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2026 Ontario Budget Considerations

ACCREDITED CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2025-2029
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The Timmins Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Province of Ontario's 2026 Budget. Representing more than 650 employers across all sectors of the local economy, the Timmins Chamber serves as a voice for businesses that are actively contributing to job creation, investment, and long-term economic resilience in Timmins and the surrounding region.

Timmins plays a strategic role in Ontario's economic future, particularly in resource development, critical minerals, and regional supply chains. While local businesses are positioned to expand and support provincial priorities, the foundational conditions that enable sustainable economic activity are under increasing pressure. This submission outlines key areas where targeted, coordinated investments can strengthen workforce capacity, infrastructure reliability, regulatory clarity, and community services.

With continued partnership between the province, municipalities, and the business community, Timmins can continue to support Ontario's economic competitiveness and shared prosperity.

1. Supporting a Skilled Workforce

Employers in Timmins across multiple sectors, including mining, construction, health care, trades, retail, and services, continue to experience persistent labour shortages. These shortages are driven less by a lack of employment opportunities and more by systemic barriers that affect recruitment, onboarding, and workforce participation.

Businesses report challenges related to apprenticeship onboarding timelines, alignment between training programs and local labour market demand, and the length of credential recognition processes for internationally trained workers. Addressing these issues is necessary to improve labour market efficiency and support economic activity.

Regional post-secondary institutions, including Collège Boréal and Northern College, play a critical role in supplying skilled workers to the Timmins labour market. Financial pressures affecting these institutions may limit training capacity at a time when employer demand for skilled graduates remains strong.

Recommendations

- Support targeted, employer-informed training programs aligned with regional labour market needs.
- Strengthen apprenticeship pathways by reducing administrative delays and improving employer navigation of the system.

- Accelerate credential recognition processes for internationally trained workers to support faster labour market attachment.
- Provide stable and predictable funding to regional post-secondary institutions that serve as primary workforce pipelines in regional economies.

2. Expanding Housing Opportunities

Housing availability and affordability have become direct constraints on workforce attraction, retention, and business expansion in Timmins. Employers report that qualified candidates routinely decline job offers due to limited housing options or costs that are misaligned with local wages. Without sufficient housing supply, workforce initiatives alone cannot succeed.

While housing development is municipally planned, provincial investment and policy alignment are critical to unlocking new supply. In Timmins, access to municipal servicing, transportation infrastructure, and predictable approvals often determines whether housing projects proceed.

Recommendations

- Recognize housing supply as a core component of economic competitiveness and labour force participation.
- Invest in municipal infrastructure that enables housing development, including servicing, roads, and utilities.
- Align provincial housing, infrastructure, and workforce strategies to ensure labour attraction efforts are not undermined by housing constraints.
- Support planning and approvals coordination to reduce delays that increase housing development costs.

3. Infrastructure that Supports Economic Activity

Reliable and predictable infrastructure underpins business operations, investment attraction, and supply chain resilience in Timmins. While recent provincial investments in connectivity are welcomed, challenges remain in broadband reliability, particularly in rural and industrial areas. Transportation costs and limited regional connectivity continue to affect worker mobility and access to markets.

Highway closures and safety issues along key corridors disrupt the movement of goods and services and increase operating costs for local employers.

Recommendations

- Continue investments in broadband reliability for rural, industrial, and employment areas.
- Advance a long-term economic corridor strategy that prioritizes safety, reliability, and efficiency.

- Consider four-laning and twinning key Northern Ontario highway segments where traffic volumes, safety risks, and economic activity warrant.
- Support multimodal transportation options that improve regional access for workers, businesses, and services.

4. Clear Pathways for Investment

Timmins is a key contributor to Ontario's critical minerals supply chain. The Chamber supports efforts to streamline regulatory processes and reduce duplication, including measures introduced through Bill 5. As implementation proceeds, businesses require clarity regarding how the new framework will operate in practice.

Uncertainty related to permitting processes, timelines, and consultation requirements can affect investment planning and project sequencing. Businesses have indicated that clearer information, earlier coordination, and improved visibility across ministries and agencies would support more efficient and responsible project development. This includes better integration of permitting, environmental assessment requirements, and Indigenous consultation processes.

Recommendations

- Provide clear, accessible guidance on Bill 5 implementation, including permitting processes, timelines, and sequencing.
- Advance the development of a centralized, one-window platform that integrates permitting requirements, environmental assessments, and consultation information across relevant ministries and agencies.
- Strengthen and clarify First Nation consultation and engagement processes to support early, meaningful partnership building.
- Promote transparency and predictability to support informed decision-making by proponents, communities, and regulators.

5. Building Community Capacity

Community capacity is a key factor in workforce attraction, retention, and overall economic stability. Timmins continues to experience physician shortages, and the Timmins and District Hospital faces sustained operational pressures as a regional service hub. Limited access to primary care and pressure on emergency services affect quality of life and influence relocation decisions by workers and families.

Businesses have also identified concerns related to crime and bail non-compliance, particularly in commercial areas. Access to addictions treatment, mental health services, and community-based supports contributes to improved community safety and reduces pressure on emergency and justice systems. Adequate resourcing for local police services remains an important component of a balanced approach.

Recommendations

- Support physician recruitment and retention initiatives in regional hub communities.
- Invest in the most critical capacity needs of the Timmins and District Hospital.
- Strengthen addictions treatment and mental health services to reduce pressure on emergency and justice systems.
- Ensure local police services have adequate staffing and resources to support community safety and enforcement.
- Encourage coordinated approaches across health, justice, and social service systems.

In Closing

The Timmins Chamber thanks the Province of Ontario for the opportunity to contribute to the 2026 Budget consultation process and recognizes the recent investments that have supported Timmins and Northern communities. These commitments have helped strengthen our local economy and position Timmins to play an even greater role in advancing provincial priorities.

Timmins has what the world needs, from critical minerals and skilled workers to established industries and emerging opportunities. With continued collaboration, clear policy direction, and targeted investments in workforce development, infrastructure, regulatory certainty, and community capacity, Timmins businesses are ready to continue delivering economic value for Ontario.

The Chamber looks forward to working in partnership with the province to ensure the 2026 Budget supports sustainable growth, competitiveness, and prosperity for communities across Ontario.

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