

February 7, 2023

Re: 2023-24 Town of Cornwall Pre-Budget Submission

Attn: Shelley Rector, Manager of Corporate Services

Dear Mayor McCourt and Town of Cornwall Councillors;

On behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce (GCACC) and our over 1,150 members, we write to you regarding the Town of Cornwall's pre-budget consultations. In this letter, we have outlined several recommendations for the Town to consider for the 2023-24 operating budget that will benefit both business owners and Cornwall residents alike.

In recent years, Cornwall has seen tremendous growth in its population. According to the 2021 census, Cornwall is the fastest-growing community in PEI, with a growth rate of 22.9% since 2016 and the 14th fastest-growing community of over 5,000 people in Canada. It is crucial the Town invests in its infrastructure and services to support this population growth. It is also crucial the Town invest in growing and strengthening its business community to spur economic growth and so residents of Cornwall have services readily available to them.

In its March 2022 Consolidated Statement of Financial Position, the Town posted a \$31-million accumulated surplus. Our Chamber believes that the Town can use some of this accumulated surplus to invest in business development and growth to support the municipality's economy in years to come.

The recommendations are as follows:

1. *Invest in resources for business development*

Cornwall has been an impressive model for population growth across our province and region. While this is great for the overall economic growth, there is some concern from our membership that there should be more investment in resources to support business development and attracting businesses to Cornwall. An example of such investment would include the introduction of a business development officer role to help with the attraction and retention of businesses in Cornwall. That said, the Chamber recommends that the Town invest in resources for business development in some capacity.

2. *Enhance transit services*

As Cornwall's population grows, so does the demand on services – including demand for reliable and available public bus options. We have heard from businesses and residents in Cornwall that the current transit options, which lack timely and effective service, are a key problem when dealing with employees commuting to work, particularly when it comes to hiring youth. Efficient transit options play a vital role for businesses to grow. Greater access to transit means greater access to potential clients or customers, as well as current and future employees.

Our Chamber recommends the Town invest in expanding transit to allow buses to run later and have more frequent runs. Alternatively, the Town could invest further in On-Demand Transit Service, which allows residents to schedule a ride based on their own timeframes and route desired stop.

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

Service delivery plays an important role for businesses trying to grow in terms of red tape and obtaining municipal permits. 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. Examples of how what this could look like include hiring more staff to grow the town administration, particularly as there is a shortage of urban planners in communities across our province, and actively engaging, communicating, and consulting with the business community more frequently.

4. *Amend Zoning & Subdivision Control (Development) Bylaw Height and Unit Restrictions for Apartment Dwellings*

Cornwall's rapidly growing population is putting unprecedented stress on housing. Presently, Cornwall's development bylaw has limits for Apartment Dwellings that they shall not exceed 12 units, with a Maximum Building Height restriction of 40 feet (12.19m). With a 0.8% vacancy rate for PEI, additional housing supply is greatly needed.

To encourage housing supply development, our Chamber suggests the Town update its Zoning & Subdivision Control (Development) Bylaw to allow for taller buildings and more units in Apartment Dwellings. Not only would this allow for developers to bring much-needed units onto the market, this bylaw change could focus in particular on the Main Street area. Increasing possible units available in the urban core of Cornwall would also keep the urban/rural balance of Cornwall by preventing further sprawl into the rural farmlands important to the Town and its residents.

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 Cornwall, and hope you strongly consider our submission. We look forward to growing our reach within Cornwall and working collaboratively with the Town Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill DeBlois".

Bill DeBlois

GCACC 2022-23 Board President