The CHAMBER.

2024 MUNICIPAL BUDGET BUSINESS PRIORITIES

TIMMINS CHAMBER MEMBER FEEDBACK

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kraymr Grenke
2023-24 Chamber President

As the 2024 Municipal budget planning is underway, members of the Timmins Chamber seized the opportunity to provide feedback on the community's outlook for the upcoming year.

In order to ensure that our Chamber membership had a meaningful role in this process, we engaged in consultations with our diverse membership, comprising local businesses, organizations, and stakeholders. Through this collaboration, we identified and articulated the most pressing issues that our members wished to convey to the municipality.

The business community has highlighted several key areas for consideration in the 2024 Municipal Budget:

- Creating a Safe Community;
- Amplifying Transparency: Extra Efforts in Disclosing Tax Allocation;
- Building Better Lives: Enhancing Quality of Life through Infrastructure and Recreation;
- A Road Less Travelled: The Connecting Link's Impact on Business; and
- Balancing Act: Retaining and Housing a Robust Workforce.

These priorities are crucial to ensuring robust support for the business community from the municipality, embodying the core values driving business priorities.

This collaborative approach with our Mayor and council has been fundamental to The Chamber's role as the voice of its members.

The Chamber's Member Priorities for the 2024 Municipal Budget

CREATING A SAFE COMMUNITY

The increased focus on community safety in our city this year has led to numerous business owners sharing their experiences within their respective locations. While many have pointed to concerns within the downtown core, others have underscored that this is a broader city-wide issue. Among the concerns are break-ins and theft for local brick-and-mortar businesses. The downtown core has been deemed a focal point for challenges related to individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health, and addiction issues.

We have noted positive responses from the business community surrounding the recent addition of the safety improvement grant to the Community Improvement Plan (CIP). Alongside this additional support, the Chamber and the City of Timmins are actively advocating for business owners to play a proactive role in reporting unsafe activities to the Timmins Police or City agencies (Service Timmins), aiming to gather essential data and contribute to the ongoing efforts in long-term safety planning for the community. This collaborative approach seeks to create a safer and more secure environment for both residents and businesses alike.

AMPLIFYING TRANSPARENCY: EXTRA EFFORTS IN DISCLOSING TAX ALLOCATION

Understanding the use of tax dollars plays a role in fostering transparency within a community. In recent discussions with Timmins Chamber members, business owners have expressed their satisfaction with the city's current public communications. Members of the community have observed more frequent and clear lines of communication, from both the City of Timmins and local media outlets. The City of Timmins Facebook page has emerged as a primary source for residents to receive timely updates and information.

However, there is a call for more extensive education on the allocation of tax dollars to further engage the public in the decision-making process. Strengthening these lines of communication is crucial to building trust and assurance for the business community.

BUILDING BETTER LIVES: ENHANCING QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECREATION

A concern within the business community is the perception that we are "a city that thinks like a town" when it comes to development and amenities. To address this, there is a call for proactive measures to ensure the City prioritizes infrastructure and recreation enhancements. The business community highlighted a need for a new multi-recreation centre and updates to existing facilities such as swimming, ice surface and community facilities. Furthermore, the need for more beautification efforts citywide, with some suggestions specific to waterfront and boat launch upgrades.

The business community calls for council to keep quality of life and recreation at top of mind, in hopes to ensure that the city's growth is strategic and sustained. It is recommended that the City of Timmins partner with upper levels of government and private sector businesses, urging them to invest long-term in the community. This collaborative approach is seen as essential to secure sustainable development for the City of Timmins, and make it a desirable city for workforce to permanently settle with their families.

A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED: THE CONNECTING LINK'S IMPACT ON BUSINESS

Businesses in our community are encouraged by the major upgrades of our main road. However, those who are located in the construction area are impacted. Business owners located within the Connecting Link project have experienced a significant downturn in sales, with some reporting decreases as high as 40%. As the city prepares for the fourth stage of the Connecting Link in 2024, there is a pressing need for the City to streamline communications to better support these affected businesses.

A proactive approach and streamlined communications will allow for better financial planning by impacted businesses. The success of such initiatives hinges on a collaborative effort between the City and the business community to navigate the challenges posed by the Connecting Link project.

BALANCING ACT: RETAINING AND HOUSING A ROBUST WORKFORCE

Workforce challenges take center stage for business owners in Timmins, driven by the worry that the city's desirable housing shortage not only discourages potential workers from settling in the area, but has also resulted in the deferral of interested talent. This has led to the anticipation that the housing shortage may already be a deterrent for future workers.

The business community acknowledges the lack of desirable housing supply and emphasizes that the responsibility for housing development should be shared among various stakeholders including the public sector, private sector, and government.

Business owners in Timmins express eagerness to actively participate in addressing the city's housing challenges, however continue to express frustration in regards to the city planning and engineering departments. A need for a more succinct and timely approval process for investors is vital for having a competitive edge, which in turn will lead to growth in the community.

The City of Timmins could also create incentives for investors, to put Timmins on the map as a desirable city to invest in. Building on existing incentives such as City Improvement Plan grants, can enhance the economic viability of housing construction in the area. Ideally being able to meet the housing demands of our much-needed workforce will lead to a sustainable and vibrant community in Timmins.

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About The Chamber
With over 635 members, The Chamber is one of the largest accredited chambers of commerce with distinction in northeastern Ontario. As the "Voice of Business in Timmins" since 1949, our advocacy and policy initiatives focus on ensuring a favourable business climate in the City of Timmins.