

January 21, 2026

Dear Mayor Yu and Prince George City Council:

The Prince George Chamber of Commerce appreciates the fiscal conservatism and discipline council and staff have shown during a difficult time filled with so much economic uncertainty and social challenges. As you ponder the tough decisions that need to be made to approve the upcoming budget, we'd like to offer some constructive suggestions, along with some ideas to aid in the preparation and passing of future city budgets. More than ever, the Chamber asks that you intensify your efforts to identify operational saving opportunities, large and small, as part of a strategic budgeting approach focusing on community health, business and safety priorities.

With that in mind, we urge you to challenge the premise that a 5.98% tax levy increase is "required to maintain existing service levels." That premise presumes that all city services are being provided at 100% productivity, with no room for improvement. Internal efficiencies can and should be found by senior staff that will have little to no impact on service levels. The Exploration Place – one of our members – provides an excellent example of how this can be done. Faced with significant fiscal challenges, the museum took a hard look at its staffing levels and operations. Today, Exploration Place is offering more programs and services than it did two years ago with half of the staff, while bringing in more revenue.

Additionally, the Chamber supports you in challenging some of the underlying assumptions presented in the Operating Budget Guidelines 2026-2028 report. Seen through the lens of just the past three years, the City of Prince George's tax increases jump ahead of Chilliwack and Maple Ridge, while falling into much closer alignment to the increases seen in Saanich, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Coquitlam, and Victoria. Ultimately, however, it doesn't matter where Prince George falls on a comparative list. The focus must be on finding savings here in Prince George.

"Residents support a cautious, stability-focused budget aiming to protect and modestly enhance core safety, mobility and community services; invest strategically in key infrastructure; and seek efficiencies or reductions in internal/administrative areas such as Corporate Services," is the "overall direction for Council" identified at the conclusion of the 2026 Annual Budget Engagement Report.

Prince George Chamber of Commerce

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The Prince George Chamber of Commerce enthusiastically agrees.

Additionally, the Chamber urges you to focus on the final paragraph of the Budget 2026 Community Engagement Results, which reads:

“Despite the successes, the engagement results also reflect growing survey fatigue and persistent public skepticism about whether input influences decisions. While in-person, paper survey participation, and social media engagement increased, the Citizen Budget survey saw a decline in responses, mirroring comments expressing mistrust, frustration with taxes, and doubts about the value of engagement.”

With that in mind, the Chamber recommends that you direct staff to bring budget estimates to its citizen engagement surveys and events in 2026 to enable much deeper and insightful feedback from the community. Further to that, the Chamber would like work with the City of Prince George in 2026 to host an event where our members could connect with city staff to ask questions and offer input regarding business taxes. More information and more transparency can only benefit the efforts to identify savings opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration of our budget recommendations and suggestions for collaboration next year.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of the Prince George Chamber of Commerce

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