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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Calgary Chamber of Commerce releases ‘Renaissance Calgary’ blueprint**

**Calgary, AB** – The Calgary Chamber of Commerce unveiled its initial blueprint of practical actions the newly elected City Council can undertake – actions that address members’ leading concerns about a deteriorating quality of life, declining business climate, and lack of confidence in the spending priorities and fiscal management of the city.

“The business community is worried with the direction our city is headed and is looking for new ideas and different approaches,” said Heather Douglas, President & CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. “In response, the Chamber has developed a new vision for the city called Renaissance Calgary.”

The vision aims to capitalize on the existing strengths of the city including economic prosperity, a clean environment, and a tremendous entrepreneurial spirit.

“Calgary has the potential to become the next great renaissance capital and model society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” said Douglas. “What’s required is a focus on excellence – in the way we live, the way we do business, and the way we’re governed.”

Recommendations from the Chamber’s new vision called *Renaissance Calgary: Blueprint for Building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century World-Leading Capital* include:

#### **The way we live**

- Improve public transit with emphasis on rapid bus transit and a more comprehensive LRT network.
- Expand high occupancy lanes.
- Put more police officers on foot patrol and take a zero-tolerance approach to crime.
- Approve developments that are high density, mixed use, and designed around transit hubs.
- Allow secondary suites in all neighbourhoods to alleviate the affordable housing crisis.
- Plan regionally – in particular, transportation design and water management issues.

#### **The way we do business**

- Reduce the administrative burden by folding business taxes into non-residential property taxes.
- Analyze business taxes and lower them if they fail to contribute to a competitive climate.
- Harmonize the business licence and taxing policies with neighbouring communities.
- Establish an inter-municipal licensing agreement that helps skilled workers move to different locations to do project work.

## **The way we're governed**

- Improve fiscal management by adopting a cost recovery approach to municipal services.
- Outsource services, wherever possible and cost-effective, to private companies.
- Expand the role of municipal auditor to ensure taxpayers receive value-for-money spent.
- Increase the transparency and accountability of the mayor and Council as well as broadening citizen participation by publishing council's record (Hansard) after every meeting; hosting semi-annual, televised meetings where citizens can question them on their plans and priorities; and schedule meetings on critical issues at convenient times to broaden citizen participation.
- Tighten municipal campaign financing by-laws with new disclosure requirements. Impose a ban on contributions from companies, unions, and all special interest groups; limit contributions to \$1,000/donor/candidate and publish the list; establish a conflict of interest registry; and require all surplus campaign funds to be donated to a registered not-for-profit charity.

The Chamber's blueprint policy project was prompted by a September survey of membership in which 80 per cent of respondents stated that they do not believe the city is a better place to live today than in 2004. The same survey indicated nearly 57 per cent of members feel the city isn't a better city to do business today than three years ago, and 65 per cent don't think Calgary is better managed than 2004.

"The Calgary Chamber of Commerce looks forward to working with the new municipal government and strongly encourages Calgarians – business owners and operators in particular – to participate in the process of building a Renaissance city, Calgary-style," said Douglas.

The full report is available on the Chamber's website: [www.calgarychamber.com](http://www.calgarychamber.com)

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### **About The Chamber:**

The Calgary Chamber of Commerce is a volunteer driven, not-for-profit, and non-partisan advocacy group whose mission is to lead and serve the Calgary business community, valuing its diversity.

On critical and emerging issues in public policy, The Chamber acts as the leading forum for debate, and advocates public policy solutions that improve the business climate on behalf of our members.

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