

Kitimat Business Walk

Post-Walk Report

2017



Background

The 2017 Kitimat Business Walk was conducted during the afternoon of Friday, November 3. The walk was organized by the District of Kitimat with support from:

- Kitimat Chamber of Commerce
- BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- WorkBC Employment Services Centre

A total of 7 participants were assembled to canvass local businesses in order to collect information about Kitimat's economic climate. Business support materials were also distributed during the walk.

Business walks are a tool to gather and track the pulse of local businesses and help community leaders identify measures and actions that ensure jobs, goods and services stay in a community.

Civic and business leaders gather information that enables them to identify and remove barriers to doing business in their municipality. Chambers of Commerce can use the walks to communicate the supports that are available to businesses and use the information gathered to tailor their services to meet the needs of their members.

Businesses were asked:

- Is your business growing, steady or shrinking?
- What do you like most about doing business in the area?
- What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?
- What can be done to help your business thrive?
- What resources would help you with your business?

Methodology

The individuals who participated in the Business Walk worked alone or in groups of two. The areas covered included City Centre, Mountainview Square, Nechako Centre, Service Centre and a few businesses outside of these areas. The event was advertised in advance with a media release, social media posts and through the Chamber of Commerce eBlast.

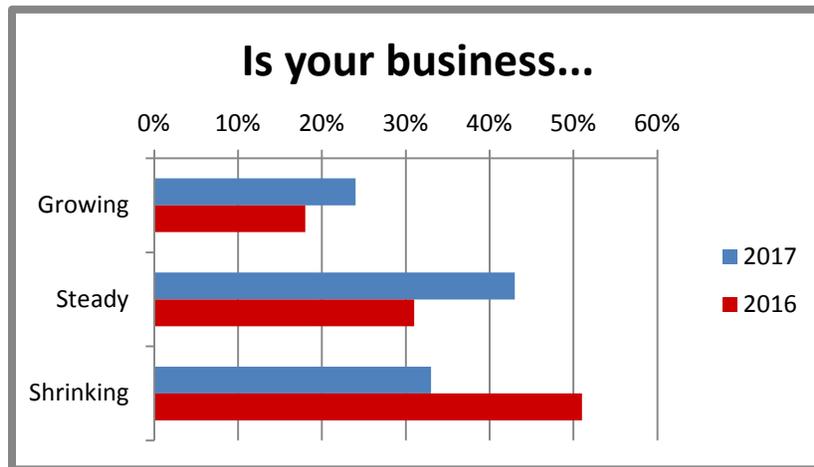
The team collectively visited 81 businesses. The survey was also made available through Survey Monkey until December 31, 2017; two surveys were received for a total of 83 responses.



Findings

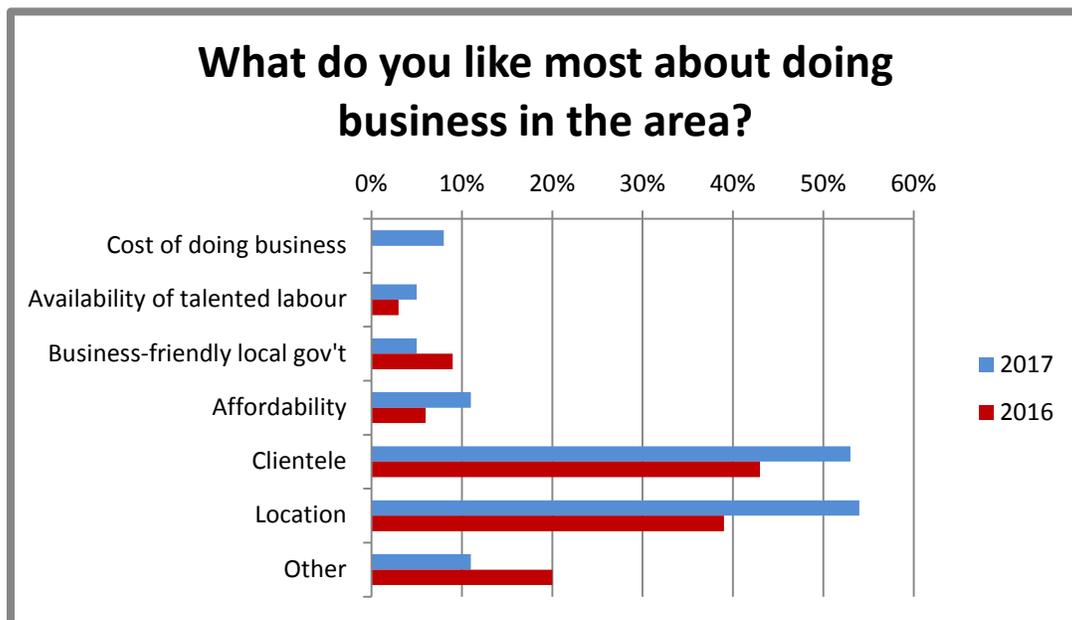
Question 1: Is your business growing, steady, or shrinking?

2017 results display that fewer businesses are shrinking and a greater percentage of businesses are holding steady or growing. In 2017, about two-thirds (67%) of respondents indicated that their business was either growing or remaining steady, compared to half (49%) in 2016. Despite this positive trend, many stated that business was very slow compared to previous years when the Kitimat Modernization Project and speculation of LNG had a significant effect on the community and local economy.



Question 2: What do you like most about doing business in the area?

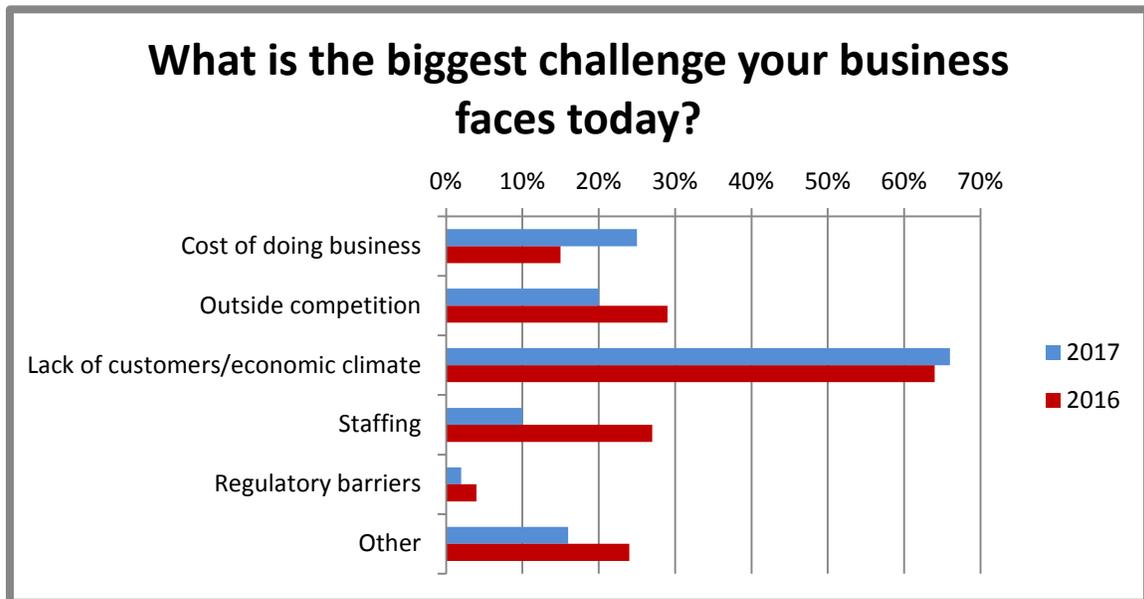
Location and clientele were the top reasons that local businesses enjoy operating in Kitimat. 2017 responses did not shift significantly from those provided in 2016, as detailed in the chart below.



Question 3: What is the greatest challenge your business faces today?

Businesses were able to provide multiple responses for this question. Results demonstrate that businesses faced similar challenges in 2017 as compared to 2016.

In 2017 a slow economic climate was by far the most cited challenge with 66% of participant businesses identifying it. In second place was the cost of doing business with a 26% response rate, as compared to outside competition in 2016. Outside competition was the third most cited challenge in 2017.



Question 4: What can be done to help your business thrive?

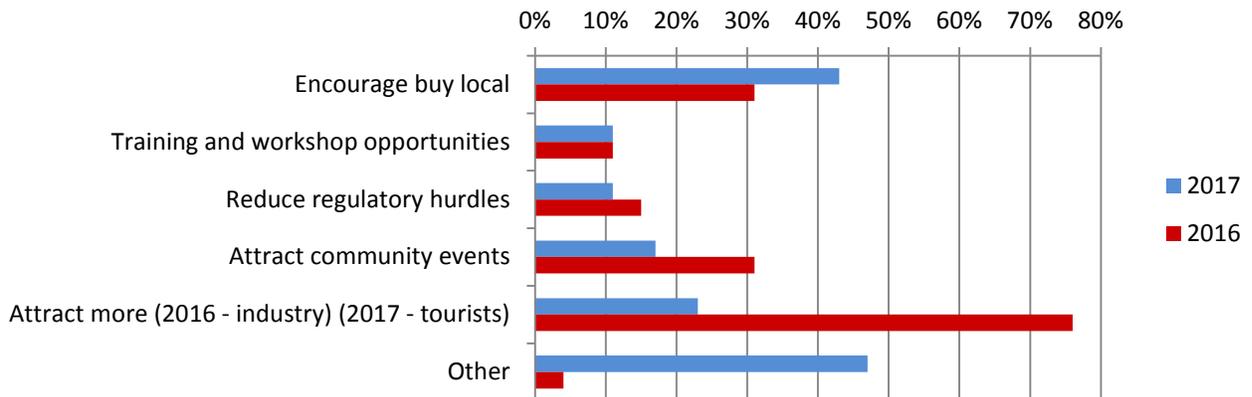
Businesses were able to list multiple responses for this question. Attracting additional industry was not provided as a response option this year because it was by far the most common response in 2016. By excluding this option it was believed that the results would better demonstrate other means to help businesses thrive.

In 2017, "Other" was the most frequent response with 47% of respondents choosing this option. There were some variances in details provided for "Other" however the majority were associated with attracting additional industry to the community, which suggests this remains a primary concern for local businesses.

43% of businesses identified "Encourage buy local" as a means to improve the local economy, making this option the second most frequent response. Keeping local dollars in the local economy was a priority for these businesses.

"Attract more tourists" and "Attract community events" were the third and fourth most common responses with a 23% and 17% response rate respectively. Bringing outside dollars into the local economy was a priority for these businesses.

What can be done to help your business thrive?

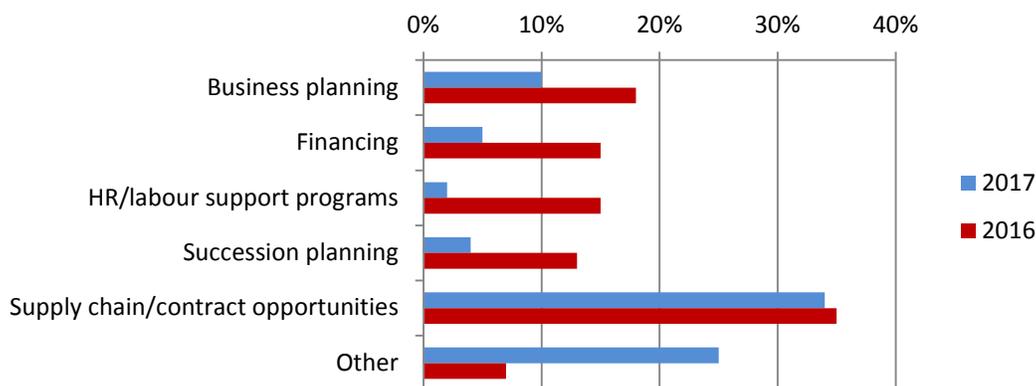


Question 5: What resources would help you with your business?

About one-third (34%) of businesses claimed that they would like to have greater access to supply chain and contract opportunities, making this the most common request for business help resources two years in a row.

“Other” was the second most frequent reply. Analysing responses, most of these were related to connecting with qualified staff and obtaining specific information. Business planning support came in third however it was down significantly from 2016, from 18% to 10%.

What resources would help you with your business?



What's next?

The District of Kitimat will continue to work with local, regional and provincial partners in attempts to strengthen and diversify the local industrial base by supporting existing industry and attracting additional industry to the area.

The District of Kitimat and the Kitimat Chamber of Commerce will:

- work with the local business community to promote the benefits of shopping locally. The District will continue facilitating and growing the Love Kitimat program in partnership with Northern Development and participating businesses. The Chamber will work with member businesses to identify additional means of encouraging shop local activity.
- seek out means of attracting and hosting additional events in Kitimat, as well as expanding tourism activity.
- work with partners in order to deliver additional training and learning opportunities to Kitimat businesses, as well as identify means of raising awareness of supply chain and contract opportunities.



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