



## NEWS RELEASE

### JOINT STATEMENT

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### PROPOSED 2024 MUNICIPAL BUDGET INCREASE RAISES CONCERNS AMONG EDMONTON'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, UDI - Edmonton Metro, BOMA Edmonton, and NAIOP Edmonton, have collectively expressed concerns over the proposed tax hike for 2024, potentially escalating the annual impact to over 7%. In an open letter addressed to Edmonton City Council, Edmonton's member-funded business organizations emphasized the criticality of upholding fiscal responsibility while evaluating budgetary priorities based on their economic repercussions.

"Our message to the City Council is all about balance – finding ways to grow without piling on extra taxes." says Doug Griffiths, CEO of Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. "We're pushing for smart investments and careful spending, aiming to boost Edmonton's prosperity without burdening people with high taxes. Let's work together to build a future where smart financial decisions and a thriving economy go hand in hand for Edmonton's success."

#### Principles: Strategic Focus Areas

**a) Ignite new investment:** Budgets can be about many things, but a simple and effective metric is that any new dollars spent should be structured to bring back more to the community in return. Every public dollar invested should result in equal or better economic impacts for Edmonton.

**b) Focus on areas where we can succeed:** Not every problem needs to be dealt with at City Hall. Council should get out of whole lines of business that are not core mandates of a municipality and/or which would be better handled by the private sector, NGOs, or other orders of government. Aiming capital and operating resources at what will make the most impact within the municipal mandate is critical.

**c) Commit to measurable progress:** Do what municipal governments need to do best and excel at that. The "basic stuff" is the most important to most people (i.e. snow clearing, road conditions, well-maintained parks, efficient waste collection). A well-run city that provides the basics will support a high-functioning business community and citizenry. When infrastructure is not well-maintained and operations struggle, we lose credibility and a sense of civic pride.

The organizations also offer concrete recommendations aimed at optimizing the city's financial resources:

- **Leveraging EPCOR dividend:** Urging the direct utilization of the recently announced additional \$8 million annual dividend from EPCOR to mitigate property tax impacts instead of allocating it to new spending initiatives.
- **Reviewing Agencies, Boards, and Commissions:** Advocating for efficiency assessments and cost-saving measures within these entities, urging divestment from non-core mandates and areas covered by other governmental or private entities.
- **Transparent approach to labor cost increases:** Urging City Council to address pending labor agreements and police funding formula adjustments through operational spending for 2024 and beyond.
- **Refining budget priorities:** Recommending a focus on municipal strengths and strategic alignment with over 70 lines of business currently operated by the City of Edmonton.
- **Maximizing Economic Returns:** Focus on smart investments that encourage business growth, generate new tax revenue, and protect key economic areas such as business employment zones and downtown.
- **Budget Flexibility:** Evaluate the necessity of previously approved capital expenditures and adjust them to address funding shortfalls without escalating taxes.
- **Optimizing Capital Projects:** Evaluate, prioritize, delay, or cancel projects that don't align with essential city requirements. Ensure projects are not overbuilt and explore private sector involvement where feasible for effective planning and execution.

The business community urges Edmonton's City Council to engage in practical steps to eliminate the proposed budget increase. Now is the time to scrutinize all expenses and revenue sources in order to maximize the collective investments that our city requires to grow and succeed.

### **Edmonton Chamber of Commerce**

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) is the official voice of business in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region. With over 1,700 member companies that employ more than 100,000 people, we are one of the largest chambers in Canada and among the most influential business organizations in the country. The Chamber supports business success through providing thought leadership on issues, delivering professional development, and networking for businesses, and advocating for conditions that keep businesses competitive.

### **NAIOP Edmonton**

NAIOP is Edmonton's Commercial Real Estate Development Association. It is a leading voice for developers, owners and investors in office, industrial, retail and mixed-use real estate. Together, businesses that occupy these kinds of buildings contribute 50% of all property taxes in Edmonton. NAIOP's membership also includes real estate professionals in fields such as brokerage, finance, law, consulting, and construction management.

### **BOMA Edmonton**

The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) Edmonton is a leading commercial real estate association that provides trusted expertise and opportunities to members, government, and the public in the Edmonton Region and beyond. BOMA Edmonton is an advocate for commercial property owners, managers, operators, and service providers. As part of the broader economic development community of the area we serve, BOMA collaborates with partners to elevate commercial real estate and our communities.

**Urban Development Institute – Edmonton Metro**

The Urban Development Institute-Edmonton Metro (UDI) is a non-profit, member-driven organization representing leaders in the land development industry in all communities throughout the Edmonton Metropolitan region. UDI's members are development companies and the professionals involved in our industry, including planners, surveyors, landscape architects, engineers, contractors, finance managers, and others.

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