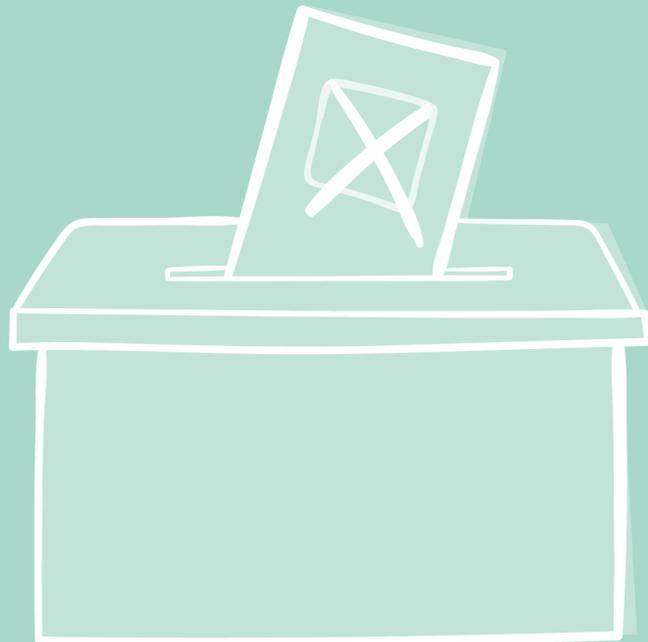


Timmins Chamber of Commerce



Chambre de commerce de Timmins

A TIMMINS THAT WORKS: Business Priorities for the 2018 Municipal Election



June 19, 2018



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a municipal election this fall, Timmins voters will soon have an important opportunity to choose what direction they would like the community to take for the next four years.

To steer candidates to strategies that help Timmins to grow and thrive, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce is releasing *A Timmins That Works: Business Priorities for the 2018 Municipal Election*. Produced in consultation with local Chamber members, this document contains eight specific priority areas that represent the business community's most pressing recommendations for building a strong economic future.

In this spirit, *A Timmins That Works* is based on two basic, crucial principles:

- Cost control, and
- Business growth.

These two philosophies are the driving force behind the eight business priorities that Chamber members have outlined in *A Timmins That Works*, which the Timmins Chamber will use to focus the conversation with all municipal candidates in the lead-up to the Oct. 22 election and beyond.

This collaborative approach with our elected officials has been the cornerstone of the Timmins Chamber's work in serving as the voice of its members, and we look forward to continuing that approach in the months and years to come.



Jamie Clarke
2017-2018 President
Timmins Chamber of Commerce



Nancy Mageau
Chair, Municipal Affairs Committee
Timmins Chamber of Commerce



COST CONTROL

Fiscal responsibility in municipal government

As businesses 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. By focusing on fiscal responsibility as a guiding principle, City Council can use the following priorities to help maximize the benefits of every tax dollar and protect businesses who have chosen to invest in Timmins.

1. CAREFUL SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LARGE PROJECTS

- Due diligence must be conducted at all stages of any large-scale project, from selection to planning to implementation. This philosophy should apply to all intended initiatives, whether they relate to infrastructure, events, or economic development.
- Proceeding with significant investments in non-essential, public-facing projects should only occur once appropriate research and stakeholder consultations determine that the municipality has the ability and the desire to bear all related costs; this determination should include a full and public assessment of the required financial commitments for all stages of the project, including any long-term costs relating to maintenance, debt, or financing.

2. APPROPRIATE AND EFFICIENT LEVELS OF SERVICE

- Any addition or expansion of municipal services must be measured against whether it is necessary, and whether their costs are relative to their value to the broader public.
- This diligence is a reflection of the findings of a municipal core services review conducted by KPMG in 2015, which indicated that the City of Timmins currently provides "a number of services that (i) are not delivered by other communities; (ii) can be funded through sources other than taxation, and/or (iii) involve a service level that is higher than what is required."
- Alternatively, the municipality should identify projects or responsibilities that could be more cheaply or efficiently undertaken by the private sector.

3. TARGETED, TRANSPARENT BUDGETING

- Specific, aggressive low-tax budget targets should be set and met annually in conjunction between council and department management. Wherever possible, these efforts should focus on careful analysis and balancing of city priorities through firm decision-making, rather than a reliance upon city reserves or tax stabilization funds; it should also focus on replenishing the city's depleted reserves and address municipal debt on an ongoing basis.
- The municipality's annual budget process must be open and transparent to the public in a way that does not impede its general efficiency. This must be done in a way that allows for a public understanding of the specific spending priorities selected by council; this should include public availability of departmental reports outlining annual projects and initiatives that will impact their ability to meet council-set budget targets.



4. COMPETITIVE BUSINESS TAX RATIOS

- While industrial assessments are on the decline due to a range of factors, including the imminent closure of the Kidd Mine, the resulting increase across other sectors occurs in part because there are fewer businesses to shoulder the overall tax burden; in other words, Timmins businesses continue to provide crucial support to the community.
- Indeed, businesses serve as the backbone of the economy, providing not only jobs and property taxes but also financial support for local sports teams and non-profit organizations. Ensuring that tax ratios are maintained at current levels will help to ensure that Timmins remains a great place to do business.

BUSINESS GROWTH Helping businesses to invest and succeed

Ensuring that Timmins remains a great place to invest will serve to strengthen not only the existing firms who have built our economy, but it will also help to attract new businesses; this adds jobs, bolsters our tax base, and helps to make sure that Timmins firms continue to support the community in many other ways. The following priorities are based in that philosophy, and offer broad ideas on how to help our businesses grow and thrive.

5. ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

- Efforts to diversify the local economy, which have been a major focus of the municipality in recent years, must remain a significant priority going forward.
- Successful business attraction of industries such as INEOS Calabrian will help to provide new opportunities for existing businesses, strengthen the community's ability to weather changes in global markets, and continue to build on the city's tax base.
- These efforts will become more important in the years to come as the city must find ways to offset the impact of the Glencore closure, which will result in an estimated loss of 40 percent of Timmins' industrial tax base.

6. BUSINESS CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT

- To ensure that it is providing the best possible environment in which to do business, the City of Timmins should continue to work with local industry to regularly conduct analyses of its public-facing processes. These results, in conjunction with business feedback and municipal best practices, should form the basis of an ongoing effort to provide the best possible customer service to the business community.
- A process of continuous improvement allows for better business performance, and an ever-stronger reputation for service and excellence. Ensuring an optimal environment for growth benefits the City and residents alike through greater salaries, an enhanced tax base, and through the financial and social capital they invest as an integral part of the community.



7. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- The municipality should continue to focus on developing low-cost, high-reward incentive programs that promote development in a way that attracts new investments and promotes expansion opportunities for existing firms.
- Previous measures that serve as positive examples of this approach include the Community Improvement Plan, which offered grants to cover up to 50 percent of costs for downtown businesses looking to invest in facility enhancements, energy efficiency grants, or feasibility studies.
- Other examples include a potential brownfields community improvement plan currently in development, designed to encourage redevelopment of vacant or derelict commercial and industrial sites. This would involve rebating municipal fees and portions of incremental property taxes, allowing the City to more effectively promote sites that have traditionally seen lesser use; this would generate new tax revenues in a cost-neutral way.

8. STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

- Appropriate investments in Timmins' core infrastructure must be made in a way that reflects long-term, strategic considerations, including financial capacity and funding.
 - This need for continued investment includes support of our core infrastructure, especially municipal roadways. These represent the lifeblood of our community, and are closely tied to Timmins' ability to attract and retain business. However, as upper-level project funding becomes scarce, greater advocacy efforts with to secure necessary resources may be required; as it has in the past, the Chamber may serve as a potential ally.
 - Investments in broader strategic planning, including a careful review of undiscussed items of the Timmins 2020 plan, should also be considered to ensure that the municipality is taking a careful and coherent approach.
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