

**Timmins Chamber of
Commerce**



**Chambre de commerce
de Timmins**

Business Climate Improvement: Report on Development

February 11, 2013

Background:

With deep roots in the community and a vested interest in its financial future, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce's 800+ members understand the value of ensuring the City remains a strong, viable place to do business.

That value and confidence in the community only continue to increase as the city bolsters its position as an important global centre for mining, and a growing number of additional sectors with world-class expertise.

However, every business – regardless of sector or industry – needs to consistently examine its operations to determine whether any changes are required to increase effectiveness and to better serve its clients. It is a process of continuous improvement that allows for better business performance, and an ever-stronger reputation for service and excellence.

The same holds true for the City of Timmins, whose clients also include local companies seeking to expand their operations, as well as companies looking to establish themselves in the region. In turn, ensuring that businesses have 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.

Indeed, the staff and council of the City of Timmins have regularly proven their commitment to enhancing the municipality's approach to enabling business growth. It is for this reason that the Timmins Chamber of Commerce is confident in offering specific recommendations for improving City services as they specifically relate to development.

As an initiative of the Chamber's Municipal Affairs Committee, the report's recommendations represent extensive consultation with local businesses over the course of nearly eight months, and have focused exclusively on solutions, rather than challenges. Specifically, this process involved roundtable discussions, member surveys, committee conversation and outreach, as well as countless one-on-one interviews, phone calls and emails.

Throughout this process, several recurring themes emerged, and the final report addresses these agreed-upon solutions that represent the business community's broader point of view. These key improvement opportunities are centered around common themes that stand to strengthen Timmins' already impressive reputation as an important business hub.

Over the course of the coming months and years, the Chamber will work with the City to monitor the progress being made on these important recommendations. As the City of Timmins emerges into its second century of excellence, such collaborative solutions are crucial for ensuring that its future remains as bright as its past.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that staffing levels within the development services department are commensurate with need, providing businesses with the expectation that project milestones can be met within a clear and reasonable timeframe.

This recommendation is supported by a presentation made by Mark Jensen, the City's director of planning and development, who expressed to City Council on Dec. 10 that Timmins is "notably understaffed when compared to similar-sized municipalities," especially when taking into consideration the city's significant geographic area. While the Chamber remains opposed to unnecessary public expenditures, strategic and appropriate levels of staffing in specific departments are required to ensure that permits and inspections are provided in a timely fashion.

2. Institute a streamlined communications framework for addressing business' updates, concerns, or questions for the Community Development Committee when it is unable to host its scheduled weekly meetings.

3. While minutes of the Community Development Committee are taken for council, a similar summary of decisions, concerns and required actions for both parties should be provided to the proponent. Clear timelines should also be attached to each, so that there is a documented mutual understanding regarding expectations.

4. A streamlined communications framework should be developed between – and within – relevant City departments to ensure consistency in the requirements and comments for permitting / development applications.

5. Where possible and appropriate, knowledge-sharing and cross-training should be provided amongst departmental staff to prevent procedural delays and to ensure continuity in cases of vacation, sick leave, or turnover.

6. Identify specific stages in the permitting/development process where City staff can direct businesses, as appropriate, to municipal resources such as the Community Development Committee (CDC) and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation (TEDC), which provide more specific assistance in further navigating the process. Ensure that frontline staff across various departments is educated in this approach, and is able to properly identify the most appropriate avenue(s) for proponents. Both the CDC and TEDC represent strong municipal resources with proven results in easing the planning, development and permitting process; by providing a clear path, the City can maximize use of these important resources while ensuring greater success rates for proponents.

7. Create a standardized, single-page reference document outlining the process business owners must undergo to move their project forward. This should involve a description of who to see, relevant contact information, what documents will be needed at each step, and a rough timeline for each. This document should be made readily available across a number of venues, including the city's website, with copies kept at reception / departmental front desks at City Hall. This could have the dual benefit of providing an initial sense of guidance for proponents while potentially reducing some of the demand placed on municipal staff.