

January 22, 2026

Mayor Clarke,

On behalf of the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to submit the 2025 CBRM Business-Friendly Report Card as a formal pre-budget submission to be considered during the development of the 2026 municipal budget.

This report is based on direct input from local businesses operating across the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. The survey was completed by 31 Chamber members representing a range of industries, business sizes, and communities. While not intended to be fully representative of all businesses, the findings provide meaningful insight into current conditions and identify clear areas where municipal action can strengthen the local business environment.

Overall, respondents rated CBRM's business-friendliness at 2.7 out of 5, reflecting moderate satisfaction alongside clear opportunities for improvement. When broken down by category, several themes emerged consistently and are particularly relevant to the upcoming budget process.

Key findings from the Report Card include the following:

- Barriers and costs were identified as a significant concern, particularly related to permitting timelines, process clarity, and commercial property tax rates. Many businesses indicated that high taxes and administrative delays influence decisions to delay or cancel investment.
- Transportation and infrastructure received mixed feedback, with respondents highlighting the need for continued road maintenance, improved transit coverage, and investments that support accessibility and logistics.
- Crime and safety concerns continue to affect business operations, with more than half of respondents reporting that safety issues have influenced decisions related to hours of operation, staffing, and location.
- Communication and engagement emerged as an area for improvement, with many businesses unsure if their input is meaningfully reflected in municipal decision-making.

It is important to note that the report also highlights a strong willingness within the business community to engage constructively. Eighty percent of respondents indicated that they would participate in policy and advocacy discussions hosted by

the Chamber, demonstrating a readiness to collaborate on recommendations for effective solutions to shared concerns.

Based on these findings, the Chamber respectfully recommends that the 2026 municipal budget consider the following:

- Investments that streamline permitting and approvals through improved processes, staffing, and digital tools;
- A review of commercial taxation and fees to improve competitiveness and encourage reinvestment;
- Continued and targeted investment in road maintenance, transit, and key infrastructure;
- Enhanced support for safety and property upkeep in commercial areas; and
- Strengthened mechanisms of communication and engagement with the business community.

The Chamber views this Report Card as a foundation for collaboration. We recognize the complexity of budget decisions and appreciate the opportunity to provide data-driven input that reflects the experiences of local employers.

The Chamber remains committed to working collaboratively with the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to create a more competitive, strong, and resilient business-friendly environment.

Thank you for considering this submission as part of the CBRM's 2026 budget process and for your ongoing efforts to support the business community.

Sincerely,



Megan Penney
Chief Executive Officer
Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce