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Subject: Western Canada Growth Strategy Consultation

Hello,

The City of Edmonton appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Western Canadian Growth Strategy Consultation. Please find enclosed responses to your questions, as prepared by the City of Edmonton Administration.

City Administration looks forward to continued collaboration and further engagement opportunities as Western Economic Diversification Canada undertakes its work to finalize and implement this important strategy. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this submission.



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Q1. Stronger Western Canadian Economy

What does a stronger western Canadian economy look like 10 years from now?

- Greater share of professional, educational, and health services with an emphasis on the export of these services, and a reduced reliance on energy sector.
- Increase local and regional economic growth in general.
 - For example, because Indigenous Nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs tend to reinvest profits at the local level, provide employment for and subcontracting to local people and businesses, and be committed to the long-term growth of the region.

Q2. New Growth in Western Canada

What are the best ways to spur new growth in western Canada?

Increase Support for Emerging Opportunities and Knowledge Economy

- The City of Edmonton is exploring ways it can support a healthy innovation ecosystem in Edmonton, while also ensuring ongoing success in traditional industries and advancement of other priorities, such as climate resiliency.
 - As we transition between the dominance of traditional sectors into other emerging sectors (and the evolution of traditional sectors to meet changing realities through innovation), consideration could be given to dedicating a portion of federal investment to technology innovation that can be applied to increase the competitiveness of, and transform, western Canada's traditional sectors (i.e. energy and food and agribusiness).
 - Additional federal funding to support commercialization of technologies that can assist in energy transition and climate adaptation would also be aligned with the City of Edmonton's 10-year climate resiliency goal.
- Support areas of identified strength within innovation ecosystems.
 - In Edmonton, for example, this can mean partnering with private and public and sectors and post-secondary institutions to leverage Edmonton's strength in Artificial Intelligence. Such support would be complementary to funding already provided in Quebec through the Innovation Superclusters initiative, which can further position Canada as a leader in Artificial Intelligence.
- Explore additional tranches of funding for Innovation Superclusters through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

- The work to put forward proposals, even among non-successful applicants, is not wasted. The local collaboration required to put together a competitive application creates new partnerships and opportunities, even in cases when federal funding is not achieved. This type of collaboration should be encouraged and supported.
- Explore opportunities for supporting social entrepreneurship.
 - Social entrepreneurship activities happen at a local level; they address social barriers, promote community development, and create jobs and stability for families.
 - Emerging sectors are growing, such as Indigenous tourism that supports locally owned and based companies. Edmonton is seen as a hub for Indigenous events and celebrations which have seen growth and could be further expanded.
- Build on existing strengths in knowledge-based products and services such as engineering and project management services, health care and post secondary education that target opportunities in emerging markets such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- Enhance strategic marketing efforts to attract investments.
- Invest in education and skills training in the right places (e.g. based on market demand and/or emerging labour market trends), and in the ability to monitor the health and progress of the economy (i.e. data collection).

Q3. Indigenous Economic Growth

What will help the Indigenous economy continue to grow?

- The City of Edmonton is increasingly approached by Indigenous governments and Indigenous community-owned and privately-owned businesses seeking to participate in the City's business opportunities and procurement. With increased efforts in consultation and engagement with Indigenous nations related to major projects, this interest is expected to continue to grow.
- Western Economic Diversification can support Indigenous economic growth by encouraging and equipping municipal and provincial governments in western Canada to include Indigenous nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs in their procurement processes (see Economic Participation of Underrepresented Groups, above).
- Supporting Indigenous participation in municipal and provincial procurement processes provides an opportunity for municipal and provincial governments to:
 - Grow and improve relationships with Indigenous nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs;
 - Involve nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs in major projects on which they may have provided input or been consulted, where a suitable opportunity exists;
 - Level the playing field among all orders of government and industry for future economic participation and growth by Indigenous nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs by building awareness of the economic potential and contributions of Indigenous nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs; and

- Increase local and regional economic growth in general, because Indigenous nations, their businesses and entrepreneurs tend to reinvest profits at the local level; provide employment for and subcontracting to local people and businesses, and be committed to the long-term growth of the region.

Note: This recommendation is linked closely to Economic Participation of Underrepresented Groups, see comments below.

Q4. Economic Participation of Underrepresented Groups

How can we improve economic participation in the west of underrepresented groups, including women, youth and new immigrants?

- Encourage broader economic participation of businesses owned by or committed to employing members of underrepresented groups through targeted local, social and Indigenous procurement initiatives in municipal and provincial procurement processes.
 - Provide municipalities and provinces with clarity around regulations governing local, social and Indigenous procurement initiatives focusing on trade agreements.
 - Build municipal and provincial capacity for local, social and Indigenous procurement initiatives by providing samples, templates and tools that can be integrated into their existing processes.
 - Reward innovation in supplier diversity by incentivizing funding for projects whose proponents build local, social and Indigenous procurement practices into their processes.

This is closely linked to the Indigenous Economic Growth recommendation above.

- Consult directly with impacted groups to determine social/cultural/economic barriers (e.g. discrimination, lack of access, etc) and to understand behavioural tendencies.
- Invest in child care to increase participation by women.
- Enhance programs such as language training for new immigrants to ensure that they can integrate quickly into the economy.
- Increase flexibility, resources and appropriate programming to ensure recognition of foreign credentials occurs in reasonable (shorter) timeframes.

Q. 5 Working Together to Grow the Regional Economy

How can governments, industry and western Canadians work together to grow the regional economy?

- Clarity of Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities:
 - Define expectations for each order of government, as well as industry.
 - Clear communication across orders of government, including sharing of information and research.
 - Define western Canadian economic development priorities in consultation with all orders of government and stakeholders that transcend the local priorities but are strongly informed by areas (regions) of localized strength.

- Information Gathering/Data:
 - Set out performance measures, targets, and indicators, etc, that are measurable and achievable.
 - Coordinate an approach to collect as much information as possible around the labour market (e.g. skills mismatches, underutilization of labour pools) and future investment opportunities (e.g. innovation corridors/opportunities).
- Relationships and Partnerships:
 - Working closely with the private sector to keep on top of emerging opportunities and issues (e.g. labour shortages, surpluses, etc.).
 - Coordination with postsecondary and vocational programs to ensure skills/training aligns with future labour market needs.
 - Coordination across provincial governments to strengthen internal trade and reduce regulatory barriers for domestic trade.
- Increased flexibility in provincial licensing arrangements for both professionals and those working in trades who want to work in a Western province.

Alignment of Investments and Support to Regional/Local Economic Development Priorities:

- Alignment - Regional Prosperity and Priority Setting:
 - The City of Edmonton has identified regional prosperity as one of four goals in its 10-year strategic plan, which highlights the importance the City places on economic development.
 - While having federal economic development priorities for driving growth is essential, deals happen at the local level. Through Edmonton Global, the Edmonton Region has identified four focus sectors in its foreign direct investment work -- food and agribusiness, manufacturing/advanced manufacturing, health and energy -- and has identified AI and other tech innovation as central to unleashing opportunities in these sectors. Looking for opportunities to align investments to already established regional priorities can ensure that limited investment dollars stretch as far as they can. These priority sectors will also help build capacity in sectors of strength (energy) while providing for diversity in other emerging sectors.
 - Investing in regional priorities can also be achieved by providing direct funding support to the regional economic development organizations that are making global connections and attracting investment to the West.
 - The Government of Canada should commit to ongoing grant funding to Edmonton Global to enable the success of that organization and ensure that the Edmonton Region can be successfully positioned to international markets over the long term.

- Core Infrastructure Funding:
 - With 70 per cent of the world's population expected to be living in urban areas by 2050, federal core infrastructure programs remain as important as ever for major city-regions in the West. Partnering with municipalities and provinces on needed city building infrastructure they identify as important, such as Light Rail Transit, is a huge economic driver, and an important space for the federal government to occupy. Providing infrastructure funding to support transportation, transit and other infrastructure keeps goods and products moving in western Canada, and makes cities more attractive for skilled workers.
- Foreign Direct Investment:
 - Embedding local and regional priorities in Canada's foreign direct investment work is key.
 - Partnering with local business, municipalities and economic development agencies not only in the participation in trade missions but in the design of them is essential.
 - While the Government of Canada may have a clear picture of its focus markets from a federal perspective, economic development ultimately happens in communities and regions. An organizing principle of federal foreign direct investment activities should be that it also meets the needs of local jurisdictions. This can increase the relevance of FDI activity and increase the likelihood that leads can translate into investment on the ground.

Enhanced Opportunities for Collaboration with Communities:

- Encourage greater economic development collaboration, planning coordination and investor attraction between neighbouring jurisdictions.
- Include both Indigenous (First Nations, Metis Settlements) and non-Indigenous communities (rural and urban municipalities), and regional planning and economic development boards in this work.
- Incentivize and encourage collaboration with program and project funding that rewards collaborative organizing and activity.
- The First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) - a federal program funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Cando - is a positive example of supporting and facilitating regional economic development collaboration.
 - Since 2016, the City of Edmonton has participated successfully in this program with the neighbouring Enoch Cree Nation.