

Advocate. Educate. Connect.



Advocacy

Expanding Edmonton's Economic Opportunity:

ADVOCACY PLAN 2016-18



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*NOTE: This document is subject to change.
As new policies and positions arise, the Advocacy Plan will be changed to reflect them.*

1. Our Advocacy Agenda

Edmonton's economy has prospered because of its clear economic advantages: robust natural resource industries, strong regional connections, a competitive business environment, a skilled labour force and an entrepreneurial business sector. Edmonton's entrepreneurs have generated jobs for workers, revenues for governments, and a vibrant community for all of us.

Edmonton competes for resources, investors, markets, customers, and workers in a rapidly-changing global economy. Our member businesses are proud to compete, because our products and services are among the best in the world. But sometimes, competing is harder than it needs to be, and the playing field isn't always level.

Artificial trade barriers make our products more expensive or harder to sell. Poor infrastructure makes it unsafe and inefficient to get our goods to customers. Unnecessary government paperwork eats up time we would rather spend with clients and family. High taxes make our products more expensive than our competitors'. Cumbersome processes delay projects and make it more attractive to build elsewhere.

As the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, we play a role in making our region more successful by advocating to all levels of government, across industry sectors, and to the community on behalf of our members. Advocacy can make a difference in removing barriers, simplifying processes, and allowing businesses to get back to doing what they do best. Advocacy is the difference between one voice raising a concern, and a chorus calling for change - the difference between speaking and being heard.



We develop policy positions, take them to municipal, provincial, and national decision tables through a policy process, and bring them forward in government consultations, meetings, and media commentary. We look for government decisions that address the issues we raise, for investments to come to the region, for Edmonton businesses to grow, and for innovative new companies to expand our range of industries. A clear strategy for advocacy helps our members succeed, our economy grow, and our city hold its own when competing on the world stage.



Our positions on priority issues are developed through our policy process, and those policy positions drive our advocacy work. The policy process helps identify priority issues and formulate policy recommendations, while the advocacy process takes those recommendations forward to the appropriate municipal, provincial, or federal bodies and other key stakeholders.



Figure 1: Chamber Policy Process

The advocacy function starts with our members. They identify issues and concerns in surveys, at meetings, events, online, and through other feedback mechanisms. Issues are taken to committees and working groups that determine whether policy work should be undertaken. If so, policy positions are developed by committees, researched by staff, reviewed by experts and senior business people, and confirmed by the board of directors. Our policy positions reflect the insights of the broader business community, beyond partisan politics and individual commercial interests.



Once policy positions and recommendations are developed, we take them forward to other Chambers, to strategic partners, to governments, to the media, and to the public in an effort to build a greater understanding and heighten awareness.

We also review the policy proposals of other Chambers. Where appropriate, we support their initiatives when they are being considered at Alberta and Canadian Chamber of Commerce decision tables. When an issue changes, or when governments act on the policy matters we raise, we ensure that members know. We report on general advocacy activities, and on matters which directly affect business operations.

The Edmonton Chamber has developed this three-year advocacy plan to outline how we will help expand Edmonton's economic opportunities. This "living document" will also be updated to reflect other positions on issues that may arise. To foster a resilient and growing Edmonton that can compete in the global economy, we will focus our advocacy efforts on:

- Expanding Business and Investor Confidence
- Expanding Trade and Access to Markets
- Expanding Regional and Northern Partnerships

With the broader business community working together, we can address challenges and get results. Collectively, we analyze costs, understand impacts, and identify better alternatives. Through our advocacy efforts, we knock on the doors of those whose decisions impact our success, and we bring business issues to the attention of all levels of government. We outline what is working well, and where we see areas for improvement. We work with our partners to find a better way to accomplish our shared goals. For maximum benefit, we focus advocacy efforts in areas that pose challenges for the majority of our members, and we look for results to enhance our members' success.

2. Expanding Business and Investor Confidence



Why are we doing it?

Business people make financial decisions every day. They assess the market for their goods and services, and evaluate the risks and opportunities in technological, taxation, regulatory, environmental, social, and political change. To determine whether a project makes economic sense, they need to understand current and future costs. Their confidence in current and future business prospects drives their decisions about staffing levels, expansion, construction, relocation, product development, marketing, and more. Uncertainty and unpredictability undermine that confidence because they add risk. When risks are too great or costs are too high, investments do not happen. Our advocacy efforts focus on ensuring that regulators, governments, and others understand the consequences of their decisions for business, and make changes with certainty and stability. In a stable business environment, economic opportunities are able to expand.

What are we doing?

We advocate for a predictable business environment so local companies can expand. We advocate for making Edmonton an attractive place to do business, so that new companies choose to come here after considering their near and not-so-near alternatives. We advocate for effective tax policies, so that businesses remain viable and competitive in a global market. Our business community has made substantial progress in reducing our environmental impact, and we advocate for effective, technologically-feasible programs that can further reduce those impacts without compromising jobs or the economy. In short, we advocate for regulations, taxes, and systems which allow for strong companies to be a vibrant part of strong communities.

2.1. Improve Regulatory Efficiencies

Objectives:

Edmonton businesses want their regulatory requirements to be simple to understand, easy to follow, and effective at getting their intended results. Onerous reporting requirements or slow processes add time and costs, especially for small or new businesses which do not have large administrative or legal units. Advocacy efforts focus on calling for changes which ensure fair rules, efficient processes, and timely decisions.



Table 2.1 Improve Regulatory Efficiency – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the City of Edmonton on performance benchmarks for permit approvals • Call on the City of Edmonton to review its permits, rezoning, inspection and approvals for development and other business activities • Call on the Government of Canada to assess income tax returns within 120 days or automatically accept them as filed • Take forward recommendations in the Red Tape Reduction policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for fair, efficient and timely review processes at regulatory agencies • Identify the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission’s barriers to business growth • Call on governments to launch a commission to simplify tax statutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Current Business Planning Advisory Committee, work with partners to identify issues and key performance indicators for city planning • Through the Current Business Planning Advisory Committee, work with partners to identify trends, decisions, and opportunities affecting long-term regulatory issues

2.2. Enhance Edmonton’s Competitive Position

Objectives:

Businesses choose where to locate, invest and grow, and those decisions create jobs and opportunity. Communities in Alberta, Canada, and around the world compete for business investments, and they each offer something different – quality of life and infrastructure, cost of construction and operations, and availability of land, buildings, and workers. They each pose different risks – rising taxes and costs, changing environmental or regulatory requirements, or increasing crime and security threats. Decreasing risk and increasing predictability make it easier for investors to see how the numbers on a project will play out. Conversely, unexpected, rapid or significant changes can compromise a once-profitable project, make prices unaffordable, result in job loss, or even make a business no longer viable. We want investing in Edmonton to be a sound business decision, and we focus our advocacy efforts on ensuring that Edmonton is a competitive, stable, predictable place to do business.



Table 2.2 Enhance Edmonton’s Competitive Position – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input to municipal, provincial and federal governments about their budgets: • Municipally, take forward recommendations related to the budget decisions’ impact on Edmonton’s attractiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability as a business hub • Provincially, take forward recommendations which call for stable, predictable, balanced provincial budgets, by controlling spending, using realistic forecasts, and applying a quality-based system to procurement practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the impacts of municipal tax increases which are greater than increases in inflation, population growth, and earnings • With our partners, identify issues affecting commercial space supply, quality and valuation in light of business attraction to the core • Identify issues and opportunities with a city charter • Call for removal of the \$10 million taxable capital limitation to the Small Business Deduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Finance and Taxation Committee, analyze municipal, provincial and federal budgets, statutes, regulations, levies and fees to identify emerging trends and issues • Increase awareness of business issues by organizing events and learning opportunities for the business community • Continue to assess municipal legislation and regulations, and identify opportunities for improvement <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Tables continued on Page 9</i></p>

Tables continued from Page 8



Table 2.2 Enhance Edmonton's Competitive Position – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federally, support recommendations to strengthen fiscal policy • Provide assessments of the municipal and provincial governments' budgets, so members understand the impact on their businesses • Working with the Calgary Chamber and other Chambers across the province, advocate for a sensible minimum wage and supports for companies challenged by a rapid wage increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take forward recommendations on taxation of corporate groups • Call for a review of processes for retroactive tax legislation • Call for accelerated capital cost allowance for oil sands, upgrading, mining and petroleum, consistent with other manufacturing industries • Call for a review of the taxation of transfers of family businesses • Call on the federal government to fairly index small business tax thresholds • Provide input to the Mayor's End Poverty Initiative, including a business definition of poverty and a process for effective business engagement on related issues • Identify a tax and fee regime for Alberta that generates stable provincial revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the involvement of foreign foundations in Canada's domestic affairs • Review the policy positions of partner Chambers, and identify opportunities for collaboration on research and advocacy • Work with our partners to address areas where governments are competing directly with private sector and creating an unfair competitive advantage

2.3. Encourage Effective Environmental Initiatives

Objectives:

Increasingly, customers look at what we produce and how we produce it. They care about the environmental impact of the products they use, how resources are extracted and shipped to market, and how the planet is protected. As businesses, we need to communicate the significant progress we have made in reducing our operational footprint, from constructing buildings to international LEED standards to developing cleaner technologies, and much more. But, we also need to meet our customers' ongoing environmental concerns, and advocate sensible approaches to government. We aim to meet world-class standards, and it makes the most sense for those standards to be the same across jurisdictions where we do business. We want programs that protect natural resources, not just tax revenues. We want regulations that are feasible, affordable, and based on science not politics.



Table 2.3 Encourage Effective Environmental Initiatives – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the City of Edmonton moves forward with its “The Way We Green” strategy, continue to call for social and economic impacts of environmental measures to be addressed • With our partners, provide input into the development of Edmonton’s Energy Transition Strategy • Review and provide recommendations on the provincial climate change strategy and royalty review initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following an inter-jurisdictional review, advocate for effective programs to promote adoption of alternative electricity • Encourage use of shared/co-generation energy as a way to reduce environmental impacts • Review how Edmonton and Alberta can champion the positive contributions of Alberta’s energy economy to the nation • Call for fair, straightforward and timely review processes at the Alberta Energy Regulator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Energy and Environment Committee, identify options for improving companies’ environmental record and increasing social license • Review the environmental benefits of a coordinated approach on Transportation and Utility Corridors at the regional, inter-provincial, and federal level

3. Expanding Trade and Access To Markets



Why are we doing it?

Businesses sell their goods or services to customers. They need to find customers, convince them to buy their product, and consistently provide what they need. Companies are each responsible for selling their products, but they often require the same basic conditions and infrastructure to be successful. Finding new customers is important, because that helps existing businesses grow. Understanding customers' changing needs is important, because that drives innovation. It requires technology for outreach, personal connections to open doors, and an understanding of the cultures and rules of different markets. Fibre optic networks allow us to exchange information and money quickly; roads and railways allow us to ship products quickly; air service allows us to travel quickly. When ideas and products can move to where they are needed, the businesses providing them expand.

What are we doing?

The movement of goods, services, people and investment are all essential to good business operations, and we identify priority initiatives to make those operations even stronger. When we hear the same concerns from several members, we identify barriers and look for solutions that will benefit the broader business community. When Edmonton businesses face challenges that others do not, we work to level the playing field. We recognize the importance of innovation in making businesses successful, and we call for a business environment that allows innovative ideas to come forward to the marketplace.

3.1. Encourage Innovation and Economic Diversification

Objectives:

Edmonton’s business community has long reflected our strengths in energy and agriculture, as well as our role as the provincial capital and home to several post-secondary institutions. As our city grew, our business community expanded to include new manufacturers and retailers, and new technology-based and research-driven companies. Our strong economic future will rely on innovation, by creating new knowledge to add value to existing products and resources and by developing new ways of solving problems. We call for alignment within the educational system; look for support from government programs and policies; and a change in approaches to innovation and commercialization. The Edmonton Chamber believes this will help new knowledge find a home in our city and expand diversity within our economy.



Table 3.1 Encourage Innovation and Economic Diversification – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call on the Alberta government to implement recommendations in the Alberta Value Added policy • Call on the Alberta government to implement recommendations in the Manufacturing and Processing policy • Call on the Alberta government to implement recommendations in the Economic Diversification policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call on the Alberta government to use a qualifications-based procurement process • Develop a policy on provincial and municipal strategies and tactics that could accelerate commercialization and business innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Trade and Market Access Committee, analyze regulatory, legislative, financial, program, political and other opportunities

3.2. Facilitate Trade by Reducing Barriers

Objectives:

Edmonton businesses are among the best in the world, and every day they compete for customers and investors. That competition, and the ability to voluntarily trade for whatever we need, creates incomes and a quality of life which are among the highest in the world. When the rules of the game are harder than they need to be, the Chamber will advocate for change. When regulations, fees, or taxes are not accomplishing what they are supposed to, we take the business perspective forward. At every opportunity, we identify ways to expand the flow of ideas, investments, and opportunities.



Table 3.2 Facilitate Trade by Reducing Barriers - Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for the Government of Canada to implement recommendations for a passport system of securities regulation • Develop a position on federal, provincial, and municipal policies, regulations and strategies needed to encourage more foreign direct investment • Develop a briefing on internal and external trade agreements, summarizing markets with the best potential for expanding exports and identifying barriers to accessing those markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for changes to improve the tax treatment of non-residents performing services in Canada • Call on the Government of Canada to improve immigration procedures for foreign students • Call on governments to include private training providers as certified educators of foreign students • Recommend ways to remove barriers to newly-identified markets • Identify barriers between western provinces, and work through the New West Partnership to remove them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call on the Government of Canada to ensure there are straightforward pathways to permanent residency for potential workers • Work with Chambers of Commerce across to continue to advocate for improvements in Canada's Agreement on Internal Trade

3.3. Support Responsible Infrastructure Development

Objectives:

Well-planned, well-functioning infrastructure allows people and products to get where they are going quickly and safely. City roads, transit and pedways determine commute times and quality of life; highways, railways and airports determine shipping times and production costs; and pipelines affect where we send energy resources. These infrastructure developments support our growth, but they come at both a financial and environmental cost. Infrastructure projects are necessary for business expansion, and we advocate for them to be built and operated in a way that respects safety, financial and environmental impacts.



Table 3.2 Facilitate Trade by Reducing Barriers - Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input to LRT development, pricing, and other municipal transportation issues • Call on the City of Edmonton to enhance its pedway system • Support recommendations for the nation-building pipelines, such as Northern Gateway, Energy East and Trans-Mountain Expansion • Support recommendations in the “District Energy for Alberta” policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for a coordinated approach to transportation infrastructure development, as per the recommendations in “Preparing for Alberta’s Growth by Securing Transportation Utility Corridors” • Support recommendations in “The Future of Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)” • Identify appropriate additional investments for the Yellowhead Highway given its role as a key east-west corridor • With the Edmonton Northern Secretariat, identify and advocate for northern infrastructure priorities • Provide support for the Trans Mountain pipeline by engaging in the regulatory process and conveying the positive impact for our region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Trade and Market Access Committee, identify other infrastructure priorities for the city and region

4. Expanding Regional and Northern Partnerships



Why are we doing it?

Our neighbours are some of our best customers, our elected officials are some of our strongest community advocates, and we are each critical to the other's success. As a Chamber, we want to strengthen business across northern Alberta, northern British Columbia and the western Arctic. Good working relationships with elected representatives and government officials mean that we can share information and ideas. Sharing expertise and business opportunities can build stronger communities within Edmonton and beyond our borders. By taking a broader perspective on our common challenges, like finding skilled workers and having adequate infrastructure, we can call for solutions which meet the greatest needs in the most effective way.

What are we doing?

With more than 1.3 million people, the Edmonton region is a sizeable consumer market – Canada's fifth largest region by population. The region is expected to grow to just under 2.2 million people over the next three decades. As a transportation, manufacturing, retail and geographic hub, Edmonton is naturally placed to partner with northern companies, governments, and industries. As a training hub and major population centre, Edmonton is well positioned to support workforce development. We are working to increase the business community's understanding of nearby markets and their opportunities, so members can better meet the needs of this growing, changing customer base. Similarly, Edmonton's businesses may have needs which northern firms are ready to meet, and we are working with our partners to identify them. Finding these opportunities and understanding their potential will expand economic success for all.

4.1. Optimize Edmonton Metro Region Collaboration

Objectives:

Collaboration between local governments, organizations and companies brings greater efficiencies to local administration and makes business expansions easier. When we see different agencies tackling the same issues, or when we see economic activity compromised by inter-jurisdictional wrangling, we call for reasonable solutions.



Table 4.1 Optimize Edmonton Metro Region Collaboration – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an effective working relationship with elected municipal, provincial, and federal representatives and officials • Call on the City of Edmonton to identify governance issues, and act on recommendations in the Capital Region Board • Participate in consultations on the Capital Region Board's growth management plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input into the City of Edmonton's potential formation of a municipal development corporation • Support Winter City initiatives to attract businesses and visitors • Support regional economic development and regional transit services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify additional opportunities for collaboration with regional business organizations • Promote further regional collaboration on mutually beneficial initiatives • Continue to work with regional Chambers of Commerce to further our region's economic interests

4.2. Strengthen Edmonton’s Northern Relationships

Objectives:

Edmonton companies can provide products, services and research capacity to a growing customer base in the north, and the Edmonton Northern Secretariat is the focal point for our work to expand those relationships. Advocacy activities will support the Secretariat’s work by bringing forward the opportunities that we collectively share in economic development, community well-being, and environmental sustainability. Where we see opportunities or issues that affect northern communities as well as our own, we act.



Table 4.2 Strengthen Edmonton’s Northern Relationships – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call on the Alberta government to adopt best practices in Aboriginal consultation • Identify diversity and inclusion strategies that work for business • Identify opportunities to build and enhance relationships at the 2016 Centrollia Arctic Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify mutually-beneficial advocacy opportunities with northern communities • Call for partnerships with northern communities in health, education, innovation and community development, as identified by the Northern Circumpolar Secretariat • Take forward advocacy initiatives identified by the Edmonton Northern Secretariat • Explore opportunities with the northern Alberta Chambers of Commerce, as well as those in British Columbia and the western Arctic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with our partners to expand the economic potential of the region to a national and international market. • Continue to partner with Northwest Territories and Yukon Chamber of Commerce on an annual conference

4.3. Strengthen Workforce Partnerships

Objectives:

Member companies need trained people to produce their goods, perform their services, and get the work of business done. Ensuring there are enough skilled people where and when they are needed takes relevant basic and post-secondary education systems, affordable and responsive training programs, effective immigration systems, and flexible governments. We advocate for more effective programs and systems, because our members are both employers of graduates and funders of the systems. Where there are barriers for skilled people to fill the jobs we create, we identify the productivity and social issues those barriers cause and propose solutions.

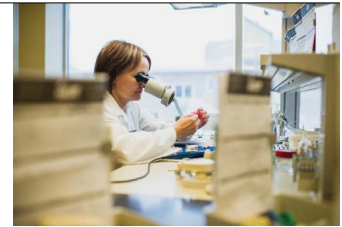


Table 4.3 Strengthen Workforce Partnerships – Actions and Decision Points

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an adequate supply of trained workers by advocating for changes to the Canada Job Grant and labour market programs, as per recommendations • Call on the Alberta government to reinstate and reinvigorate the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) • Support recommendations for career programming in the K-12 curriculum policy • Develop a policy position on the federal express entry immigration system • Identify diversity and inclusion strategies that work for business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call on the Alberta government to dedicate and increase funding to initiatives that facilitate workforce exposure opportunities for students across all programs and faculties • Call on the Government of Canada to improve immigration procedures for foreign students • Call on governments to include private training providers as certified educators of foreign students, and thereby increase their work opportunities in Alberta • Develop a policy on federal and provincial labour market spending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for adjustments to employer representation on the Canadian Employment Insurance Commission • Form strategic partnership with other Chambers and stakeholder groups to explore issues of common interest and best practices

5. How This Can Benefit Your Business

In all of our activities, we are a familiar voice to Edmontonians, a credible voice to media, and a trusted voice to government on the issues that matter to business. We are a strong partner with governments, think tanks, economic development agencies, other Chambers of Commerce, and post-secondary institutions in projects that expand our economy and our community. We organize events that provide information, insight, and networking opportunities, and we support mentorship programs to nurture entrepreneurship.

The advocacy function enables individual businesses to identify their interests and issues, work together to raise awareness about them, and get them addressed. The benefit to member businesses is that their priorities become the group's priorities, and the resources of the group can be dedicated to understanding those problems, identifying solutions, and getting action.

Advocacy means that not only do many businesses "sing from the same song sheet", they write the songs, set the music, draw the audience and get others singing too. This increases the likelihood that the views they convey will be heard, understood, and acted upon.

Our advocacy efforts encompass a wide range of social, environmental, and fiscal issues. In the short term, members benefit from governments' acknowledgement of limitations on taxation and regulation, and their limited introduction of unforeseen, unworkable or costly new measures. In the medium term, members benefit from progress on issues that affect their success: workforce and training initiatives, environmental policies, and utility and infrastructure development.

In the long term, members benefit from an Edmonton business climate that allows them to expand their customer base and product line, increase their workforce, and create a community we are all proud to call home.

