



**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**New survey results place the economy and energy industry competitiveness  
as top concerns of Calgary's business community**

(Calgary, AB) – The Calgary Chamber of Commerce released survey results today identifying the business community's most important issues for the coming year. The priorities, which will guide the work of the Chamber's committees and public policy advocacy efforts, are:

1. Weathering the current economic storm
2. Tax competitiveness (municipal, provincial and federal)
3. Energy industry competitiveness and environmental sustainability
4. Workforce development
5. Fiscal management and accountability of Calgary City Council

"The health of the economy, with emphasis on access to credit, small business sustainability and restoring investor confidence, is the main priority of our membership," said Heather Douglas, President & CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. "Our members face many challenges caused by the global economic downturn and recommend a proactive focus on measures to improve the competitiveness of Canada's business environment."

An important element of this focus, tax competitiveness at all levels of government, moved up one spot from last year's survey.

"High levels of taxation represent a significant challenge to business growth," said Douglas. "We urge all governments to reduce the burden and to include broad-based tax relief as part of any stimulus initiative."

Environmental sustainability including the challenge of 'greening' our energy production remains a key priority; however, our members are increasingly concerned with the competitiveness of the energy industry.

"Calgary's business community recognizes the tremendous contribution of the energy sector to Alberta's growth and prosperity," said Douglas. "Our members are troubled by the flight of capital investment to other jurisdictions including B.C. and Saskatchewan, and urge the Government of Alberta to move swiftly on its oil & gas competitiveness review and adopt any recommendations that will improve the operating environment of Alberta's most important industry."

The new entrant to this year's list is 'workforce development', which has replaced labour shortages in the top five.

"Chamber members do not have the same acute drivers in relation to labour as they did last year; however, they continue to recognize the importance of education and skills development to prepare for the next economic surge," commented Douglas.



For the first time in the Chamber's annual survey, fiscal management and accountability of Calgary City Council emerged as a top five priority.

"During the 3-year municipal budget last year our members focused on value for money and increased transparency and accountability," said Douglas. "We're pleased that City Council ultimately lowered the tax increase for 2009 and that the provincial government is moving forward on a Chamber recommendation to create an Office of Municipal General at the provincial level to conduct comprehensive reviews of budgeting, procurement and spending programs. The Chamber will continue to monitor and make recommendations in these areas."

Along with these overall priorities, the Chamber also surveyed members in greater detail on the most pressing municipal, provincial and federal issues.

Crime and public safety remains a major concern at the municipal level, as does city expansion and growth management. Fiscal management, infrastructure, interprovincial trade barriers and health care are still key issues at the provincial and federal levels.

"Calgary is a great place to be in business and one of the best in the world to operate during this period of economic uncertainty," said Douglas. "The Chamber has been an integral part of Calgary for the past 118 years. We have been through many business cycles and are confident that we will emerge as a global leader when the current storm passes. By identifying pressing issues and providing new ideas and solutions, the Chamber plays an important role as Calgary's newest think tank, dedicated to improving the business environment on behalf of our members."

**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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## BACKGROUND

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### 2009 Membership Issue Priority Survey Results Summary

Margin of error: +/- 5%, 19 times out of 20  
Survey conducted Feb. 2 - 13, 2009

#### 2009 Top Five Business Issues

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(Data derived from an open-ended question)

1. Weathering the current economic storm
2. Tax competitiveness (municipal, provincial and federal)
3. Energy industry competitiveness and environmental sustainability
4. Workforce development
5. Fiscal management and accountability of Calgary City Council

#### 2009 Top Five Municipal Issues

1. Fiscal management (spending and priority setting) by City Council
2. Crime / safety / policing
3. Transparency and accountability of City Council decision-making processes (e.g. Municipal Auditor)
4. City expansion and growth management (e.g. planning, urban sprawl)
5. Transportation – roads

#### 2009 Top Five Provincial Issues

1. Economy
2. Fiscal management (spending and priority setting)
3. Health care spending and delivery
4. Infrastructure (e.g. provincial highway system, schools, hospitals)
5. Corporate and small business tax competitiveness

#### 2009 Top Five Federal Issues

1. Economy
2. Fiscal management (spending and priority setting)
3. Corporate and small business tax competitiveness
4. Personal tax competitiveness
5. Interprovincial trade barriers / labour mobility

#### 2008 Top Five Business Issues

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(Data derived from an open-ended question)

1. Labour shortage
2. Transportation Infrastructure
3. Taxes (Federal, Provincial, Municipal)
4. Economic health and diversification
5. Environment (Land use, water, climate change)

#### 2008 Top Five Municipal Issues

1. City expansion and growth management (e.g. planning, urban sprawl)
2. Transportation – roads and transit
3. Public and personal safety
4. Fiscal management (spending and priority setting) by City Council
5. Quality of environment

#### 2008 Top Five Provincial Issues

1. Health care spending and delivery
2. Fiscal management (spending and priority setting)
3. Infrastructure (e.g. provincial highway system, schools, hospitals)
4. Post-secondary education (universities, colleges, polytechnics)
5. Environmental sustainability and land use planning

#### 2008 Top Five Federal Issues

1. Fiscal management (spending and priority setting)
2. Personal tax competitiveness
3. Interprovincial trade barriers/labour mobility
4. Corporate and small business tax competitiveness
5. Infrastructure investment