

## City's quality of life at risk

Unless business climate improves, Vancouver will lose global competition

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Vancouver's business climate must improve or the city's quality of life is at risk, says a new report by the Vancouver Economic Development Commission.

The Vancouver Business Climate Report, to be presented to city council next week, shows that Vancouver is not competitive with other jurisdictions when it comes to doing business and that companies are fleeing the city due to concerns about taxes, regulations, crime, housing prices and the availability of useable land, the commission said in a media release.

"If you look at the construction sector and unemployment numbers, the economy appears to be strong, but there are no guarantees that these conditions will continue," said Tom English, chairman of the commission's board of directors.

"It's a competitive, global economy, and we need to ensure that Vancouver provides a favourable climate for doing business.

"A strong business climate means jobs and tax dollars, which fund services such as social housing, community service organizations, policing and parks."

The report -- which was commissioned by council in March 2006 and based on interviews with more than 100 business and community leaders, extensive research and comparing Vancouver to other jurisdictions -- calls on Vancouver through 40 recommendations to "integrate economic oversight into its policy and planning initiatives," said economist Roslyn Kunin, who worked on the report.

"Our consulting team spent a lot of time talking to businesses, community organizations, and non-profits in all sectors, and the feedback was consistent -- something needs to be done to improve conditions for business," said commission CEO Phil Heard.

"They would like Vancouver's business climate to be as strong as the city's reputation for livability, and they recognize that the two are tightly related."

The commission, the city's economic-development agency, is a non-profit society governed by a council-appointed board, including members from the Vancouver Board of Trade, Tourism Vancouver and the provincial and federal governments.

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