



Bruce Quayle



The Law Department of the City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver, as a large urban centre and a major corporate, regulatory and governmental body, has an extensive, continuing need at all times for a wide range of legal services.

It gets those services, primarily, from the “in-house” lawyers employed in its Law Department.

The City’s Law Department is made up of approximately 20 lawyers and 18 support staff, many of whom are trained legal assistants. The Department is headed by the City’s Director of Legal Services who, at this time, is a woman who came to the City’s Law Department from private practice approximately 20 years ago.

Most of the lawyers who make up the Law Department came to it from private practice. For instance, one came from a firm in Vancouver that specializes in insurance-related litigation. Some are

from large, full-service national law firms with offices in Vancouver. Some have backgrounds in real estate law, some in construction law, some in commercial areas of law, some in criminal law, and some in labour law. Some came from other forms of public practice, such as Crown Counsel.

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One has been a City lawyer, working primarily in real-estate-related matters, since the early-to-mid 1970s. This broad range of experiences is fully utilized in the City’s Law Department in the municipal law context.

The City of Vancouver is situated in a region of urban and rural centres with a combined population of more

than 2 million. The City’s population is approximately 570,000. That is expected to increase to as much as 635,000 over the next 15 years. The City covers a geographical area of 113 sq km. Its land base was fully developed many years ago; nowadays population growth is accommodated primarily by redevelopment.

Vancouver is a major Canadian financial, business, industrial, and cultural centre. It is the main western terminus of Canada’s transcontinental highway and rail routes. The Port of Vancouver is Canada’s largest and most diversified port, trading more than \$43 billion in goods with more than 90 trading economies annually. Port activities generate 69,200 jobs in total, with \$4 billion in gross domestic product and \$8.9 billion in economic output.

Approximately 38 percent of jobs in the Lower Mainland region of BC are located in Vancouver. Approximately 60 percent of the region’s office space is located in Vancouver’s central business/commercial area. It is home to the headquarters of forest products and mining

companies and to main and regional branches of national and international banks and accounting and law firms.

In recent years, the City has grown as a centre for software development and biotechnology, while film studios and the City's streets provide a backdrop for our developing film industry.

Two of the Port of Vancouver's container docks are located in the City. The Fraser River has barge and log traffic serving forestry and other water-related industries.

Around 1800 acres of industrial land provide an important range of support services, manufacturing, and wholesale premises for businesses throughout the City and region.

Vancouver is a major tourist destination, with approximately 180 parks. It will be Host City to the 2010 Winter Olympics and the Winter Paralympics in February and March of 2010.

The City employs approximately 9000 people in its numerous departments and services branches and related organizations such as its Park Board and Library Board.

Examples of the kinds of jobs its employees do are garbage collecting and landfill operations; accounting; managing real estate; streets and sewers; engineering and works; property use inspections, urban and transportation planning and development; archival works; general civil engineering; parking and other bylaw enforcement; permits and licensing issuance; social housing works and projects; public arts works and public/private partnerships; and many more.

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The City itself is a corporate entity which, pursuant to the *Vancouver Charter*, SBC 1953 c.55, is given various wide-ranging, local government powers and duties to carry on various municipal activities and control certain activities of others within its boundaries.

For instance, it can enter into contracts. It can build streets and establish parks. It is required by law to provide policing within its boundaries and can establish and has established its own police force. It can establish a Library Board and put libraries in place. It can own property and deal with it as would any other property owner. It can borrow money and issue securities. It can in many ways control the development and use of private property.

Virtually every person who or legal entity that owns property in, resides in, passes through, carries on any activity or business in the City, in one way or another, is in a legal relationship, of one kind or another, with the City. For instance, if

