

January 4, 2017

Hon. Kevin Doherty, Minister of Finance
Government of Saskatchewan
Room 312, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3

Dear Minister Doherty:

In November 2016, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce surveyed businesses to gain a more in-depth understanding of their priorities heading into the 2017/18 provincial Budget. We wanted to share these results with you and hope they will help inform your decision making as you look to finalize the Budget (see enclosed).

Our members have been feeling the impact of the economic downturn over the last couple years, as has the provincial government. The “slowdown” has gradually become the new normal and our business community has been making tough choices and necessary adjustments to remain viable. The appetite among our members for the provincial government to avoid making these choices and keep accumulating debt has dropped, 55% of respondents were uncomfortable or extremely uncomfortable with the government increasing provincial debt through borrowing for infrastructure investments, up from 35% in 2014. This discomfort is in addition to our organization’s longstanding position that the government should not routinely accumulate operating debt.

The survey also revealed that our membership strongly supports the government looking for cost control measures internally. Controlling the size and cost of government, as well as financial transparency within government were reoccurring themes among respondents. Health care was also seen as a prime area for spending control. Conversely, members indicated strong support for ongoing spending related to infrastructure, an innovation agenda, and investment attraction to help facilitate business growth.

We understand this is a difficult budget for your government but also want to remind you that the provincial business community has also been going through difficult years. Many local enterprises are close to a tipping point which would end or seriously impact their ability to continue, we ask that you please keep this in mind during your decision making. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input and if you have any questions or comments regarding the items in this letter or the attached survey results please contact the me directly.

Sincerely,



Steve McLellan
CEO, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce