

JANUARY 2024

2024 PRE-BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

PREPARED BY THE GREATER
SUMMERSIDE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PREPARED BY

Kaley O'Brien
CEO - GSCC





GSCC

CONNECTING BUSINESS WITH COMMUNITY.

Established in 1900, the Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce is a volunteer organization made up of business and professional people sharing a common goal — the economic development of the Greater Summerside area. Small and large businesses from virtually every sector and profession form the membership.

CHAMBER VALUES & GOALS

The Chamber represents and promotes its members. It works to promote and create business opportunities to foster and enhance economic development. The Chamber serves as an advocacy group for business members, bringing member concerns to municipal, provincial, national and international governments.

CHAMBER FUNCTION

Volunteer officers and directors are elected from the membership to choose policies based on the mandate of the members. Member volunteers are organized into committees to identify goals and programs. All members can share in the decision-making and shaping of the programs and services of their Chamber. The organization's success depends on the support and participation of its members.

The Chamber is financed partly through membership fees and partly through revenues derived from events and activities organized for members. It operates as a not-for-profit organization and incurs costs of operation and expenses similar to any other type of business.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 3 ----- Recommendations
Page 3 ----- ONE: Supporting Further Investment in Infrastructure
Page 4 ----- TWO: Support Economic Development Opportunities
Page 5 ----- THREE: Revitalize The Downtown Core
Page 6 ----- Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS

The GSCC distributed a pre-budget questionnaire to all its members, emphasizing specific areas for the City of Summerside to prioritize in supporting the business community.

From the top three areas of interest, we've compiled suggested recommendations for action within each category.

The majority of our members highlighted population growth, infrastructure, and healthcare as the key focal points for attention; these should be our Cities' primary focus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ONE: Supporting Further Investment in Infrastructure

Areas of focus:

- i) Housing
- ii) Healthcare
- iii) Roads, Sewer, and Water / additional infrastructure

1. Streamline Regulatory Processes:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of red tape, zoning regulations, and permitting processes to identify and eliminate unnecessary obstacles.
- Simplify and expedite procedures to encourage smoother and faster development, making it easier for businesses and investors to navigate the regulatory landscape.

2. Promote High-Density Development:

- Focus on population growth by promoting high-density areas.
- Encourage the development of mixed-use spaces and residential complexes in a sustainable manner.
- Consider rezoning specific areas to incentivize high density housing (Holland College area Downtown waterfront, etc)
- Reevaluate and reconsider decisions made by the city that encourages NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) mentality.

3. Revise Infrastructure Investment Strategy:

- Conduct a thorough assessment of basic infrastructure needs, including water, sewer, and roads. Explore cost-effective solutions and consider innovative financing models. Additionally, consider the city acting as a lender to established businesses, providing capital for infrastructure development that encourages growth and benefits the community.
 - Consider tax incentives within the Eco Park to recruit developers within the Green and Sustainable Energy sector
 - Consider Tax Incentive programs for first 5 years to high growth businesses
 - Consider utility discounts and incentive programs to encourage development in Summerside

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Financial Stability and Long-Term Planning:
 - Address the city's debt and lack of reserves by implementing measures for financial stability. Accelerate debt service payments and actively build reserves for economic growth. Explore alternative funding sources, such as collaboration with interested parties and inducements for developers, to diversify revenue streams and reduce dependency on external grant

4. Investing in Healthcare Infrastructure:

- Prioritize focus on expanding and stabilizing our PCH
- Advocate for hosting UPEI Med School programs at PCH: Collaborate with the new medical school to host internship and residency programs at the PCH. This hands-on experience creates a local talent pipeline, encouraging a connection to the community and increasing the likelihood of long-term commitment.
- Consider tax incentives for internists and healthcare providers purchasing housing to support the recruitment and retention of medical professionals.

TWO: Support Economic Development Opportunities Through:

1. Diversify High Paying Job Creation Opportunities:

- Encourage the development of diverse industries to create new high paying job opportunities. Focus on attracting businesses from different sectors to ensure a resilient and varied job market.

2. Revitalize Downtown Core - Mixed Used Development

- Invest in the revitalization of the downtown business center, emphasizing the creation of a thriving and attractive business environment. Consider initiatives such as tax incentives and infrastructure improvements to attract businesses and enhance the overall appeal of the area.
- More on this in Suggestion # 3

3. Promote Sustainable Economic Development:

- Prioritize economic growth without resorting to tax increases. Explore and create more Public-Private Partnership (P3) opportunities to share the financial burden of development projects.

4. Address Taxation Concerns and Encourage Population Growth:

- Review and adjust tax policies to address concerns about high taxes. Incentivize population growth by focusing on high-density areas and revisiting previously halted developments. Ensure that taxation is fair and proportional to the services provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. **Federal Partnership for Tourism Infrastructure:**

- Collaborate with the Federal government to secure investment in tourism infrastructure. Seek funding and support for projects that enhance the city's appeal to tourists, thereby boosting the tourism industry.
 - Consider reviving a Summerside golf course

6. **Tax Incentives for Business Development:**

- Introduce tax incentives for both new and existing businesses, including a tax holiday for the first five years of operation. Additionally, consider implementing rent subsidies to ease the financial burden on businesses during their initial stages.

THREE: Revitalize The Downtown Core

1. **Mixed-Use Development:**

- Promote the construction of multi-use buildings to encourage living and working downtown.
- Transform Smallman's into living spaces, condos, and a grocery store, attracting more residents and businesses.

2. **Business Development:**

- Focus on attracting and supporting authentic businesses.
- Seek to enforce active business in our downtown
- Provide resources and incentives for the establishment of real businesses that contribute to the local economy.

3. **Public Spaces:**

- Incentivize the upkeep and attractiveness of the downtown, and ensure proper development of public spaces.
- Invest in parks, libraries, and recreational facilities as "equalizers" that enhance the overall quality of life for residents.
- Consider pushing the downtown boundaries from ending at Samuels to extending to Mackenzie Drive.

4. **Retail Spaces and Small Businesses:**

- Make affordable retail spaces available to encourage small businesses and pop-ups.
- Develop tourist-centric waterfront spaces to support both permanent and temporary operations, boosting the local economy.

5. **Family-Friendly Amenities:**

- Identify and implement amenities that attract and retain families, such as parks, recreational facilities, and family-friendly events.
- Explore additional services that families may need to strengthen the community base.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Outdoor Programming:

- Introduce outdoor programming, such as an ice rink, to enhance community engagement and provide recreational opportunities.
- Green Spaces and Trails:
 - Develop parkland, walking trails, and passive green spaces to create a more environmentally friendly and enjoyable downtown environment.
 - Prioritize the integration of natural elements to improve the overall aesthetic and well-being of the community.

OVERALL

The primary emphasis is on population growth and the necessary infrastructure to support it. We suggest streamlining regulatory processes to facilitate smoother development and encouraging high-density housing in strategic locations. Infrastructure investment strategies are outlined above, including innovative financing models and tax incentives for sustainable energy developers.

Securing stable healthcare is prioritized, along with initiatives to host UPEI Med School programs and incentivize medical professionals

Do you think the current level of investment in infrastructure is adequate to support the growth of local businesses in Summerside?

54% YES
38% NO

Main challenges that your business faces in Summerside?

employees
ridiculously expensive basic infrastructure
training for employees
capital for expansion
skilled employees
basic infrastructure prohibitive zoning
cell service
funding

Do you believe our current taxation measures up against the service provided?

75% YES
25% NO

Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce:

Established in 1900, the Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce is a volunteer organization made up of business and professional people sharing a common goal – the economic development of the Greater Summerside area. Small and large businesses from virtually every sector and profession form the membership.

Contact Information:

Kaley O'Brien
CEO
kaley@summersidechamber.com