

November 23, 2021

Re: 2022-23 Town of Stratford Pre-Budget Submission

Dear Town of Stratford Council,

On behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce (GCACC), we write to you today regarding the Town of Stratford's pre-budget consultations. In this letter, we have outlined three recommendations for the Town to consider for the 2022-23 operating budget that will benefit both business owners and Stratford residents alike.

Over the past two years, businesses in Stratford and across our province have endured a variety of challenges due to the pandemic. As a result, the Chamber has developed several recommendations that the Town of Stratford may consider to help enable recovery and growth within Stratford. These recommendations were developed with the help of focus groups of Stratford business owners, the Chamber's advocacy committee, and various membership surveys.

The recommendations are as follows:

**1. *Invest in resources for business development and navigation***

It comes as no surprise that Stratford has been an excellent model for population growth across our province and region. While this is great for the overall economic growth, our membership has some concern that there has not been enough investment in resources to support business development and to help with navigation of programs for businesses already established in the Town. Examples of investments would include the introduction of a business development officer role, and similarly, or combined with, a business navigator role to help with attraction and retention of businesses in Stratford. That said, the Chamber recommends that the Town invests in resources for business development and navigation.

**2. *Enhance service delivery as it relates to economic growth***

Timely and effective service delivery is crucial for any municipality, especially for those with a rapidly growing population such as Stratford. The Town's trends in population growth encourage robust economic growth, with many franchises and businesses exploring Stratford as their next destination. That said, efficient service delivery plays a vital role for businesses trying to relocate and grow in Stratford. Areas such as development and signage permits, reducing red tape, and active engagement

and communications towards businesses are all examples of service delivery. We recognize that the Town already does a great job in many areas, but as the population grows, so does the need for further investments in service delivery. Any area where the Town can invest in enhancements towards service delivery would be recommended as a way to encourage economic growth by creating more efficiency.

**3. *Transparent planning for tax rate increases***

The Chamber recognizes that property tax rate increases, whether commercial or residential, are sometimes required to ensure fiscal sustainability and foster development in the Town. However, when doing so, our members believe that a more open and transparent process is needed when planning for any tax rate increases. This will allow businesses and residents alike to be better prepared for upcoming changes to their taxes and adequately budget for any increases. The Chamber recommends that the Town develop and publish a clear, transparent multi-year plan for potential property tax increases in Stratford as a way to allow residents and businesses to be better prepared.

On behalf of our membership, the Chamber would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide our pre-budget recommendations for the Town of Stratford and hope you strongly consider our submission. We look forward to growing our reach within Stratford and working collaboratively with the Town Council on the progress made up to this point.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Godfrey'.

Robert Godfrey

*Chief Executive Officer*

GCACC