

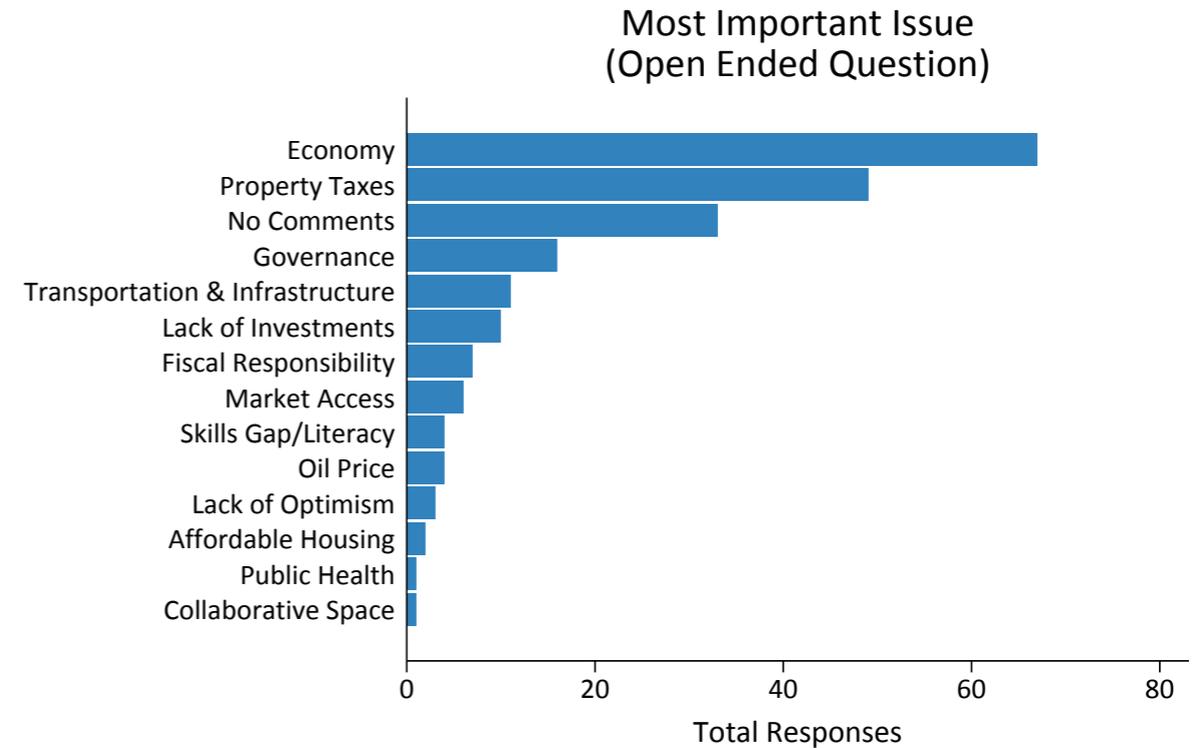
THE POLICY PRIORITIES OF THE CALGARY BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Written by Jack Lucas

Many of Calgary’s most pressing municipal policy issues, from economic development to infrastructure to business recruitment, involve close relations between municipal government and the local business community. To understand the preferences and priorities of the Calgary business community, the School of Public Policy partnered with the Calgary Chamber of Commerce to ask local businesses a series of questions identical to those in a simultaneous public opinion survey undertaken by Forum Research. We received a total of 214 responses to the survey of local businesses, along with 2,001 complete responses to the public opinion survey.¹

At the beginning of our survey, we asked our business respondents to describe the most important issue facing the City of Calgary. We then sorted these open-ended responses into the fourteen categories listed in the figure. The economy dominated the results, capturing nearly a third of the total responses. Property tax relief is also clearly important to local businesses. Other issues ranging from governance to infrastructure to market access and oil prices were also mentioned by at least five respondents.

How do these priorities compare to those of the general public in Calgary? One way to answer this question is to compare “issue importance” scores, ranging from zero to ten, which we asked in both surveys for nine areas of municipal spending. The results reveal several shared priorities. For instance, businesses and the general public agree that recruiting new businesses to Calgary is highly important – of the nine spending areas, this issue was ranked first in importance by business respondents and third by the general public. Policing and transportation infrastructure were also ranked highly



in both surveys. A more challenging policy area is “tax relief for local businesses”: while the public felt the issue was fairly important (the average score was 5.4/10), it was ranked lower (7th) among the general public than among business respondents (3rd). As the city continues to discuss solutions to address declining non-residential property value assessments in the city’s downtown core and the accompanied tax burden shift to suburban businesses, communication and discussion between the business community, municipal policymakers, and the general public on this issue will clearly need to be a priority.

1 For additional data on both surveys, along with technical documentation, data, and replication files, please visit <https://dataverse.scholarsportal.info/dataverse/jacklucas>