



Member Priorities for the 2020 Municipal Budget

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Chamber Representatives:

Val Venneri, 2019-20 Chamber President

Melanie Verreault, 2019-20 First Vice-president

Presentation:

Good evening. My name is Val Venneri, and I am the President of the Chamber. With me here tonight is Melanie Verreault, First Vice-president of the Chamber and the Chair of our City Impact Committee. As the indispensable partner of business in Timmins, the Chamber is proactive in highlighting the concerns of our 630 members.

Every year, the Chamber is pleased to offer City Council our members' priorities for consideration in your upcoming budget deliberations. We understand the considerable challenges you face in approaching the 2020 budget, and we hope that the constructive suggestions provided this evening are taken in the same spirit of collaboration that they are being offered. Ultimately, our members share Council's goals to continue to make Timmins a better place to do business, and we look forward to working together to achieve them.

| Growth

The collaborative approach between the municipality and the business community is crucial, given that we both share growing financial pressures from various levels of government and changing economic realities. As always, the Chamber urges council to approach the 2020 budget with an eye on constraining costs in order to minimize potential tax increases.

Many business owners feel that current commercial property tax rates are impacting their business, citing taxes and fees on business are too high. While our commercial rates are actually very competitive, it is to be noted that the most effective way to reduce rising taxes is by growing and attracting business to share the burden. As we indicated in our 2019 Business Confidence Report last month, the Chamber is pleased to support the Timmins Economic Development Corporation in their continued efforts and of course share the optimism of our Mayor that the smelter to service the Ring of Fire should and will be located in Timmins.

The Chamber also understands that a heavy focus on enticing new industries and cutting developmental burden will help the City realize cost savings while improving service delivery and increasing business attractiveness. In formulating attraction and retention strategies, the City can look to encourage greater investment in Timmins that would grow our tax base and boost city services provided to residents and businesses alike.

Ensuring that Timmins remains a great place to invest will serve to strengthen not only the existing firms who have built our economy, but will also help to attract new businesses. This leads to greater opportunities for our workforce, bolsters our tax base, and ensures Timmins businesses continue to support the community in many other ways.

We recognize success in reducing Red Tape depends heavily on the Province and we continue to advocate for improved regulatory processes, however, utilizing municipal resources prudently by improving administrative efficiencies can also save money. These strategies will undoubtedly send a message to the Province that Timmins is a city that is open for business, with a highly efficient local government that further increases our competitive advantage.

| Attraction

The Chamber has long heard a need for creative attraction and retention strategies. Growing a highly-skilled workforce is everyone's responsibility. We acknowledge that success will require partnership, communication and collaboration among all parties as they deal with existing realities and anticipate future needs of the workforce. In the near future, there will be a shift in the labour force that will heavily impact our business community. The Chamber encourages the City to do all it can to realize the success of programs such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot so that we can continue to grow our community. It is important to understand that the city that secures a successful solution is the city that wins, and we need to be that city.

| Investment

Appropriate and responsible investment in a community is also the cornerstone of its growth, and it is with this point of view that we continue to advocate for continued spending on economic diversification, business attraction, and other measures that contribute to the development and expansion of our tax base.

Of course, investment in our key municipal infrastructure, and our roads in particular, is also crucial. Maintaining our core infrastructure is highly important as they represent the lifeblood of our community and are closely tied to Timmins' ability to attract and retain business.

The Chamber is pleased to note council's focus on the long-needed Connecting Link upgrades and asks that the city continue to communicate with business owners impacted by the roadwork. Regular consultation and information sharing will reduce vulnerabilities and better develop policies with the aim of fostering trust. Because we value this opportunity, and wish to accurately reflect our members' views, we develop and prepare this presentation following extensive research, consultations, surveys, and more. As such, we appreciate that this unique circumstance can allow for broader consultation so as to ensure that the voices of local businesses and other stakeholders are fully heard.

It is important to convey that the Chamber will continue to support long-term planning for core infrastructure, and the development of corresponding financial strategies to ensure that deferred work does not compound to increasingly impractical levels. We certainly sympathize with the municipality's struggle to manage the burden of infrastructure spending, given that the province continues to shift that burden regardless of the capacity to bear it. It is for that reason that we have aggressively and successfully advocated for greater funding solutions within our own provincial network.

| Closing Remarks

As we wrap up our presentation of our members' recommended priorities for the 2020 municipal budget, the Chamber would like to extend our appreciation to City staff and Council for the opportunity to address you here today, and for your

dedication to working with the business community. We value the relationship we share with council, both as individuals and as a collective, and we look forward to building on it in the coming year.

In particular, we would like to recognize the hard work that CAO Dave Landers has done in reaching out to the Chamber and its members; his participation in Chamber initiatives and his understanding of our shared goals has led to a truly positive collaboration, and we appreciate being able to build on this strong relationship as we look to the future.

In closing, and especially as we enter the holiday season, I would remind you of the Chamber's Find it in Timmins initiative which not only encourages consumers to find goods and services within the community, but also serves to emphasize the importance of voting with your dollar. By supporting Timmins businesses, they in turn can support a variety of charitable causes, community programs and events. Whether you are a business, a consumer or an organization that has received support from the business community, I invite you to participate in this campaign by actively using the hashtag Find it in Timmins and sharing it openly with your network.

The Chamber recognizes that our community can only be made stronger when we all work together on constructive, positive solutions. It is with great eagerness that we pursue that work through the coming year, and beyond.

On behalf of our members, our Board and our staff, we at the Chamber thank you for the opportunity to address you today, and we look forward to working with you throughout 2020.

Thank you.

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