WHAT WE HEARD.

CITY of AIRDRIE COMMUNITY & OPPORTUNITY

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Business Licence Bylaw Update

Project Overview:
The City of Airdrie undertook a review of its Business Licence Bylaw in 2026. As part of that review the City conducted a survey with Airdrie-based businesses for feedback on the current business licensing process reflected in the current bylaw. The survey link was emailed directly to current business licence holders. 400 respondents provided a submission.

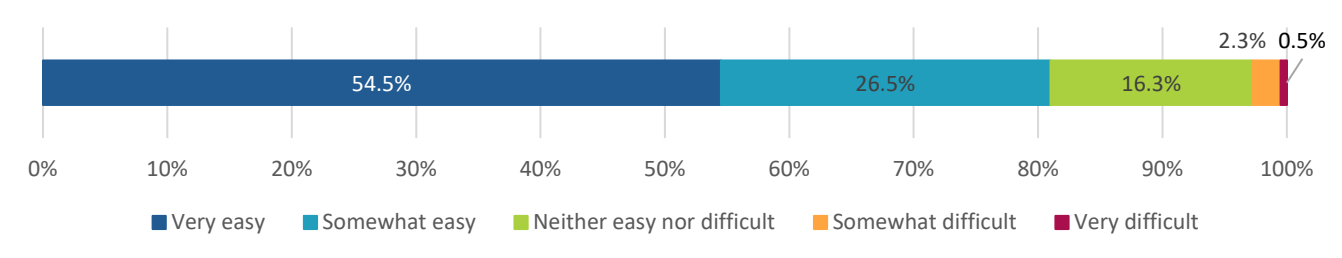
Date: July 20, 2026
Prepared by City of Airdrie

Executive Summary

The City of Airdrie is undertaking a review of its Business Licence Bylaw to ensure it continues to effectively support local businesses, reflects how businesses operate today, and aligns with current best practices. An online survey hosted on Involve Airdrie from June 8-26, 2026 sought feedback from Airdrie business licence holders.

Home-based businesses (49%) made up a significant portion of the respondents to the survey, nearly equalling commercial (28%), mobile (11%) and industrial (9%) business combined. Businesses based in Airdrie (86%) were the largest group of respondents, a small portion of respondents (3%) identified that they operate in Airdrie but are located outside of Airdrie.

Overall respondents indicated that it is somewhat or very easy to understand licencing requirements in Airdrie (86% combined). For those experiencing difficulties, participants identified that guidance on eligibility, fee exceptions, and whether a licence is needed could be clearer especially for new business operators.



Sentiment was mixed on whether to integrate massage business licensing (41%) into the business licence bylaw, or whether to keep it separate as it is now (41% unsure, 18% keep separate)

Participants noted that the licensing fee can be a burden on mobile therapists who work in multiple municipalities, and some comments recommended that massage therapists are better regulated by the Province.

Suggested improvements to the City's business licencing process included; reducing costs and creating tiered fee structures, allowing online renewals, automatic renewal options, and/or multi-year licences, providing clearer guidance and business categories, and offering administrative assistance (for questions or clarifications) outside of traditional Monday-Friday business hours.

Project Information

The City of Airdrie is undertaking a review of its Business Licence Bylaw to ensure it continues to effectively support local businesses, reflects how businesses operate today, and aligns with current best practices.

Recent business research has shown that while many businesses are generally satisfied with operating in Airdrie, there are opportunities to improve clarity and consistency related to business licensing. In response, the city is exploring whether the current bylaw remains fit for purpose or whether it should be repealed and replaced with a modernized bylaw.

Public Participation Approach

As part of the bylaw review, the City conducted a survey with Airdrie-based businesses for feedback on the current business licensing process reflected in Bylaw B-52/2005, the Business Licence Bylaw, as well as Bylaw B-18/2007, the Massage Licence Bylaw.

The survey was hosted on Involve Airdrie, open from June 8 through June 26, 2026. the city's online public engagement platform. The survey link was emailed directly to current business licence holders. 400 respondents provided a submission.

Summary of Public Participation Input

Home-based businesses (49%) made up a significant portion of the respondents to the survey, followed by commercial (28%), mobile (11%) and industrial (9%) business respondents. Businesses based in Airdrie (86%) were the largest group of respondents, with some other businesses being exempt by legislation from municipal business licencing (9%) and a small portion of businesses (3%) that operate in Airdrie but are located outside of Airdrie.

Overall respondents indicated that it is somewhat or very easy to understand licencing requirements in Airdrie (86% combine). For those experiencing difficulties, participants identified that guidance on eligibility, fee exceptions, and whether a licence is needed could be clearer especially for new business operators.

Sentiment was mixed on whether to integrate massage business licensing (41%) into the business licence bylaw, or whether to keep it separate as it is now (41% unsure, 18% keep separate)

Suggested improvements included; reducing costs and creating tiered fee structures, improving renewal processes, providing clearer guidance and business categories, and simplifying administrative requirements.

What we heard

The following sections provide summaries of responses to each survey question organized by category of question.

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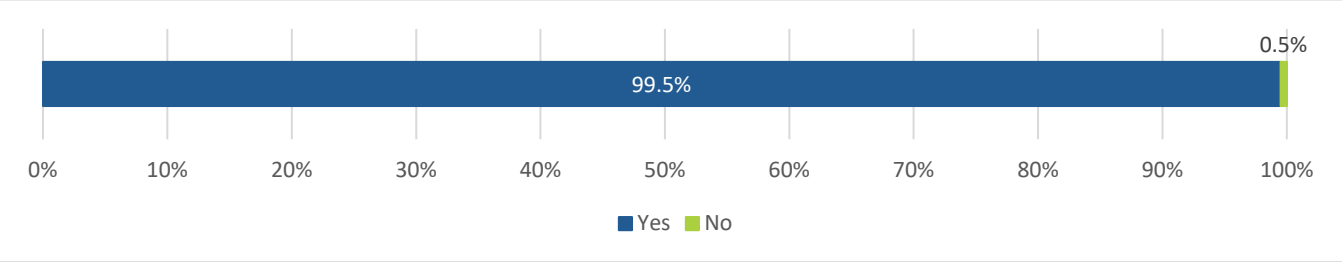
Notes:

Numbers of responses to individual questions in the survey are reported as n=x included in brackets at the end of the question wording, for example, “Q1 Do you hold a valid City of Airdrie Business Licence? (n=400)”

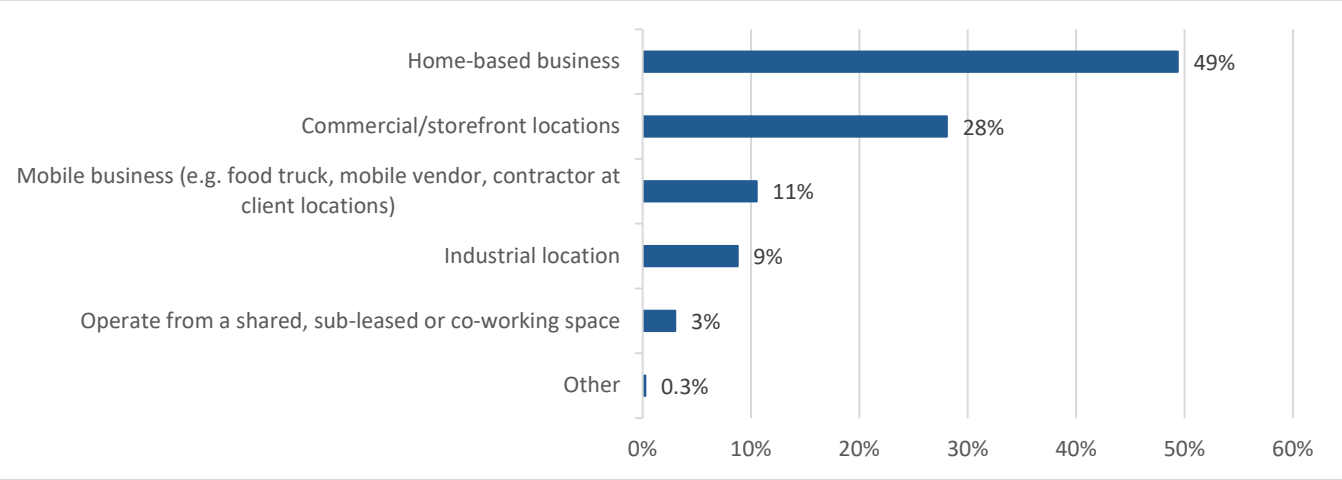
A single comment from a respondent may identify more than one topic which means numbers of mentions for key themes, identified in the tables, may not equal the number of comments received.

ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

Q1. Do you hold a valid City of Airdrie Business Licence? (n=400)



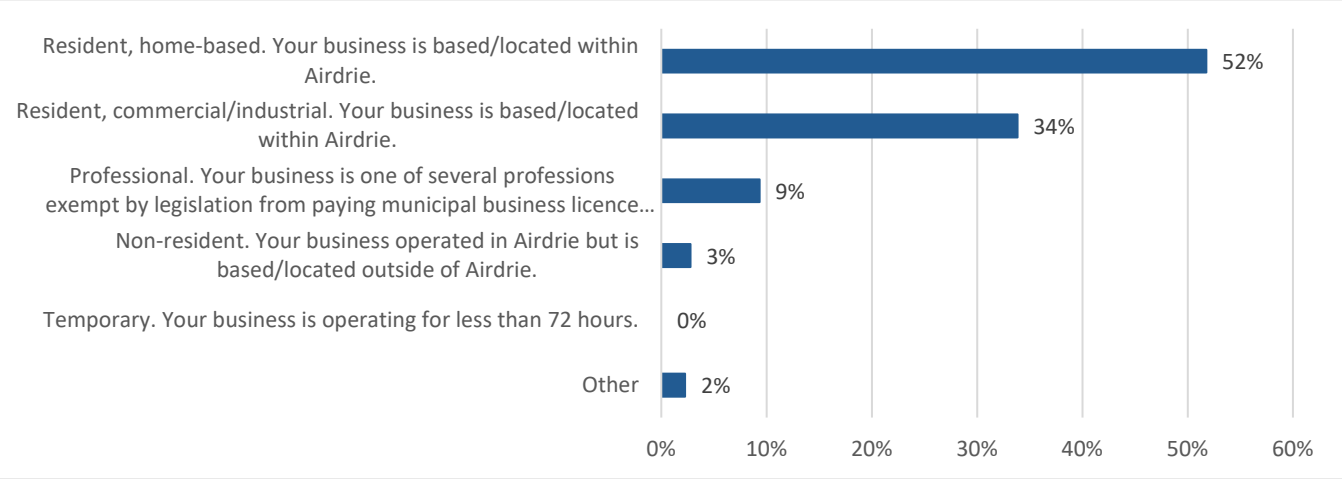
Q2. Which of the following best describes how your business operates in Airdrie? (n=400)



Q2. Other, please specify

Theme or topic	# of mentions
Schools/sports fields	1

Q3. Do any of the following location descriptions fit your business type? (n=398)

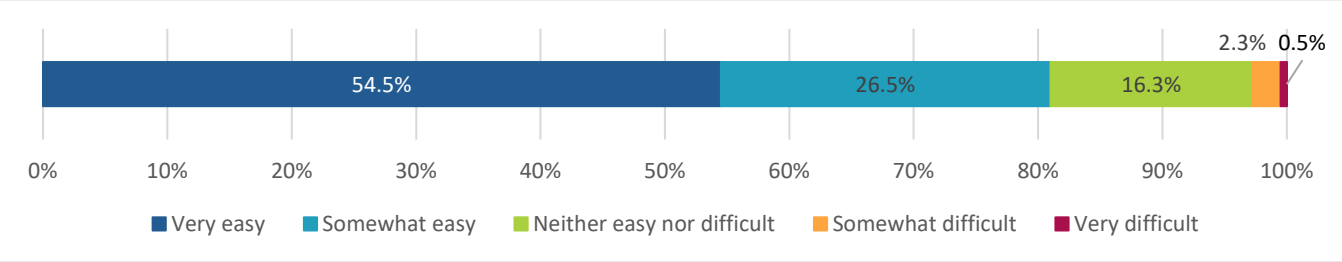


Q3. Other, please specify

Theme or topic	# of mentions
Office/Admin is home-based, work is at client sites	4
Office/Admin is home-based, work is mobile	3
Non-profit	2

CURRENT LICENSING EXPERIENCE

Q4. Overall, how easy or difficult is it to understand the City of Airdrie's business licence requirements? (n=400)

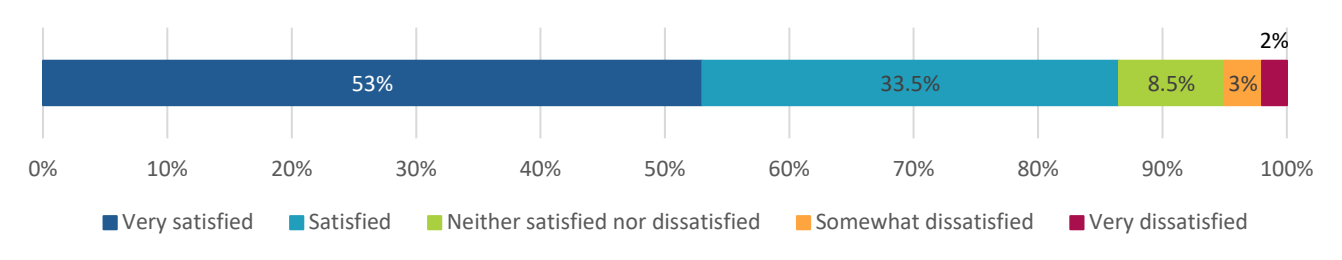


Q5. What was/is difficult? (n=8)

Comments from participants identified that guidance on eligibility, fee exceptions, and whether a licence is needed can be difficult to understand, especially for first-time or home-based business operators. This can lead to unnecessary applications, repeated visits to administrative offices and frustration. Other comments identified that business categories and classifications are not well defined, making it hard to determine the correct licence type.

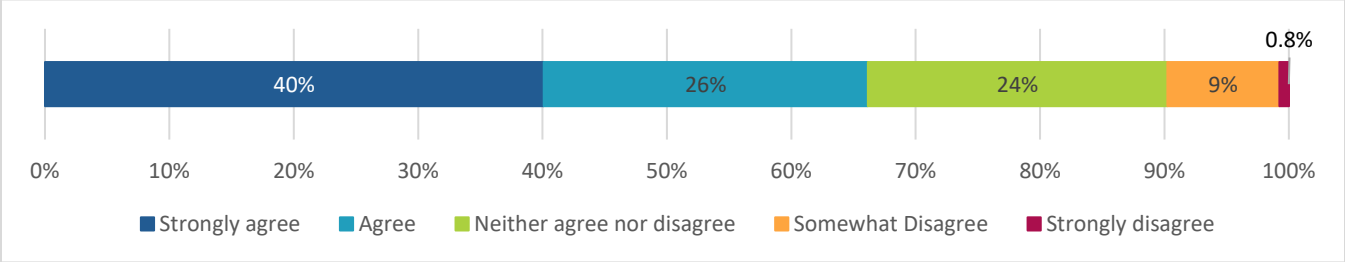
Theme or topic	# of mentions	Theme or topic	# of mentions
Confusion about which permits apply to my business	3	Repeated visits to administrative offices for applications	1
Confusion about exemptions	2	Unclear renewal process	1
Rules around direct sales, or mobile food vendors could use review	2	Limitations/restrictions on home-based businesses	1

Q6. How satisfied are you with your experience applying for or renewing a City of Airdrie Business Licence? (n=400)

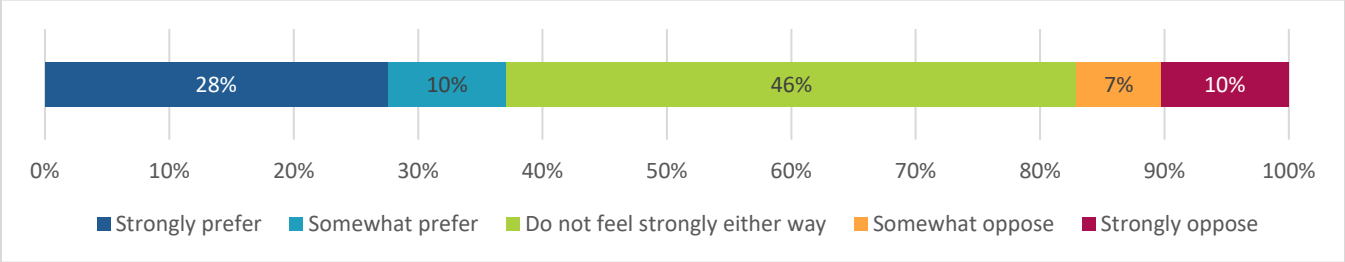


BYLAW MODERNIZATION

Q7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The current business licence process reflects how my business actually operates." (n=399)

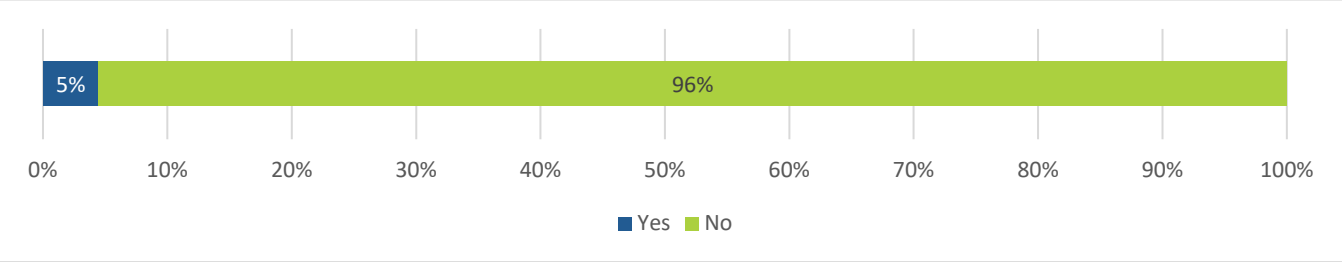


Q8. Currently, all business licences are renewed each calendar year on December 31, regardless of date of issue. Would you prefer your licence to renew on the anniversary of when you applied (i.e. valid for 12 months from the date of issue)? (n=399)

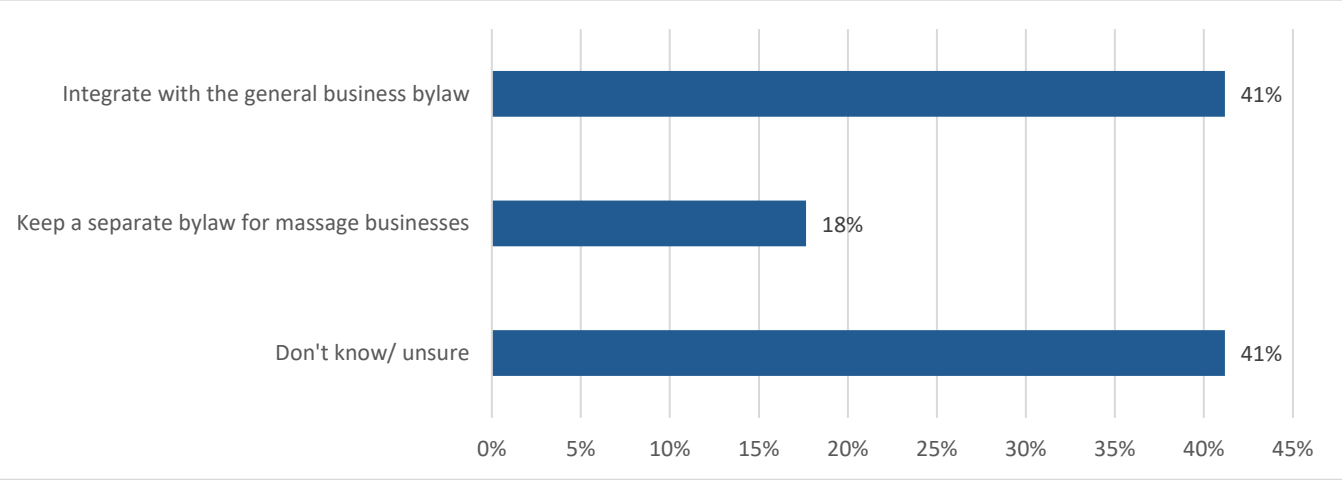


MASSAGE THERAPY

Q9. Do you operate a massage therapy business or are you a massage therapist? (n=400)



Q10. Currently massage therapists are governed under the massage business bylaw. Would you prefer that massage therapy licensing was integrated into the general business bylaw, or remain separate as it is now? (n=17)



*Q11. What might improve the process for massage business licensing? (*n=25)

Participants identified some ways to simplify and modernize massage therapy licensing by enabling online renewals, automating the notification and or renewal process, and removing the need for photo ID. Participants noted that the licensing fee is a burden on mobile therapists who work in multiple municipalities, and some comments recommended that massage therapists are better regulated by the Province, and that a registered (RMT) should be exempt from municipal business licences.

Theme or topic	# of mentions	Theme or topic	# of mentions
Enable online renewals	7	Business licence increases cost to business without benefitting them	6
Municipal licensing adds cost for mobile therapists who work in multiple regions	3	Automated reminders and/or renewals	3
Remove photo ID requirement	2	Consistent fee structure	1

Theme or topic	# of mentions	Theme or topic	# of mentions
Different requirements for registered RMT (should be exempt) vs. non-registered (licence required)	1	Municipal licensing duplicates Provincial requirements	1
Prefer if Massage Therapist Association of Alberta managed permits/licences	1	Renew each 12 months, not on a specific calendar date	1

FINAL COMMENTS

Q12. What is the biggest challenge you anticipate when thinking about getting a business licence? (n=0)

No comments received

Q13. What is one thing the City could change about the business licensing bylaw to better support businesses like yours? (n=118)

Of those participants who identified a need for better supports, those suggested improvements included:

Reduce costs and create tiered fee structures: Several respondents felt fees are too high for small, home-based, arts-based, start-up and sole-proprietor businesses. Suggestions included tiered pricing, reduced renewal fees, revenue-based or number of employee-based fees, nonprofit discounts, and lower fees for businesses with minimal community impact.

Improve renewal processes: Common requests included online renewals, automatic renewal options, multi-year licences, renewal dates tied to the licence issuance date rather than the calendar year, prorated fees, and better renewal reminders.

Provide clearer guidance and classifications: Respondents asked for clearer business categories, simpler application requirements, better online information, improved communication, and tools such as online chat or artificial-intelligence-assisted guidance to help determine licensing requirements and exemptions.

Simplify administrative requirements: Suggestions included streamlining documentation, reducing duplication where businesses are already regulated by provincial or professional bodies, and making applications easier for shared-space tenants and mobile businesses.

Theme or topic	# of mentions	Theme or topic	# of mentions
Reduce fees for small or home-based businesses	17	Reduce the licence fees	17
Renewal date from time of licence	6	Eliminate municipal business licences	6
Enable online renewals	5	Improve communication	5
Allow multi-year licences	5	Enable automated renewals	4
Wider range, clearer descriptions of business categories/types	4	Business licence increases cost to business without benefitting them	3
Automated reminders/notifications	3	Create tiers of fees based on number of employees, size, categories, other	3
Clearer process for exempt businesses	3	Should be exempt if based in Airdrie but clients are not	3

What's Next & Timelines

Through the third quarter of 2026, the city will review the results of this survey, along with research from other municipalities and develop draft recommendations to update Bylaw B-52/2005, the Business Licence Bylaw, as well as potential updates to Bylaw B-18/2007, the Massage Licence Bylaw.

It is anticipated that the recommendations will be presented at a Public Hearing of City Council in the fourth quarter of 2026.

Contact Information

For more information regarding the 2026 Business Licence Bylaw Update Survey, contact:

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