



**Timmins Chamber of Commerce
Chambre de commerce de Timmins**

Member Priorities for the 2019 Municipal Budget

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Timmins Chamber of Commerce Representatives:

Nancy Mageau, 2018-19 President

Val Venneri, 2018-19 1st Vice-President



Presentation:

Good evening. My name is Nancy Mageau, and I am the president of the Timmins Chamber of Commerce. With me here tonight is Val Venneri, first vice-president of the Chamber and the chair of our Municipal Affairs Committee.

I would first like to begin in congratulating Mayor Pirie, and the councillors on running successful campaigns. We look forward to our collaboration over the coming years.

As we do every year, the Timmins Chamber is pleased to offer City Council our business members' priorities, as outlined in *A Timmins That Works*, for consideration in your upcoming budget deliberations. We understand the considerable challenges you face in approaching the 2019 budget, and we hope that the constructive suggestions provided this evening are taken in the same spirit of collaboration that they are being offered. Ultimately, our members share Council's goals to continue to make Timmins a better place to do business, and we look forward to working together to achieve them.

Cost control

The collaborative approach between the municipality and the business community is crucial, given that we both share growing financial pressures from various levels of government and changing economic realities. As such, the Chamber would urge council to approach the 2019 budget with an eye on constraining costs in order to minimize potential tax increases.

There are of course certain areas where the City's hands are tied, particularly as it relates to rising costs for energy and staff – two areas that are largely beyond your control, and which have a significant impact on the budget. However, given the rising fiscal challenges faced by our local businesses, we would again ask council to be mindful of the need for the judicious use of taxpayer dollars and to consider the impact that each budget line item will have on the final rate.

This means taking a careful look at all opportunities for the potential to reduce costs, maintain or increase revenues, and protect against unnecessary expenditures. As business continue to face growing financial challenges from all levels of government, it is crucial that the municipality focus on limiting future tax increases through diligent efforts to control the city's overall costs. Targeted, transparent budgeting allows for greater public understanding when considering significant investments. Moreover, every budget presents opportunities to delay or defer projects whose timing may be less optimal for the current financial climate. Identifying such projects within these municipal budget discussions -- alongside inter-departmental synergies and attrition -- could assist Council in achieving these specific goals.

Greater reductions would benefit the community through lower tax bills, much as it would benefit council by providing a buffer against unexpected mid-year costs, whether it's project overruns or property reassessments. As Timmins enters a time of increased financial instability, we hope this will serve as the foundation for the pursuit of even greater savings.

Striving for greater accuracy in job costing may also provide an opportunity for some greater fiscal efficiencies for municipal projects and alleviate some of the pressures seen on specific infrastructure initiatives throughout the year.

Business Growth and Investment

Ensuring that Timmins remains a great place to invest will serve to strengthen not only the existing firms who have built our economy, but will also help to attract new businesses. This leads to greater opportunities for our workforce, bolsters our tax base, and ensures Timmins businesses continue to support the community in many other ways.

Appropriate and responsible investment in a community is also the cornerstone of its growth, and it is with this point of view that we continue to advocate for continued spending on economic diversification, business attraction, and other measures that contribute to the development and expansion of our tax base.

Of course, investment in our key municipal infrastructure, and our roads in particular, is also crucial. Maintaining our core infrastructure is highly important as they represent the lifeblood of our community, and are closely tied to Timmins' ability to attract and retain business.

Given the considerable constraints facing Timmins and all municipalities on this file, we continue to support long-term planning for core infrastructure, and the development of corresponding financial strategies to ensure that deferred work does not compound to increasingly impractical levels. That said, we certainly sympathize with the municipality's struggle to manage the burden of infrastructure spending, given that the province continues to shift that burden regardless of the capacity to bear it. It is for that reason that we have aggressively and successfully advocated for greater funding solutions within our own provincial network. Following significant advocacy on our part, we are pleased to report that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the province's largest business advocacy group, included as one of its 12 recommendations in its pre-budget submission to the Government of Ontario last year including the need for an enhancement of the Connecting Link fund.

This is something the Ontario Chamber will continue to push for throughout the coming years, and is the direct result of the Timmins Chamber's enthusiastic and passionate work on this file. We hope these types of collaborative initiatives between the City and the Chamber on common goals can continue as we respectively leverage our shared strength on key issues.

Investment in broader strategic planning should also be considered to ensure that the municipality is taking a careful and coherent approach.

Enhanced Public Timelines

Indeed, the constructive relationship that the Chamber shares with City Council and administration is something we truly believe best serves businesses and residents alike. It is for these and many other reasons that we appreciate the opportunity to come to these chambers to speak to you about what our members see as necessary priorities for the coming budget year.

Because we value this opportunity, and wish to accurately reflect our members' views, we develop and prepare this presentation following extensive research, consultations, surveys, and more. That said, we recognize that this newly elected Council may face some learning curves and that additional time will be needed to review the budget. As such, we appreciate that this unique circumstance can allow for broader consultation so as to ensure that the voices of local businesses and other stakeholders are fully heard.

With that I would like to address one such issue. On December 17, the Provincial Government granted municipalities the authority to impose a Municipal Accommodation Tax on facilities that offer accommodation stays under 30 days. Different from the previous Destination Marketing Program, the newly implemented Municipal Accommodation Tax remains uncapped and non-voluntary, meaning the city is free to impose the rate at any level they choose.

What is also concerning, as little as 50 percent of the Municipal Accommodation Tax revenues must go towards a non-profit tourism industry association, and businesses that are directly impacted by the tax have little spending oversight over those funds. This reduces the industry's ability to ensure that spending is allocated effectively to address new and ongoing challenges.

On behalf of our members in the tourism industry, the Chamber encourages the city to cap the Municipal Accommodation Tax at 4 percent. Additionally, we ask that you allow businesses paying the Municipal Accommodation Tax to participate in the oversight and distribution of the tourism-focused portion of revenues.

Tourism continues to be an important driver of economic activity in Northern Ontario and our recommended changes to the Municipal Accommodation Tax will ensure that the industry remains competitive for our region.

Closing Remarks

As we wrap up our presentation of our members' recommended priorities for the 2019 municipal budget, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce would like to extend our appreciation to City staff and Council for the opportunity to address you here today, and for your dedication to working with the business community. We value the relationship we share with council, both as individuals and as a collective, and we look forward to building on it in the coming year.

In particular, we would like to recognize the hard work that CAO Dave Landers has done in reaching out to the Chamber and its members; his participation in Chamber initiatives and his understanding of our shared goals has led to a truly positive collaboration, and we appreciate being able to build on this strong relationship as we look to the future.

In closing I would like to share the Chamber's Find it in Timmins initiative which not only encourages consumers to find goods and services within the community, but also serves to emphasize the importance of voting with your dollar. By supporting Timmins businesses, they in turn can support a variety of charitable causes, community programs and events. Whether you are a business, a consumer or an organization that has received support from the business community, I invite you to participate in this campaign by actively using the hashtag Find it in Timmins and sharing it openly with your network.

Again, we would like to congratulate the mayor and councillors on running successful campaigns. The Chamber recognizes that our community can only be made stronger when we all work together on constructive, positive solutions. It is with great eagerness that we pursue that work through the coming year, and beyond.

On behalf of our members, our Board and our staff, we at the Chamber thank you for the opportunity to address you today, and we look forward to working with you throughout 2019.

Thank you.

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