

Home businesses booming here

Just don't break the law: City

By Joe Rogers
Staff Reporter

Home businesses in Winnipeg and Canada are reaching unprecedented levels but the City is warning the small number of home operators running illegal businesses to watch out.

Susan Lam, a home business operator and a board member of the Manitoba Home Business Advisory council, said the upward swing in home businesses is due to a combination of technology and people wanting to escape the rat race.

Lam cited a CIBC study that predicted there will be 750,000 self-employed women across Canada by 2010, marking the peak of a trend that started 15 ago.

She said large companies like Kodak and EDS, where she previously worked, encourage employees and consultants to work from home as a way to limit overhead.

Lam, who operates a business consulting service from her St. Vital home, said obtaining the appropriate permits and levels of liability insurance are crucial to staying on the right side of the law.

"Some people might find it overwhelming and it all costs money," she said, adding the cost can be offset by tax savings.

"It comes down to what point in life you're at."

Lam is also director of the Winnipeg Chapter of Women in a Home Office, which has members from life coaches to organic tea distributors, and said she's yet to find anyone to get in trouble or cause a disruption to the neighbourhood.

Arlene Shipper has been running her



Photo by Joe Rogers

Susan Lam is running one of the city's growing number of home-based businesses.

business from her River Heights home for two years.

She distributes Rooibus organic tea to 17 stores across Winnipeg and said she is mindful of following home business guidelines.

When she applied for her permit she

considered the potential impact of her business was low.

"I don't have many deliveries and seldom do I have have clients come to my house," said Shipper, adding her business is expanding.

Martin Grady, an administrator with the City's zoning department, said they go out of

their way stop businesses that may offend.

"We try to prevent any lewd stuff going on," said Grady, citing X-rated industries and dating services as examples of businesses that neighbours would likely get uptight about.

He said any home businesses that have the potential to cause disruptions to the neighbourhood will be subject to a zoning notice being posted on the property so the neighbourhood has a chance to voice any objections.

Some of these businesses include hair dressers, psychic readers and hobby breeders.

They also have the ability to place a time restriction on the permit to review the impact of the operation on the community at a later date.

He said if businesses set up illegally or exceed their permitted operations, City inspectors will enforce the zoning bylaw, but pointed out that this was very rare.

Terry Aseltine, a spokesperson for the City inspectors, said they don't do regular home business inspections because the incidence of wrongdoing is low.

Aseltine estimated there are about six cases a year of people either operating illegally, that is without the proper permits, or exceeding their permitted operations, such as a daycare that had more children in its care than it was licensed for.

Although the inspectors can initiate legal action if necessary, Aseltine said businesses in the past have complied once they've been visited.

"If they have the appropriate permits, they have nothing to worry about," said Aseltine.

All home businesses require a Home Occupation Permit and a Business License, and restricted business will also require a Regulatory License.

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