



November 24, 2019

City Council
cityclerk@Calgary.ca

Re: Budget for 2020

Dear Mayor Nenshi and members of Council,

Council has hard decisions to make this week and in the months to come to try to resolve the economic situation in which we find ourselves.

There is no easy way out, at least this year, from the legislative limits imposed by our imperfect property tax system. The Financial Task Force is working hard to identify and activate as many revenue tools as we can to help our Calgary economy in the longer term. I look forward to a few months from now when we will begin to propose some new revenue generating tools we hope will increase City revenues for future budgets. But that is not what we are here to discuss today.

Today we are discussing two decisions regarding the 2020 budget:

1. Will you vote to increase the City budget by 3% as previously planned, or 1.5% as a half measure or will you vote for a zero increase?
2. Will you vote to move the ratio of residential to non-residential property tax at least one more point in favour of non-residential?

The Calgary business community is about to be hit by the 'bow wave' of deferred tax increases resulting from the three years of PTP. In all the scenarios presented by the tax ratio committee, the outlook for the business community is not rosy.

There is, in fact, no decision Council can take this week that will make everyone happy or fix our economy. Your only choice is to decide on a way forward what will 'do the least harm.'

Decimating the small outdoor business districts will cause irreparable harm to Calgary.

I'd like to remind you that BIAs represent

- about 20% of Calgary businesses
- about 6,000 entrepreneurs
- employ about 55,000 people
- generate about \$11M in parking revenue annually

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- attract tourists
- support local and homebased businesses and artists
- pay for and organize street festivals and other seasonal events
- beautify your streets and oversee garbage collection and snow removal
- the City's most successful main streets

I know that all of you are aware of how crucial it is for you all to work together this November to make budget decisions that are courageous, to make decisions that are non-political, to make decisions that represent your highest, best use of your fiduciary responsibility to Calgary to do the least harm in this budget.

I urge you, do not increase your budget and please shift the tax ratio further to protect the business community. Show Calgarians that we are all in this together. Show Calgarians you feel our financial pain. Show Calgarians you are willing to do what it takes to restore their confidence in Council and in a future Calgary where businesses do not organize tax revolts and where worrisome numbers of business owners are not closing their businesses.

Help us all believe in a brighter, more prosperous tomorrow. Help Calgary's business community believe that better days are coming.

Oh and #buylocalyyc

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