



Downtown Victoria Business Association  
20 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC  
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info@downtownvictoria.ca

July 15, 2019

Mayor Lisa Helps & Council,  
City of Victoria,  
1 Centennial Square,  
Victoria, BC,  
V8W 1P6

Re: Potential Closures of Government Street to Vehicular Traffic

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

On behalf of the business owners along Government Street, I am writing to support the staff report on Government Street submitted by Kerri Moore for this week's Committee of the Whole meeting. We all want Government Street to be easy for pedestrians to enjoy and to be a place where businesses can thrive; however, the Downtown Victoria Business Association maintains that these can co-exist with cycle and vehicular access as well. Over the past fifteen years we have seen many closures for various purposes but only limited uptake on the idea of improving pedestrian experience without street closures.

Financially, these closures have a negative impact on businesses. When we ran the Sunday trial closures in 2018, less than 10% said it had been a positive experience; 43% of business owners saw it as a negative event. 61% of respondents were opposed to future closures. We called a meeting of business and property owners together to discuss the idea of street closure since it was in the City's Strategic Plan. Only one businessperson, out of the forty-five present, defended programmed street closures; the remaining attendees were vehemently opposed to the idea. Between rising taxes and the higher cost of living, small businesses are finding operations a struggle as it is, and a significant reduction in their sales will cause a great deal of suffering, layoffs, and business closures.

Ms. Moore has attached the results from the 2015 Government Street Charette and the Public Realm Plan to her report. The Charette was a full-day brainstorming session where DVBA and City staff met with business owners about the future of the street and ways to improve the experience for everyone. The unresolved issues from the Charette (in particular, removing cement planters and hornbeam trees and replacing them with tall trees with light and transparent canopy; creating more spaces for locals to relax; and positively addressing street issues to allow everyone using the street to feel safe) would be an excellent and preferred way to move ahead. In the Downtown Plan's guidelines for Government Street, it is proposed that the distinctive and pedestrian-friendly look of Government Street south of Yates be extended to "Pandora, Fisgard, or Pembroke Street [...] for better connectivity to Centennial Square and Chinatown". This would be a potent way to encourage additional pedestrian traffic without severe impacts on the businesses along the street.



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The DVBA asks that council supports Ms. Moore's recommendations. The actions in the Downtown Public Realm Plan would significantly enhance the pedestrian experience without harming business productivity. Our community is at its best when we all work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Bray".

Jeff Bray  
Executive Director, Downtown Victoria Business Association