

# REPORT

## *Community Services Department*

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** October 7, 2024

**From:** Blair Fryer, Acting Director, Community Services  
**File:** #2536453

**Item #:** 2024-549

**Subject:** Expanding the Metro West Inter-Municipal Business Licence to Include Health Care Professionals and Services, and Annual Licence Fee Increase

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **THAT** the Inter-Municipal Business Licence Scheme Bylaw No. 8475, 2024 be considered for first, second and third readings; and
2. **THAT** the Inter-Municipal Business Licence Agreement Bylaw No. 8487, 2024, be considered for first, second and third readings; and
3. **THAT** the Inter-Municipal Business Licence Scheme Bylaw No. 8475 and Inter-Municipal Business Licence Agreement Bylaw No. 8487, 2024 be forwarded to an Opportunity to be Heard at the Regular Meeting of Council on November 4, 2024.

### **PURPOSE**

To expand the Metro West inter-municipal business licence (IMBL) to include health care professionals and services, and update the annual licence fee.

### **SUMMARY**

This report recommends adding health care professionals and services to the Metro West inter-municipal business licence (IMBL) program so that businesses providing in-home health care and related services can operate in Vancouver, Burnaby, Delta, New Westminster, Richmond and Surrey with one licence. Under the program, the IMBL is purchased from a business' home municipality through a top-up fee on their municipal business licence. The report also recommends increasing the Metro West IMBL fee from \$250 to \$300 annually, effective January 1, 2025.

Currently the Metro West IMBL is open to trades and construction related businesses, and to businesses that repair and maintain land and buildings outside their home municipalities. Expanding the IMBL to include home health care professionals and services will contribute to greater regional coordination and promotion of a welcoming business climate.

The annual fee for the Metro West IMBL has not changed since 2013. If approved, the increase from \$250 to \$300 will bring IMBL fees more in line with other licensing fees that have increased over the years to cover municipal cost escalation.

Changes to the Metro West IMBL require approval from all participating municipalities. Staff from each participating municipality will be bringing the same recommendations in this report to their Councils for approval in Q4 2024. Should the recommendations be approved by all participating municipalities, the Metro West IMBL will be available to health care professionals and services businesses on January 1, 2025, and the fee for all IMBL licence holders will be \$300.

Health care professionals and services businesses will be notified of the new licence opportunity through direct mail, social media and updates to the City’s website. Current holders of the IMBL will see the new licence fee on their 2025 licence renewal notices.

**BACKGROUND**

Inter-municipal business licences (IMBLs) support dynamic local and regional economies. They reduce administrative and cost burdens by allowing eligible businesses to operate in multiple municipalities with the purchase of a single licence. The terms and conditions of an IMBL including the fee and licence administration are set out in a set of common bylaws enacted by each participating municipality. In BC there are 17 IMBL partnerships between 104 municipalities. Consumers can benefit from increased choice as businesses expand services across participating municipalities.

The City of New Westminster participates in the Metro West IMBL program, which launched as a pilot in 2013 for businesses in the construction industry to operate in Vancouver, Burnaby, Delta, New Westminster, Richmond, and Surrey. See Attachment 1 for the existing IMBL Business Licence Bylaw No. 7610, 2013. In 2015 the participating municipalities agreed to make the IMBL permanent, and to add businesses that repair, inspect and maintain land and buildings (for example arborists, building inspectors and janitors) to the program. Under provisions of the IMBL agreement, businesses must obtain a business licence in their home municipality (the municipality where they maintain business premises) and for an additional fee, they get the IMBL. A condition of the IMBL is that businesses are required to comply with relevant bylaw conditions of each municipality in which they work.

The IMBL fee was set at \$250 in 2013 and a revenue sharing agreement among the participating municipalities was established. In 2015 the revenue sharing agreement was simplified from one based on the proportionate share of each municipality's non-resident licence revenue, to one in which each municipality retains 90% of its IMBL revenue and distributes the remaining 10% evenly among the other partners.

Uptake of the IMBL has been steady. Since 2015 the annual number issued has increased 17-fold. In 2023 a total of 6,817 IMBLs were issued by participating municipalities, with 187 issued by New Westminster.

On May 10, 2023 the City of Vancouver Council directed their staff to explore the establishment of an inter-municipal business licence for home health care support workers. Vancouver City staff brought the proposal to the Metro West IMBL working group for exploration and discussion with participating municipalities.

## **PROPOSAL**

The proposed changes to the Metro West IMBL program include:

- an expansion of the program to include health care professionals and services so that businesses providing in-home health care and related services can operate in Vancouver, Burnaby, Delta, New Westminster, Richmond and Surrey with one licence.
- an increase in the annual fee from \$250 to \$300, effective January 1, 2025. Under the program, the IMBL is purchased from a business' home municipality through a top-up fee on their municipal business licence.

The proposed new agreement between the participating Metro West IMBL program municipalities is included as Attachment 2 – Proposed Inter-Municipal Business Licence Agreement Bylaw No. 8487, 2024, 2024) and the proposed new IMBL Business Licence Scheme bylaw is included as Attachment 3 - Proposed IMBL Business Licence Scheme Bylaw No. 8475, 2024. These new bylaws reflect the two proposed changes noted above.

## **DISCUSSION**

Businesses that provide home health care and other in-home support services are good candidates for the Metro West IMBL. Many serve clients in multiple Metro Vancouver municipalities providing services that include in-home medical care, transportation, companionship, and home making.

The City of New Westminster issued five (5) business licences in 2024 to businesses whose core work is to provide in-home health care and nursing services. In addition, the City issues about 360 licences annually to health care businesses that could provide in-home services as part of their business. These include midwifery, registered massage

therapy, fitness training, and counselling services, among others. Staff recommending expanding the IMBL definition of an “inter-municipal business” to include home care and nursing, and other health care professionals and services when the services are provided in the client’s home.

### **IMBL Annual Fee**

When the Metro West IMBL pilot launched in 2013, the \$250 annual fee was deemed appropriate to yield overall revenue neutrality for the program. In the years since, while other City business licence fees have been adjusted annually, the IMBL fee, which must be approved by all six participating municipalities, has remained unchanged. Financial analysis suggests that increasing the fee from \$250 to \$300 will help to offset cost escalation experienced by participating municipalities over the last 10 years.

Increasing the annual fee for the IMBL by \$50 is expected to generate approximately \$8,400 dollars in new revenue for the City in 2025.

### **Risks**

Staff from each Metro West IMBL municipality will present the same recommendations in this report to their respective Councils for approval in Q4 of 2024. All six participating municipalities must approve the recommendations in order for them to be implemented.

### **Interest Group Feedback**

Vancouver City staff met with the BC Care Providers Association and with business owners who held related business licences in participating municipalities. Staff reported unanimous support for the proposal to include businesses that provide in-home health care and related services. They also reported that participants said the reduced administrative and cost burdens would be welcome for businesses that already operate in two or more municipalities; may encourage and enable able businesses to expand their service areas; and could benefit clients through increased service options.

If Council recommends the Bylaws proceed, notices for the Opportunity to Be Heard (to be held November 4, 2024) would be placed in CityPage, Invest West newsletter and at community facilities per the City’s standard public notice practice.

### **Implementation**

If all participating municipalities approve the recommendations, the Metro West IMBL will be available to health care professionals and services businesses on January 1, 2025, and the fee for all IMBL licence holders will be \$300.

Related health care professionals and services businesses will be notified of the IMBL opportunity by direct mail, social media and the City’s website. Existing IMBL licence holders will see the new fee reflected in their 2025 renewal notices.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff expect that including health care professionals and services to the Metro West IMBL will not have a negative financial impact on the City. Any revenue lost as a result of out-of-town businesses currently licensed in New Westminster switching to an IMBL purchased from their home municipality, are anticipated to be offset by revenue from New Westminster based businesses purchasing the IMBL from New Westminster. Furthermore, the revenue sharing protocol of the Metro West IMBL ensures that all participating municipalities receive a portion of the total revenues from licences issued

**OPTIONS**

There are three options Council presented for Council’s consideration:

- 1. THAT the Inter-Municipal Business Licence Scheme Bylaw No. 8475, 2024 be given first, second and third readings; and
- 2. THAT the Inter-Municipal Business Licence Agreement Bylaw No. 8487, 2024 be given first, second and third readings; and
- 3. THAT the Inter-Municipal Business Licence Scheme Bylaw No. 8475 and Inter-Municipal Business Licence Agreement Bylaw No. 8487, 2024 be forwarded to an Opportunity to be Heard at the Regular Meeting of Council on November 4, 2024.
- 4. THAT Council provide staff with alternate direction.

Staff recommend Options 1 - 3.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Existing IMBL Business Licence Bylaw No. 7610, 2013
- Attachment 2: Proposed IMBL Business Licence Agreement Bylaw No. 8487, 2024
- Attachment 3: Proposed IMBL Business Licence Scheme Bylaw No. 8475, 2024

**APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
Alyssa Randhawa, Business Growth Coordinator

This report was reviewed by:  
Carolyn Armanini, A/Manager, Economic Development  
Jennifer Miller, A/Deputy Director, Community Services

This report was approved by:  
Blair Fryer, A/Director, Community Services  
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer