

CHAMBER FORWARD

Community Conversation- What Comes Next

Flin Flon & District Chamber of Commerce | May 28, 2026 | Council Chambers, City Hall

Attendees: Becky Cianflone, Dianne Russell, Chuck Davidson, Kory Eastman, Leslie Beck, Sayna Cossette, Deanna Van Caesele, Karen Thomson, Carrie Hume, Rachelle James, Josh Teneycke, Dawn Hlady, Crystal Kolt, Barb Bragg, Stefanie Didychuk, Brooke White, Melanie McIntosh, Anita Rainville, Jamie Grant, Delaina Parker, Crystal Woodward, Lyn Brown, Thomas Heine, Theresa Wride, Dennis Strom

Overview

On the evening of May 28 2026, the Flin Flon & District Chamber of Commerce hosted Chamber Forward- a structured community conversation designed to surface honest input on whether the Chamber is still needed, what it should prioritize, and who is willing to help carry it forward.

Rather than a formal presentation, the event was designed as a working session. Attendees rotated through four roundtable stations, each focused on a distinct local issue. Station leads facilitated discussion while scribes captured themes on flip charts. This report compiles the key findings from all four stations.

EVENT AT A GLANCE

Date	Thursday, May 28, 2025
Time	6:30 – 8:30 PM
Location	Council Chambers, Flin Flon City Hall
Format	Four rotating roundtable stations, 12 minutes each
Station Topics	#1 Are Our Communities Business-Ready? #2 What Does Advocacy Look Like Here? #3 Is Business Connected to Local Government? #4 What Are Our Economic Drivers?
Facilitated by	Becky Cianflone, Dianne Russell, Kory Eastman, Leslie Beck
Guest Speaker	Chuck Davidson, President & CEO, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce

Station #1- Are Our Communities Business-Ready?

The conversation at this station was frank. Participants identified genuine barriers to business readiness- many of which are structural and longstanding. At the same time, there was recognition that the community has real assets; the challenge is visibility and consistency.

Workforce & People

- Need for employees- workforce availability is a consistent barrier
- Skilled workforce and trained employees are critical but hard to retain
- Regionality and accessibility affect who can get here and stay
- Community-minded culture is a genuine asset

Infrastructure & Environment

- Housing shortage is acute- affects both attraction and retention
- Short-term accommodations are limited; "home share" / adopt-a-roommate models were raised as creative solutions
- Main Street infrastructure needs investment- signage, websites, and curb appeal all flagged
- Main Street is shrinking and described as undesirable- called out as a priority issue
- Hours of operation are inconsistent and unpredictable- a barrier for visitors and locals alike
- Lack of available property is an advocacy topic

Business Climate

- Businesses need customers- local economic circulation matters
- Less access to essential services compared to urban centres
- Need for diverse businesses to serve the local population
- Beauty is here but takes time to see- the community doesn't market itself effectively
- Export potential and industry diversification questions raised

Policy & Advocacy Gaps

- Development of land and land-use policies identified as a gap
- Available lands need to be publicized
- Support from municipal government needed for advocacy
- Note: Municipal government was not in the room- flagged as a problem

One thing this group wants the Chamber to know: The community is not fully business-ready, and that needs to be said out loud. The Chamber can help by making business readiness a visible, ongoing advocacy issue- not just a talking point.

Station #2- What Does Advocacy Look Like Here?

This station generated strong engagement. Participants were clear that advocacy is not just about lobbying- it includes representation, relationship-building, and connecting needs to the people who can resolve them. Several participants noted that the Chamber's value is its ability to give business a collective voice.

What Advocacy Means Here

- Representing businesses- learning matters of importance and making them understood
- Support letters and formal representation on issues
- Lobbying government at all levels- local, provincial (MB & SK), federal
- Lobbying universities on environmental and local issues
- Identifying issues before they become crisis
- Building and maintaining relationships- particularly on economic development topics
- Connecting needs to means to resolve them

Channels and Targets

- Advocacy to residents- e.g., Shop Local campaigns
- Advocacy to businesses- promoting standards and community expectations
- Lobbying the Health Region for services
- Education and health care (including birthing services) named as specific lobbying priorities
- Mayors and Chamber working together to find and match supports
- Need for Chamber to be efficient

Where Advocacy Can Go Further

- Business directory with profiles- listing becomes advocacy
- Mentorship access as a form of internal advocacy
- Advocacy = Power. The Chamber can help open doors that businesses can't open alone
- Promoting resources both inside and beyond the community
- Sticking up for local business when things go wrong or get overlooked

One thing this group wants the Chamber to know: Advocacy is not just about going to government. It starts locally- with how we talk about our businesses, promote our resources, and stand up for each other. The Chamber should be the place that connects those conversations.

Station #3- Is Business Connected to Local Government?

This station explored the relationship between business and local government — and how to make it stronger. Participants recognised that while connections exist, there's room to deepen them. Better communication, more alignment, and more regular engagement on both sides would go a long way.

Chamber Role: Advocate for FDC Growth

- Advocate for FDC growth and business readiness
- Invest and advocate- these go together
- Lobbying government for what?

Named priorities: education, health care, workforce development

- Health Region named as a specific target for advocacy

What Support Looks Like

- Support businesses in challenges they face
- Raise awareness- not every business owner knows what help exists
- Education and training as a Chamber offering
- Funding navigation- helping businesses find and access what is available
- Advocates to be on the board- get people with influence inside the Chamber structure

One thing this group wants the Chamber to know: The Chamber can help build stronger relationships between business and local governments by creating the table, inviting the conversation, and making it easier for both sides to show up consistently.

Station #4- What Are Our Economic Drivers?

This station produced the most wide-ranging conversation of the evening. The room identified a mix of current drivers, emerging sectors, and structural gaps and then turned to the question of where the Chamber fits in that picture.

Current and Growing Drivers

- Mining- growing; named as the sector to bet on for the next decade
- Tourism- growing; named alongside mining as a key long-term bet
- Healthcare- present but under-invested
- Hospitality
- Education- growing
- Retail hub function
- Recreation hub- growing
- Arts and culture
- Wild rice processing
- Indigenous culture, Indigenous companies, and Indigenous investment

What Makes This Community Distinct

- Snow Lodge
- People- the community itself is an asset
- Beauty of location
- Creative businesses
- Entrepreneurs
- Community stakeholders
- Sporting teams- growing
- Heritage and culture- growing
- Cost of living (relative advantage)
- Unique community identity- diverse and inclusive
- History of the community
- Ease and pace of life
- Picturesque setting

What We Are Under-Investing In

- Main Street- flagged by both groups as shrinking and under-invested
- Community safety
- Housing
- Healthcare- under-invested relative to need
- Seniors services and senior housing
- Bike lanes and active transportation
- Recreation and sports centres
- Hotel capacity
- Accessibility
- Transportation infrastructure

10-Year Bets: What Would We Back?

- Mining
- Tourism
- New diversified industries
- Regional health care centre
- Developing an economic zone between two provinces
- Centre for the arts
- Senior housing
- Support and attraction of young families
- Industry development- education and health

Where the Chamber Fits

- Keep connecting- be the convener
- Vehicle for letting people know what is happening
- Bring outsiders to the community
- Advertise member profiles
- Creating citizenship- a sense of collective ownership
- Attending Indigenous events and building those relationships
- Being a conduit for information on what is being done
- Advocacy to the city or municipalities

One thing this group wants the Chamber to know: Mining and tourism are the anchors. But the community's distinctiveness- its people, pace, affordability, and culture- is underused as an economic asset. The Chamber should be telling that story, loudly and consistently.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Several themes emerged across multiple stations and represent the strongest signals from the evening.

- Main Street is a shared concern. Raised in at least three of the four stations- both in terms of under-investment and the practical experience of walking into our community. This is not just an aesthetic issue; it is a business readiness issue and an economic signal.
- Workforce and housing are inseparable. Almost every conversation about growth or business readiness circled back to the same constraint: you cannot attract or keep workers without somewhere for them to live.
- The business-government relationship needs tending. The conversation pointed to gaps in communication and alignment between the business community and local government. Both sides have a role to play, and the Chamber is well-positioned to be the bridge.
- Advocacy is broader than lobbying. Participants understand advocacy as everything from attending Indigenous events to running a business directory. The Chamber's convening power- its ability to connect people and information- is itself a form of advocacy.
- Indigenous partnerships are an economic opportunity. Named across multiple stations as a growth area- in tourism, in industry, and in community building. This is not a side conversation; it belongs in the core economic development strategy.
- The community's distinctiveness is an underused asset. People know this place is special. They do not feel that story is being told effectively- to potential residents, to visitors, or to investors.

Station Summary

Station	Top Themes	One Thing for the Chamber
#1 Business Readiness	Workforce gaps, housing shortage, inconsistent hours, Main Street decline, missing municipal voice	<i>Make business readiness a visible, sustained advocacy issue</i>
#2 Advocacy	Representation, relationship-building, connecting needs to solutions, health and education priorities	<i>Be the connector- local advocacy starts with how we talk about ourselves</i>
#3 Gov't Connection	Gap between business and Council, need for Chamber as bridge, advocates on the board	<i>Get the right people in the room consistently</i>
#4 Economic Drivers	Mining, tourism, Indigenous economy, arts and culture- with Main Street, housing, and healthcare under-invested	<i>Tell the community's story Loudly and consistently</i>

Suggested Next Steps

These next steps are drawn from the themes of the evening. They are a starting point for discussion at the next executive meeting, not a final action plan.

Immediate

- Send follow-up email to all attendees: sign-up totals, top themes, and what the executive is taking up next.
- Tally and review the get-involved list. Reach out personally to anyone who flagged deeper interest.
- Photograph and file all four flip charts before they are lost.

Short-term (30–60 days)

- Convene a working session with the get-involved list to prioritize themes.
- Open a direct conversation with municipal government- they were not in the room and need to be.
- Start a business directory with member profiles- flagged at multiple stations as a basic, high-value tool.
- Identify one advocacy issue to lead on publicly this quarter (Main Street and housing are the strongest candidates).

Longer-term (3–6 months)

- Develop a position on Indigenous economic partnerships- this is a growth area that deserves a deliberate strategy, not an ad hoc approach.
- Create a consistent narrative about the community's distinctiveness- pace of life, affordability, people- and deploy it in member communications, social media, and external-facing materials.
- Explore a regional economic zone conversation between the Manitoba and Saskatchewan sides of the district.
- Build a pipeline for advocates to join the board- people who can open doors and bring credibility with government and industry.