**JOINT STATEMENT**

For Immediate Release

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| Edmonton Chamber of Commerce | A screenshot of a video game  Description automatically generated | Logo, company name  Description automatically generated |



**A BUDGET BALANCING ACT: BUSINESS CALLS TO ACTION**

**Organizations Respond to Edmonton’s Proposed 4-Year Spend**

Through written submissions and verbal presentations, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, NAIOP Edmonton, BOMA Edmonton and Urban Development Institute – Edmonton Metro, have individually expressed ideas for Edmonton’s City Council to consider with respect to the proposed 4-year budget. The following joint statement represents a summary of their collective ideas and calls to action as Edmonton City Council begins budget deliberations.

“This is an incredibly important time in our city’s future – we need to proceed with the utmost care and thoughtfulness,” said Jeffrey Sundquist, President and CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. “From what we have heard from both business and community leaders alike, the current proposed budget raises concerns in regards to both fiscal restraint and transformative projects. Many partners from across the city building spectrum are clear in their desire to see a more strategic budget.”

The following are key recommendations from Edmonton’s member-funded business organizations:

* **Refine priorities** – The proposed budget lacks a clear list of priorities for Edmonton, running contrary to the City’s goal of Priority Based Budgeting. Rather, it compiles a list of projects open for debate during a short public hearing process. For a more thoughtful discussion, the budget should clearly articulate priorities and associated trade-offs and compromises for the entire city.
* **Allow for more flexibility** – The proposed budget commits significant spending at the front end of its four-year cycle. Given Edmonton’s current fiscal challenges, these expenses could be delayed and reduced until new circumstances require their strategic investment.
* **Focus on what cities do best** – The proposed budget should focus on what municipal governments excel at, for example infrastructure maintenance, waste management, and transportation. Focus on the core mandate of the City to avoid stretching our resources and capacity and look for cost reduction on an ongoing way.
* **Keep taxes low** – The proposed budget shows $20 billion in spending and a possible tax increase of 16.4% over the next four years essentially to preserve the status quo. These figures do not include a proposed estimated additional $200 million in unfunded service packages. These increases will impact businesses big and small – from companies looking at Edmonton as a place to invest, to the local coffee shop in your neighbourhood.
* **Maximize return on investment** – The budget needs to focus on smart investments that leverage economic returns from the private sector. Each new dollar spent should have an equal or greater value to the community in return.

Kalen Anderson, Executive Director of the Urban Development Institute – Edmonton Metro, highlighted how the last four-year budget (2019-2022) was approved in a very different context. “Affordability is being eroded based on a wide variety of factors and businesses and households are struggling to keep up. The budget Edmonton approved this month needs to reflect that we are living in an even more volatile marketplace – decisions made today can severely impact Edmontonians, small business owners, and investors who are looking to make Edmonton their home in the future.”

One way forward is to prioritize existing spending, said Anand Pye, Executive Director of NAIOP Edmonton. “Edmontonians and businesses have been clear that they don’t want significant tax increases. We’ve been working to identify ways to decrease spending so that we can keep up with new priorities.” Pye also notes that capital expenditures should consider market comparables for construction in the private sector and costing data from other public jurisdictions. “Some practical ideas include getting out of some lines of business and getting a better deal for large city capital projects.”

Speaking to why this matters, Lisa Baroldi, President and CEO, BOMA Edmonton notes that “small and medium-sized companies are the backbone of our economy. It is imperative that we can make investments that bolster and grow these businesses so that they can continue to employ Edmontonians and contribute to the economic and social fabric of our communities.”

These insights from the business community are in keeping with community and public sentiment shared through the City of Edmonton’s engagement process, where feedback was solicited from community members with a range of identity factors:

* 73% of public said they were uncomfortable with property tax increases;
* 64% of public said they were uncomfortable with tax-supported debt for new projects;
* Respondents noted how their budgets are stretched thin and cost of living increases are making it more and more difficult to balance their budgets and afford essential items like food and utilities;
* Respondents noted how the City should concentrate on providing essential services and ensure it is not providing services that are the responsibility of the provincial or federal government;
* Respondents shared their perspective that Council should consider the financial risks and burdens tax increases will place on individuals and families;
* Respondents shared their view that the City should look to reduce administration costs.

In summary, the business community encourages City Council to consider all options available to reflect the priorities of Edmontonians. 

[**Edmonton Chamber of Commerce**](https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=chamber+of+commerce&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8)

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 and longest standing 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**](https://www.naiopedmonton.com/)

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 in these types of buildings represent 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**](https://bomaedm.ca/)

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**](https://www.udiedmonton.com/)

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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