

DOWNTOWN KELOWNA

Submission To: The House of Commons' Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)
131 Queen Street, 6-08 / 131 rue Queen, 6-08
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Re: Canada Summer Jobs

Submission by: Mark Burley
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October 25, 2023

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131 Queen Street, 6-08 / 131 rue Queen, 6-08
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To whom it may concern:

Thank you for allowing me to submit my thoughts on the Canada Summer Jobs program.

The Downtown Kelowna Association (DKA) is a not-for-profit Business Improvement Area (BIA) that markets and promotes Downtown Kelowna as a destination for shopping, dining, services, and multiple events. The organization has served Downtown Kelowna since 1989 and is one of the largest BIAs in British Columbia. The DKA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and provides services that address safety, security and cleanliness for our Downtown Kelowna members through our Downtown on Call and Clean Team programs in addition to our Marketing, Promotion and Event initiatives.

The Canada Summer Jobs program is essential for the DKA to staff its summer event program "Meet me On Bernard." Students hired through the program staff the 2-block closure of Bernard Avenue setting up games, outdoor seating areas and assisting visitors finding locations throughout the Downtown. Another student hired through the program takes on a Marketing Assistant position and actively manages our Social Media effort for the summer working both with our Events Manager and me as well as working independently creating content for our channels.

This year the program presented us with an unexpected issue that needed to be addressed. After taking the time to complete the application, I received notice that the Downtown Kelowna Association was not eligible for funding as in past years as it had been incorrectly determined that we were not a not-for-profit entity, assigning us a Public (government) designation. Upon further investigation I discovered that other BIAs were having the same issue while some others were not. It was indicated to me that since we received public funds from the city, we are not considered a not-for-profit.

The Downtown Kelowna Association is funded by its membership. Monies are collected by way of a levy on property taxes of Class 5 & 6 properties within the boundaries for which the Bylaw indicates. The existence of BIAs is mandated through the Community Charter in BC. The levy is collected by the city and then forwarded to the Association monthly. We operate under the Societies Act of British Columbia and are classified as a Not-For-Profit organization and governed by those guidelines as set out in the Societies Act of BC. Clearly, the DKA is indeed a not-for-profit entity.

To correct this error, I contacted our Member of Parliament Tracy Gray. MP Gray immediately contacted the federal Minister to correct the error. The government eventually backed off making the changes that would have seen us receive only half the funding as in years previous. While this was greatly welcomed and appreciated by me, the time it took to correct this error put us behind in hiring resulting in difficulty getting appropriate candidates for the open positions.

Hiring from the small pool left at the time we were approved to hire resulted in management issues with the summer team. First, we had difficulty filling all positions and then lost one staff to another job and another who just decided to leave.

In general, the process is both faulty and time consuming. The online application is tedious, lengthy and repetitive. Each year since the pandemic I have applied for the same number of positions. Each year, I have had to repeat the whole application process beginning to end. It would certainly be more efficient for all if we could simply indicate that we are applying for the same number of positions. Then we could change hourly rate, hours if necessary and re-calculate MERCs for the new year. This would save all an immense amount of time.

Approval from application completion to approval is too lengthy. As a not-for-profit, we cannot hire until we know we are approved. Finances dictate the process to be done this way. Then once approval is received, business is well into the summer hiring process. This puts those of us relying on CSJ money in an untoward position to hire as the pool has significantly shrunk limiting the number of applications received.

The name of the program, Canada Summer Jobs, is not current nor is it appropriate given the parameters under which participants are held to for hiring. Currently, the maximum number of hours is set at 35 weekly for 8 weeks. While the hours are within reason, the length of the program is not.

Training is essential when hiring students for a summer tenure. With the program only covering 8 weeks, the organization can be impacted in several different ways. In 2023, if I had started our students a week prior to the July 1st weekend they would have been done their 8 weeks by mid-August. We started the Meet me On Bernard students on the July 1st weekend and they were done their 8 weeks a full week before the Labour Day Weekend.

Since the CSJ program is 8 weeks in length, we have the students start the last week of June and employ them up to and including Labour Day Weekend. In 2023 this meant our students were employed for 10 weeks. We also pay these students the going rate for part time work in Kelowna which is \$17 - \$17.50 per hour. If we didn't do that, we would not receive many applications. The excess weeks and top up in hourly rate from the minimum wage are paid by the DKA.

Finally, I have found that the DKA's use of the Canada Summer Jobs program is beneficial to most our local MP's chosen priorities. The students work to assist and promote tourism, small businesses, not-for-profit organizations and more. A requirement of only 10% scoring on these initiatives seems low to me given the spirit of the program. If that score were higher within the total percentage to achieve approval, then the program would be more correctly addressing its original intention to not only give students and people entering the workforce a chance to gain experience but would also be addressing the priorities that our elected local MP has set for our community.

In conclusion, the Canada Summer Jobs program, while a valuable initiative, needs to be revisited and changed to address how our economy and employment atmosphere currently exist. Suggested changes to the program could include:

- Shorter, simpler application process.
- Re-use previous year's application if appropriate.
- Fast approval.
- Funding for a full summer of 10-11 weeks.
- Cover wages above minimum wage to facilitate more applications.
- Notify local MPs upon receipt of an application from within their Riding.

Thank you for allowing me to submit my thoughts on the Canada Summer Jobs program. I am available by email or telephone in the event you have any questions.

Regards,



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CC: MP Tracy Gray, Kelowna / Lake Country