



Mayor David Bronconnier and Council
The City of Calgary
PO Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2M5

September 19, 2008

RE: Revisions to Quasi-Judicial Boards Filing Fees FCS 2008-32

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Calgary Chamber of Commerce represents over 3,200 members in the Calgary business community. On behalf of our membership, the Chamber would like to express its concern over the proposed filing fee increase for all quasi-judicial boards.

The Chamber believes the administrative report to the Standing Policy Committee on Finance and Corporate Services dated September 10, 2008 on Revision to Quasi-Judicial Board filing fees identifies a principle, cost-recovery, which focuses too narrowly on financial concerns of the City and does not consider the impacts on the community at large. In addition to the principle of cost recovery, the Chamber recognizes that access and deterrence are two issues of central importance to the debate over the new filing fees. More specifically, the Chamber acknowledges that fees must be set at a level that guarantees the widest access possible to the system while deterring frivolous assessment appeals. Discouragingly, the administrative report only makes passing reference to these considerations in the implications section and not as one of the main priorities in adjusting the fees.

This oversight could have been avoided had the City held meaningful stakeholder consultations with the Calgary business community – the constituency base likely to be the most impacted by the proposed changes. Adopting a more thorough and robust stakeholder consultation process in the development of reports on tax policy in the future will lead to a more informed set of recommendations, and would more likely garner the support of the Calgary business community prior to presenting proposals to the Standing Policy Committee on Finance and Corporate Services.

The Calgary Chamber of Commerce cannot support either of the proposed fee increase options presented in the report, and respectfully recommends that Council delay a vote on this report until such time as the business community has been sufficiently consulted and a new report including the principles suggested is issued. The Calgary Chamber of Commerce would be pleased to participate in the consultation process.

Sincerely,

Heather Douglas
President & CEO
Calgary Chamber of Commerce

Geoffrey M. Pradella
Vice President, Public and Government Affairs
Calgary Chamber of Commerce