

From: Melissa Ryan
Sent: November 25, 2024 1:05 PM
To: 'Connor Lalonde' <clalonde@windsoressexchamber.org>
Subject: RE: 2025 Budget Submission

Good Afternoon Connor,

Thank you for sharing the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce's detailed policy recommendations. We appreciate the Chamber's commitment to enhancing business conditions in our region.

While the current budget under deliberation in four days does not account for all the items outlined, we value the insights provided and will consider integrating aspects of these recommendations into future planning discussions. Please continue to keep us informed about member priorities to align efforts where feasible.

Thank You.

MR

From: Connor Lalonde <clalonde@windsoressexchamber.org>
Sent: November 22, 2024 8:35 PM
To: Melissa Ryan <MRyan@countyofessex.ca>
Subject: 2025 Budget Submission

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Good Afternoon Melissa,

Please see the attached 2025 Chamber Budget Submission. We hope the County will take the policy asks under consideration.

Thank You,

Connor Lalonde (He/Him)

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WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL

Chamber of Commerce

**2025 County of Essex
Budget Submission**

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Chamber of Commerce

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber) is the leading Voice of Business in the Windsor-Essex region. The Chamber represents over 650 businesses with over 30,000 employees across our area in all sectors. Through our discussions with members, our annual business confidence survey, and working with our counterparts at the Canadian and Ontario Chambers, the Chamber has identified key areas of policy concern that impact businesses in our region. The unique two-tiered nature of the County of Essex provides a special opportunity for collaboration and leadership among the constituent municipalities under the County of Essex and with the City of Windsor.

Transit and Transportation

Businesses need workers and workers want jobs. However, a significant hurdle connecting these businesses and their job opportunities with workers is the ability of workers to get to the place of business when they lack their own means of transportation. Many areas of Windsor-Essex remain disconnected from public transit effectively preventing those job seekers who can't or choose not to drive, from accessing those opportunities and the potential economic mobility that comes with those opportunities. The lack of transit connectivity also hurts businesses that are dependent upon walk-in traffic by preventing a portion of our local population from accessing their businesses. An expansion of transit in coordination with the City of Windsor that is expansive in nature and considerate of those in need of accessible transportation can only bolster community and economic inclusion across the region.

Policy Asks

- Work with constituent municipalities, the City of Windsor and Transit Windsor to develop a comprehensive regional transit plan that connects population centres with commercial and industrial areas such as South Sandwich, Oldcastle, and Patillo Road.
- Work with local stakeholders to increase the accessibility of transit (Handi Transit) across the region to get people with disabilities that wish to work, the opportunity to access major job and resource centres as well as major retail and service areas.
- Work with the City of Windsor and Transit Windsor to explore and study regional transit models like those implemented in other jurisdictions such as Translink in Metro Vancouver and whether such systems are applicable for Windsor-Essex and what practices can be implemented to enhance connectivity across the region.

Electric Vehicles and Infrastructure

As the market for electric vehicles continues to grow, older neighborhoods and business districts that lack private parking, are at risk of being left behind in the transition. Without the vehicle charging infrastructure in place, older business districts dependent upon on-

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street parking could potentially lose access to those customers who want or need the infrastructure to visit those business districts.

Policy Asks

- Work with utility providers to develop a comprehensive plan to expand public electric vehicle infrastructure to neighbourhoods, parks and business districts dependent upon on-street parking.
- Work with homeowners and businesses to facilitate the installation of electric vehicle infrastructure where feasible to meet the needs of consumers that lack the property design to host private charging infrastructure (ex. driveways, garages, carports, etc.)

Small Business Property Tax Subclass

The Small Business Property Tax Subclass was created in 2020 by the Province of Ontario to allow municipalities to provide tax relief to the small businesses within their jurisdiction. The greatest feature of this subclass is its flexibility allowing the municipality to define the eligibility criteria and the level of savings (up to 30%) businesses receive on their tax bill. The subclass can allow businesses to pass their savings on to their customers, expand their operations, or invest in new equipment. At the same time the municipality can determine who qualifies and limit the impact to other members of their tax base.

Policy Asks

- Conduct a thorough study, drawing insights from successful implementations of the subclass in the cities of Toronto and Ottawa, to assess the feasibility and potential benefits of introducing a Small Business Property Tax Subclass at the upper tier municipal level.
- Develop and implement a framework that considers the unique responsibilities for two-tier municipalities that can be implemented among the various County municipalities should they adopt the Small Business Property Tax Subclass in the future.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is essential to the development of Windsor-Essex. This includes the necessary infrastructure for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and agricultural land uses. All these types of land use are essential for a thriving local economy and ensuring that future infrastructure planning is essential to each sector's success and regional economic development.

Policy Asks

- Increase the amount of serviced land to expand commercial, industrial, and residential land areas while maintaining a healthy approach to preserving farmland and naturalized areas.

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- Look into opportunities, initiatives, and potential funding sources to redevelop brown and grey lots to reduce the costs of infrastructure expansion into un-serviced land.
- Continue to expand infrastructure dedicated to alternative transportation options including CWATS while also maintaining and enhancing existing road infrastructure.
- Foster increased cooperation between constituent municipalities and the City of Windsor to promote increased efficiency among shared services and reduce costs to taxpayers.

Tax Transparency

Transparency is essential in maintaining the public's confidence in government at any level. Providing the public with simple and easy to understand information that helps them understand what their tax dollars are being spent on will help them engage when it comes to their knowledge of financial decisions and their impacts.

Policy Asks

- Provide residents and businesses with a breakdown of how their taxes are spent to help improve the confidence and understanding of municipal budgets. The Chamber leaves the methodology to this ask to the County. Please see figure 1 below as an example of the tax transparency the Chamber is asking for.

MPAC Assessments and Implementation

The Government of Ontario continues to delay the MPAC reassessments as it determines the best way forward post-COVID and the high increase in real estate prices. The Chamber is concerned about the impact of MPAC assessments on property owners both on residential and non-residential properties throughout the municipality. Businesses need stability to plan for their future operations and any impact from the restart of MPAC reassessments should be well communicated and informed to business and property owners.

Policy Asks

- Provide property owners with advanced notice of the impact to their tax bill that results from the restart of MPAC reassessments.
- Phase in any large property tax increases over a multi-year period to help businesses and homeowners better adjust to any increased costs of property ownership.

The Chamber believes that through an open and collaborative approach from all of the municipalities of the region, we can better thrive and grow together. The policy asks the Chamber has made are key in making Windsor-Essex a better place to live, play, work, and do business giving the region's businesses the best opportunity to prosper. The Chamber will always advocate for its members and the business community to bolster our region as a place to invest and grow.

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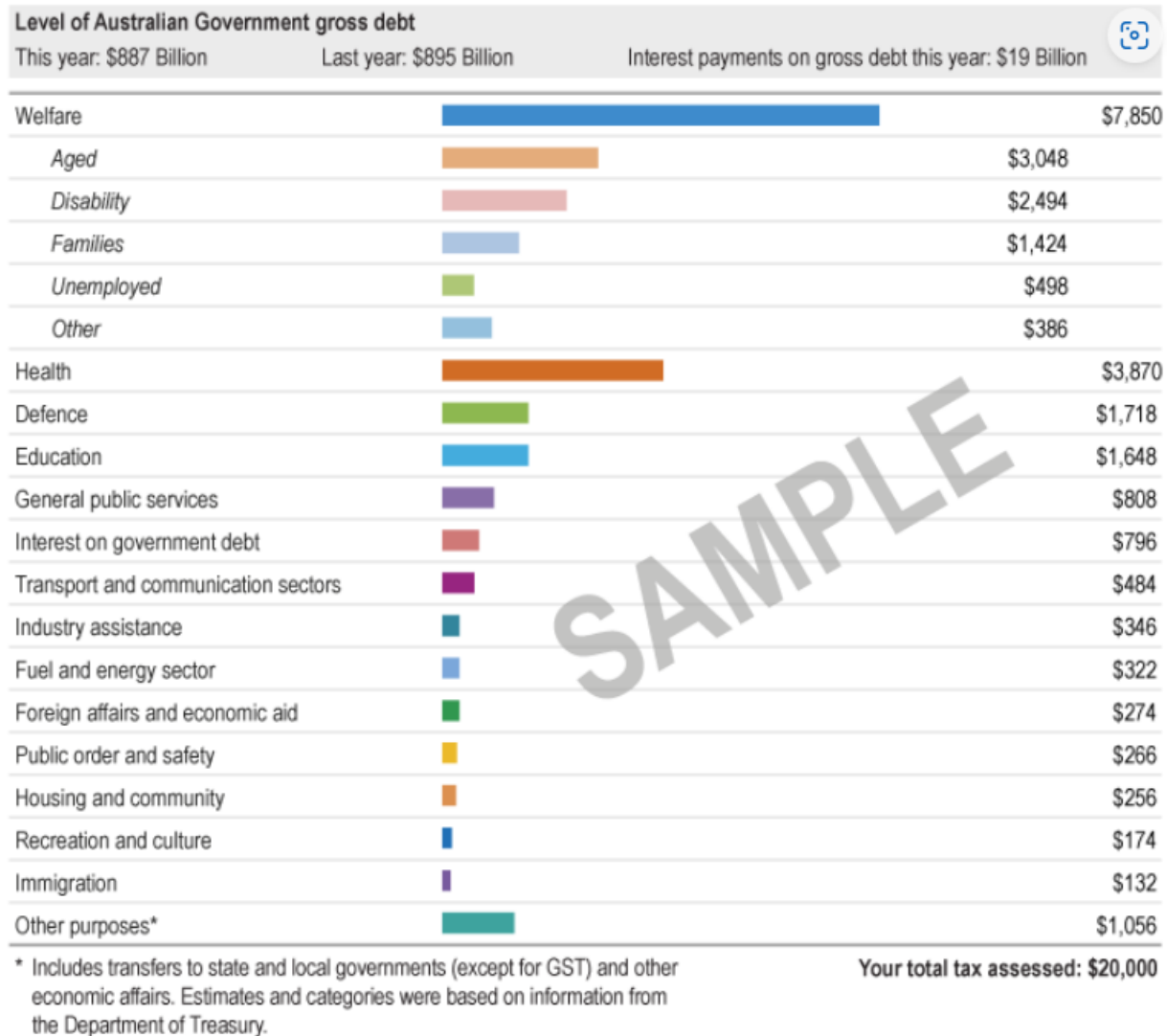


Figure 1: Australian Tax Receipt Sample

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.