

Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Halifax Chamber of Commerce
2020-2021 Budget Update

Presented To: Mayor Mike Savage & Councillors of the Halifax Regional Municipality

In February, we provided the municipality with our annual Pre-Budget Submission that outlined ten asks of government ranging from construction mitigation to ride-sharing to the type of accounting used for budget valuation. The Halifax Chamber is aware these are difficult times, both for our business community and the municipality. We want to ensure that we commend the municipality for the work you have done to mitigate the effects of covid-19 and the collaboration you have shown during our Nova Scotia Business & Labour Economic Coalition calls. We appreciate that tough decisions have been made and that many programs, projects and departments have seen cuts, reductions and deferrals. This is not an easy task and we assure you that the Halifax Chamber is pleased to see that the municipality is carefully restructuring the budget. With the re-introduction of this new budget, we would like to pose a few questions and suggestions prior to its approval.

- When available, the Chamber would like to see the municipality provide direct funding to rejuvenate and revitalize our business community and promote local shopping and tourism around our city and our many main streets. We suggest that the municipality direct funds from the event budget to organizations like Discover Halifax to encourage local consumption and increased activity with local businesses.
- We know that the deferral of property taxes will have an impact on the municipalities budget. The Chamber is pleased to see that the municipality has deferred some projects, like the Moving Forward Together Plan, but we ask if projects like the Cogswell Redevelopment plan would infuse cash into our economy through increased infrastructure spending to Halifax?
- When approving the budget, please take into consideration the idea that while some businesses may be allowed to open, many consumers may not return straight away to use their provided services, which may impact their ability to pay for taxes, permits, etc. If capital projects rely heavily on revenue of taxes these may be projects to defer or amend. We would ask you to further extend commercial tax deadlines for those with an inability to pay.
- Construction impacts businesses in a normal environment, and now with Covid-19, construction projects that physically impact a business, could further damage or hinder a business's ability to stay alive. In our pre-budget submission, we asked that businesses be supported during periods of construction. The need for this support is vital now as many previous revenue generators for businesses, like in restaurant dining may not be available for

months. We would like to suggest a further read of the [Construction Mitigation letter](#) sent to you by numerous businesses and organizations in Halifax.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your collaboration and support for the business community during this unprecedented time. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our letter further please don't hesitate to reach out to me or the Chamber's Policy Analyst, Kathleen@halifaxchamber.com.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sullivan
President and CEO
Halifax Chamber of Commerce