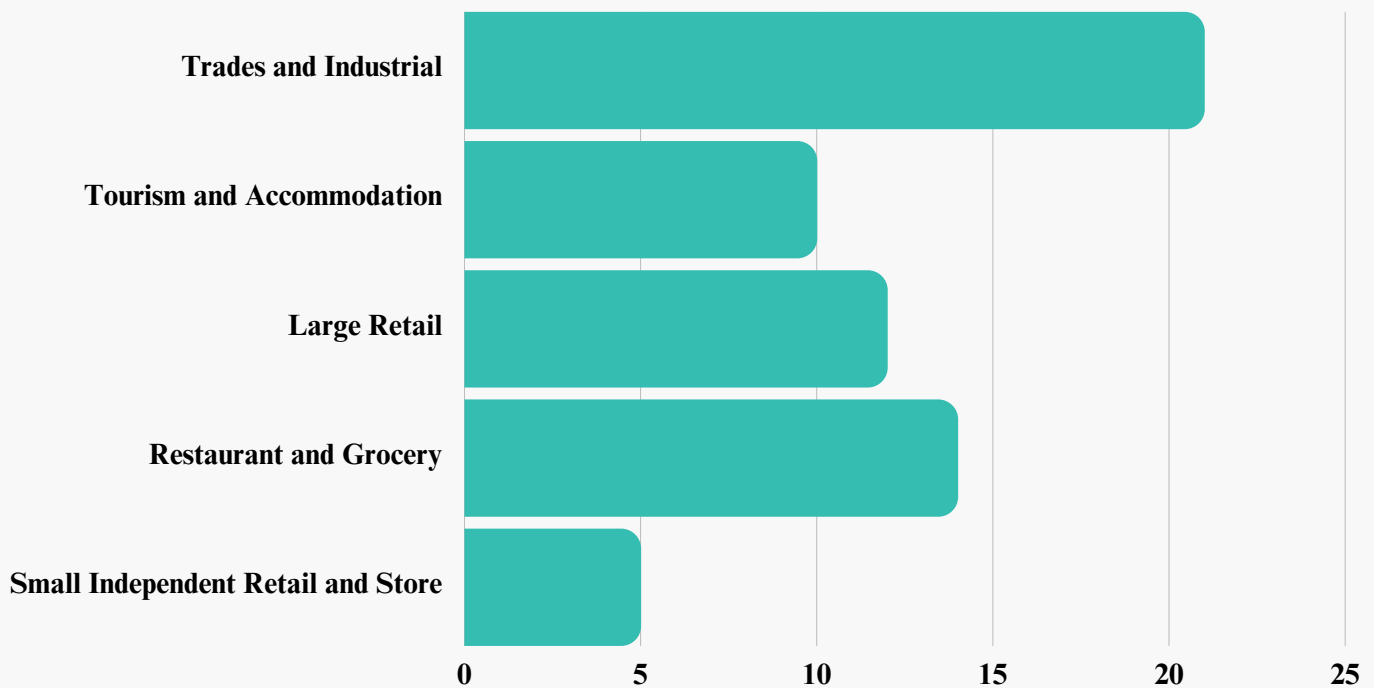


41.2% of respondents have been affected by the temporary closure of the Houston Canfor Mill has affected **43.9%** have had not noticed any impacts, and **14.9%** were unsure, or it was not applicable to their business.

New Business Opportunities



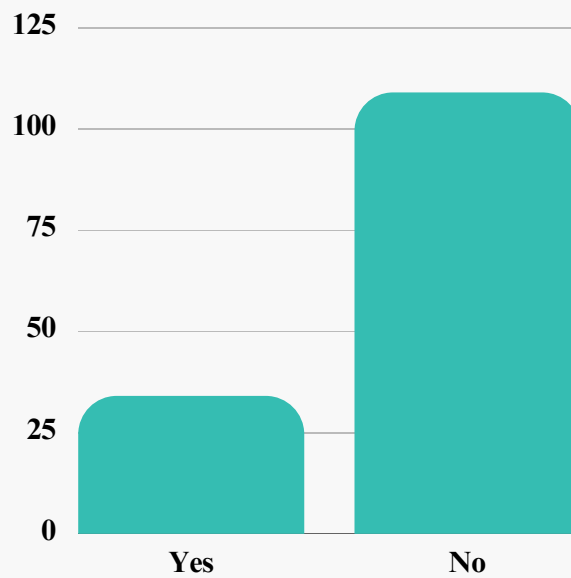
Businesses surveyed expressed they would like to see more trades and industrial business in Smithers such as **manufacturing services, construction material providers, and shipping and logistics companies**. Many respondents expressed a desire for more tourism businesses such as **experience providers, hotels, and attractions**. Feedback indicated that large retail stores like Walmart or Costco would be helpful for business and personal use, while also attracting other outlying communities to spend money in town. Expanded options for both grocery and restaurants such as Booster Juice, or locally owned take-out, was noted as a common demand.



Business Planning



Out of the businesses surveyed, **34 respondents** indicated plans to sell or retire within the next five years. Retirement planning was common among businesses that have been in service for 15-30 years. Majority of businesses in Smithers have no plans to sell or retire within the next five years.



Next Steps

The Town of Smithers is working collaboratively with community stakeholders to create an Economic Development plan to support existing businesses and assist in making Smithers an attractive place to do business.

1 Communicate Survey Results

The survey results will be sent out to participating businesses, stakeholders, community organizations, and be available on the Town of Smithers website and social media.



2 Follow-Up

Businesses who requested further information on financing, loans, wage subsidies, staff recruitment initiatives, and local supports will be contacted.

3 Creation of the Smithers Economic Development Plan

Data collected through the surveys and engagements, a long term Economic Development Plan is under development for 2023/2024.



Comments

"Business was so good in 2021-2022, we broke all records!"

"I have been in business for 13 years now and the positive feedback from the local community has been supportive and encouraging. This community needs a variety of shops and stimulus for its residents and tourists. More shops should be encouraged to open on Main Street."

"We are celebrating our 110th year in business."

"Smithers was our first location, and its success has allowed us to expand to four more locations."



Acknowledgements

The Town of Smithers would like to thank the businesses in our community for participating in the 2023 Business Walk.

This program was made possible by:



The Town of Smithers acknowledges the Gidimt'en Clan and the Witsuwit'en people, on whose unceded traditional territory we live, work and play.

The Town of Smithers
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