

FORT SMITH BUSINESS VISITS

2018 REPORT

**We asked participants how
their business is doing:**

60% of Businesses are Good.

23% of Businesses are Okay / Slow

10% of Businesses are Great/
Perfect / Too Busy!

3% of Businesses are Poor

Businesses that reported being Okay, Slow or Poor indicated a slow fire season and low tourist season for some of the decline.



**32 BUSINESSES
SURVEYED**

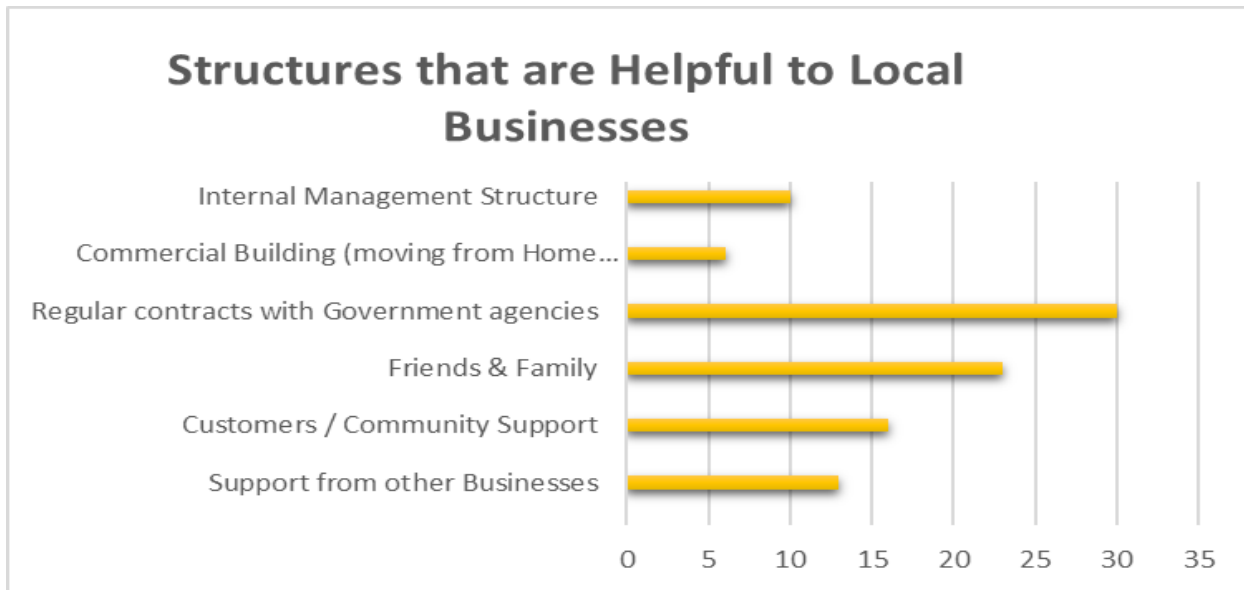
15 % of Fort Smith Businesses
Participated

Of the 192 businesses licensed with the Town of Fort Smith, ninety were contacted and thirty two were interviewed between August and October.

The visits were made by the Economic Development Officer with support from the Town's Tourism and Trade Advisory Board volunteers.

The businesses were visited with the intention to build stronger relationships and collect data on how Fort Smith can build a vibrant business community.

What supports and structures are already helping businesses?



What are the challenges facing Fort Smith businesses?

23% Small Market—Small Town, limited customer base.

17% Finding qualified, dependable staff as their biggest challenge

16% Marketing & Advertising. No time to market themselves or they want the town to be marketed better as a whole.

13% High shipping costs.

13% High cost of travel.

10% Taxes—Concerned about businesses who don't pay, and it is unfair to those who do.



What are some initiatives that can help businesses?



13% Develop / Advocate for a loop road to the South through Garden River or Fort McMurray.

16% Develop an industry, eg: technology, services for mining, services to support industries of NWT.

20% Promote tourism including sports tourism, train all community employees to be Fort Smith ambassadors.

26% Town of Fort Smith could improve communication with businesses regarding tenders, projects, printed events list and response to Aurora College review.

30% Assist with advertising and marketing.

Other suggested initiatives include:

Offer courses for small businesses, better signage both in town and along the highway at various points, educate the community on the importance of supporting local businesses, develop downtown, hire foreign workers, grade and clear roads promptly where home business are located.

What are the next steps?

- Determine best practices for growth, business revenues and employee retention for local businesses.
- Determine supports needed for both commercial and home-based businesses.