

WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL

Chamber of Commerce

**2024 County of Essex Budget
Submission**

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The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, representing nearly 700 member businesses and organizations employing over 30,000 people in Windsor and Essex County, offers the following recommendations for consideration in the upcoming budget. These proposals align with our mission to enhance the business environment, foster economic growth, and contribute to the overall prosperity of our community.

This year marks the first year of our business confidence survey and based on over 300 responses, the Chamber has identified several key priorities for local government. These include crime & theft, property taxes, and investment attraction. These priorities underpin many of the issues we have identified for County council and administration.

1. **Investment Attraction:**

- Leverage major projects, such as the Stellantis/LG EV battery plant and the Gordie Howe International Bridge, to attract additional investments from tier 1 and tier 2 suppliers/manufacturers in the automotive sector. Emphasize the transition to electric vehicles and the opportunities it presents.
- Utilize the new acute care hospital as a catalyst for attracting research and development firms and medical professionals to the region, addressing local healthcare needs and fostering economic growth.

2. **Transit Development:**

- As the upper-tier government of Essex County municipalities, develop a plan to expand connections to the City of Windsor through public transportation to help connect county and city residents with the job centres of the region.

3. **Small Business Property Tax Subclass:**

- Conduct a thorough study, drawing insights from successful implementations in cities like Toronto and Ottawa, to assess the feasibility and potential benefits of introducing a Small Business Property Tax Subclass.
- Consider eligibility criteria, tax discounts, and financial impacts to empower small businesses to reinvest in their operations, navigate economic challenges, and reduce overhead costs.
- Develop a framework that considers the unique responsibilities for tier-two municipalities that can be implemented among the various county municipalities should the county adopt the Small Business Property Tax Subclass in the future.

4. **Housing Affordability:**

- Collaborate with the Federal government to address challenges related to zoning changes set by the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund to secure additional funding to help cover expansion of housing and necessary infrastructure.

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- Recognize the urgency of addressing housing affordability to retain competitiveness and avoid falling behind other cities in attracting future investments.
- 5. Infrastructure**
 - Maintain and improve infrastructure including roads and bridges in a manner that fosters better transportation throughout the county including for land deemed suitable for industrial expansion.
 - Address the necessary power constraints that are limiting growth in the agriculture and greenhouse sector.
 - 6. Homelessness, Mental Health, and Addiction:**
 - Acknowledge the impact of homelessness, mental health, and addiction on the broader community, including businesses, and allocate resources to provide necessary support.
 - Recognize that addressing these issues contributes to a safer community, reduces property crimes, and enhances the overall well-being of residents.
 - 7. Environment**
 - Address environmental challenges such as flooding and shoreline erosion through means such as restoration and conservation while maintaining a balance to address the needs of businesses, industrial expansion, and residential development.
 - 8. Tax Transparency:**
 - Emulate best practices in tax transparency by providing citizens with a simple breakdown of where their tax dollars are allocated, similar to the approach in some jurisdictions, such as Australia. Implement a framework for this model to be easily implemented for each of the lower-tier municipalities.
 - Enhance public confidence by showcasing the value residents and businesses receive from their tax contributions.

These recommendations are presented with the best interests of Essex County and its residents in mind. We believe that by carefully considering and implementing these suggestions, the County can contribute to a more vibrant, inclusive, and economically prosperous community.

Thank you for your attention to these critical matters. We look forward to continued collaboration for the betterment of our region.

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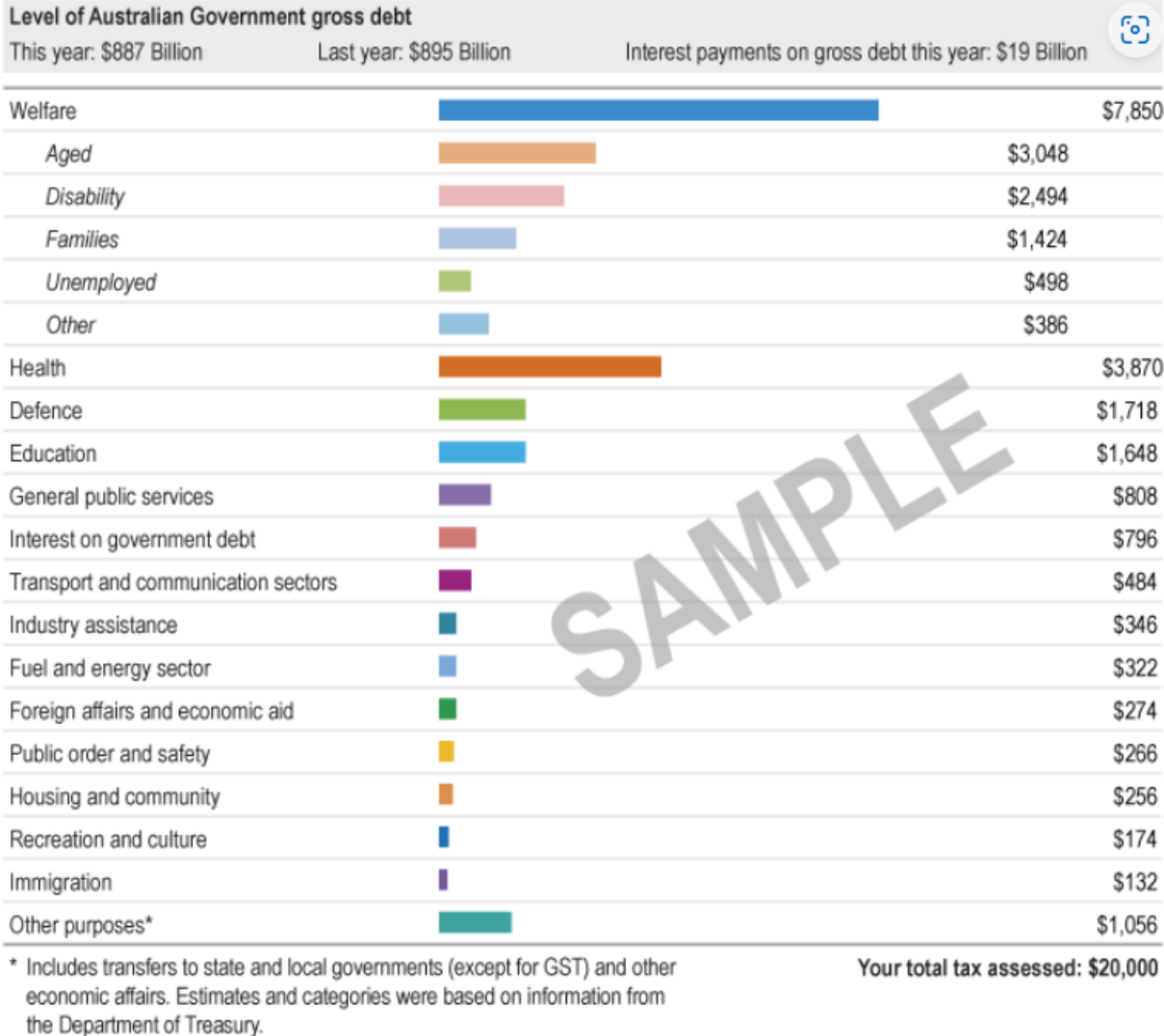


Figure 1: Australian Tax Receipt Sample

About the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce has been the leading voice for business in Windsor and Essex County for almost 150 years. Our mission is to be the key connector and advocate for the long-term business success of our members. The Chamber serves as an anchor for businesses in Windsor-Essex to connect with government of all levels, partners abroad, and with each other. The Chamber hosts regular “After Business” networking events, an annual Golf Tournament, and the Business Excellence Awards to celebrate our community’s best in business.