

December 9, 2019

Re: City of Regina 2020 Budget

Good evening Your Worship, members of Regina City Council. My name is John Hopkins and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce.

I am here tonight on behalf of our 1200 members to provide our perspective on the City Budget.

I want to begin tonight by talking about a very important part of our community, business owners. While some are of the view that business people are about profit at all costs and that it is a race to the bottom, I would like to assure you that the truth is that the vast majority of business people cannot and should not be put into that category. On the contrary, most businesspeople put it all on the line signing personal guarantees, creating jobs, creating opportunities and yes paying taxes. Moreover, I don't believe we can lose sight of the generosity of business. The reality is that a significant number of businesspeople give back to our community in so many ways be it economic initiatives, cultural initiatives, social initiative as well as sporting and many others. For many the paradigm has shifted and swung toward the triple bottom line of social, environment and financial responsibility.

With respect to the budget before you, I would like to offer the following comments.

First and foremost, we would like to express our appreciation for a preliminary budget with the lowest proposed rate of increase in a decade. Having said that I am sure it will come as no surprise that we would like to encourage Council to look to reduce the rate of increase without cutting services. While that may sound like an impossibility at first glance, we believe that it is possible. For example, in our review of the budget we note that you are projecting a \$6.5 million surplus. We would encourage you to take a portion of that surplus and use it to reduce the rate of increase.

In the not too distant past the City of Calgary released the 2018 Residential Property Taxes and Utility Charges Survey. Based on a representative bungalow in each community Regina's municipal property tax in isolation was found to be 4th best at \$1,727, 6th best on average property tax for single detached homes at \$3,248 and 3rd best on median property tax at \$2,998 . Based on the Calgary survey we are in a good position relative to property tax, but the utility charge continues to be a challenge. According to the report Regina comes in last when looking at utilities which combines water, sewer, garbage, land drainage, and other fees at \$129 monthly. However, the survey does not account for the unique circumstance being faced by Regina's water utility.

In closing I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here tonight and encourage you to continue to provide an environment that is conducive to growth, not simply for the sake of growth but for all that growth affords us - jobs, tax revenues and new opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here tonight.

John Hopkins

Chief Executive Officer

Regina & District Chamber of Commerce