

September 2025
Glen Savard, Director of Finance
City of Chilliwack
8550 Young Road
Chilliwack, BC V2P 8A4

Re: Input on the City's 2026 Financial Plan

Dear Glen,

On behalf of the Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce and the thousands of businesses we represent, we thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the City of Chilliwack's 2026 Financial Plan. For more than 110 years, the Chamber has served as the collective voice of business in our community, advocating for decisions that promote stability, prosperity, and long-term sustainability.

We recognize the difficult economic context facing our region and country. Rising costs of living, tight capital markets, and slower growth are placing pressure on households and businesses alike. In this climate, fiscal prudence and operational efficiency should guide the City's financial planning. Businesses are making hard choices to prioritize essentials, and we expect the same discipline from our municipal government.

As part of this work, the Chamber recently established a **Policy and Government Affairs Committee** with a clear strategic plan to strengthen our participation in municipal issues such as this. The committee's goal is to become more informed and well-versed on the challenges facing our business community today, and to ensure those perspectives are effectively shared with decision-makers. While this is the first time the Chamber has provided formal feedback on the City's financial plan, it reflects our commitment to building a more constructive, collaborative role in shaping policies that impact local business.

With that in mind, we respectfully highlight the following priorities for Council's consideration:

1. Restraint in Taxation and Spending

Chilliwack businesses rely on predictability and stability. In a time of economic strain, property tax increases should be kept as low as possible and focused only on essential services. We urge Council to resist adding discretionary or "nice-to-have" programs that expand the operating budget without clear, measurable returns.

2. Focus on Core Infrastructure

Investments in roads, utilities, drainage, and flood protection are not optional—they are fundamental to public safety, business continuity, and economic resilience. These must take precedence over new recreational amenities or non-essential capital projects.

3. Efficient Public Safety Spending

Public safety remains vital, and we acknowledge that police and fire services account for a significant portion of the City's budget. However, we encourage the City to continually review service delivery models, identify efficiencies, and ensure every dollar is used effectively, particularly as costs continue to escalate.

4. Streamlined Development and Economic Growth

While new spending is limited, the City can support growth at little cost by improving efficiency in planning, permitting, and approvals. Cutting red tape and ensuring timely decisions will reduce barriers for businesses and generate tax base growth without additional strain on existing taxpayers.

5. Long-Term Discipline

We commend the City for maintaining a 10-year financial outlook. Protecting reserves, reducing reliance on transfers, and prioritizing maintenance of existing assets over new commitments will strengthen Chilliwack's financial resilience. In this environment, it is better to do fewer things well than to spread resources too thin.

The Chamber urges Council to adopt a disciplined, conservative approach to budgeting for 2026—focusing on essentials, driving efficiencies, and resisting the temptation to grow spending beyond what the community can sustain. Together, we can navigate today's economic challenges while laying a stable foundation for future growth.

Respectfully,



Jason Metcalfe

Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair

Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce