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Proposed Changes to Property Tax Model Welcome
Chamber recommendations included in independent report

SASKATOON, SK – August 22, 2022 – Small and medium size businesses could benefit the most from proposed changes to Saskatchewan's property tax model based on an expert study commissioned by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities (SUMA) that outlines how the model could be made more simple, fair and transparent.

The third-party report was prepared by the International Property Tax Institute (IPTI) to undertake an independent review of the way in which the property assessment in Saskatchewan operates compared to best practices and approaches from other jurisdictions. The study was completed in April 2022 and tabled with Saskatoon City Council's Governance and Priorities Committee today.

"We thank municipal leaders for undertaking this important work and engaging experts to take a fresh look at this file," says Jason Aebig, CEO of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. "Business owners have shared their challenges with the current model and ways that it could be improved. They will be eager to see improvements introduced prior to the 2025 revaluation year."

In November 2021, the Saskatoon Chamber advanced three key recommendations to provincial and municipal officials, endorsed by Saskatchewan's provincial chamber network:

1. **Competition and Stability:** Shift from the current 4-year assessment cycle process to a province wide 2-year assessment cycle to ensure that re-valuations and baseline data reflects a more current market value. If moving to a shortened assessment cycle is not viable at this time, consider allowing larger urban centers, with assessment capabilities, the jurisdictional authority to complete reassessments on shorter cycles.
2. **Equity:** Remove the tiered classification system for different property types so that all properties are assessed based upon 100% of their value.
3. **Simplification and Transparency:** Formulate a committee comprised of community stakeholders and tax experts to begin with the end in mind, by breaking down the property tax system ensuring simplicity and ease of use. End user understanding of the process will lead to less confusion and unnecessary appeals based upon lack of knowledge.

"We are pleased to see that the report reflects the Chamber's longstanding recommendations for change. Our property tax model is overly complicated and cumbersome for the average business owner," says Aebig. "Many are often left holding a huge, unexpected tax bill without an understanding of how it was calculated, let alone enough time to plan for it or appeal it."

"The present system is also a potential barrier to Saskatchewan's economic growth," adds Aebig, citing the report's view that "there are risks of reputational damage, and loss of confidence, if steps are not taken to improve the property tax system in the province."

The Chamber thanks Saskatoon Mayor Charlie Clark and the provincial Minister Responsible for Government Relations, Don McMorris for their commitments to consult with businesses on the findings of the report.

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The Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce is Saskatoon's voice for business, and biggest business network, representing community-minded businesses, organizations and leaders who want the best for their city. Learn more at saskatoonchamber.com.

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