The CHAMBER.

Shipping Container Roundtable and Survey Summary.

The City of Timmins is considering broadening the approved use of metal sea containers (also known as shipping containers or sea-cans) for outdoor storage units. Currently, the existing bylaw only allows containers to be placed on industrial zoned properties. Expanding the use of metal sea containers for storage presents a significant opportunity to boost Timmins' economy.

To address the needs of the business community, the Timmins Chamber recently surveyed business owners and held a roundtable feedback session with city officials and staff. This report summarizes the feedback received from the business community to help shape the proposed by-law and includes proposed recommendations for consideration.

Impacts to Business and Considerations

Storage containers offer a versatile and cost-effective solution for businesses in Timmins. By providing secure, weather-resistant storage, containers can streamline operations, reduce transportation costs, and free up valuable space.

Economic studies demonstrate a clear link between increased storage options and business growth. Expanding the use of shipping containers aligns with the City's economic development goals and can contribute to job creation. Moreover, the adaptability of containers has led to innovative uses in other cities, including retail, food services, offices, and residential spaces. Limiting container use could hinder economic growth and potential housing developments, which are crucial factors to consider in the City of Timmins Housing Action Plan and the upcoming Growth Management Study.

The current proposed amendment to the by-law, which limits containers to two per property, imposes significant financial burdens on businesses. This restriction can hinder growth and competitiveness. By allowing for more flexible container usage, the city can support local businesses and foster economic development.

While acknowledging concerns about visual impact, the proposed by-law provides a solid foundation for regulating container use. To further enhance the aesthetic appeal of container installations, the city should consider expanding design guidelines to include materials, placement, and pre-engineered options. Offering financial incentives through the Community Improvement Plan can encourage businesses to adopt these guidelines.

To ensure compliance and potential revenue generation, a permitting process should be implemented. This would allow the city to monitor container usage, collect data, and address any issues promptly. Regular inspections and audits can be conducted to ensure that all containers adhere to safety and environmental regulations. By integrating community feedback mechanisms, the city can continuously improve the permitting system, fostering transparency and trust. This proactive approach not only

enhances regulatory compliance but also encourages sustainable urban development and innovative container usage.

Based on the feedback collected from the survey administrated between July 8 to July 17, and the roundtable session held on Monday, July 15, the Chamber is providing the following recommendations for consideration for the City of Timmins to create a balanced approach that supports business growth while maintaining the community's aesthetic and environmental standards.

Recommendations

1. Provide greater flexibility in the by-law to accommodate numerous containers on properties zoned for industrial, commercial, and institutional use. This adjustment allows businesses and organizations to optimize their storage capabilities, operational efficiency, inventory management, logistics, and productivity. Focus on container appearance, safety, and site maintenance rather than imposing arbitrary limits on quantity or duration.

2. Explore the potential of allowing container applications in various industry settings such as retail, workspaces, and food services, ensuring compliance with applicable and relevant by-laws and permits. By refraining from limiting the use of these adaptable containers, local businesses can benefit from a cost-effective and versatile solutions for their businesses or expand their limited workspaces. Similar models have proven successful for businesses and communities in Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, and Toronto. Timmins has the opportunity to support future business development by refraining from imposing restrictions on the use of shipping containers.

3. Implement a streamlined permitting process that accommodates various business needs, including temporary storage for off-site operations. Regular inspections should be conducted to verify compliance with by-law regulations and address any issues promptly. Consider utilizing technology, such as a geographic information system (GIS), to track container locations and facilitate inspections. The process should be fast and efficient to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy that hinders business operations and investment.

4. Provide support to businesses transitioning to the use of shipping containers. This could include financial incentives or grants through the Community Improvement Plan fund, as well as a 24-month compliance period. Establish detailed design guidelines for shipping containers, including specifications for materials and pre-engineered designs for containers that require modification.