



# Driving Business Growth

The Chamber's Business Priorities for the 2022  
Municipal Election

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Five key priorities to #DriveGrowth and  
unleash competitiveness in the City of  
Timmins



# Message from the President

With a municipal election this fall, Timmins voters will soon have an important opportunity to choose what direction they would like the community to take for the next four years.

To steer candidates to strategies that help Timmins to grow and thrive, The Chamber has launched Driving Business Growth: Business Priorities for the 2022 Municipal Election. Produced in consultation with our supporters, local businesses, organizations and stakeholders, this platform contains five specific priority areas representing the business community's most pressing recommendations for building a strong economic future.

In this spirit, Driving Business Growth is based on five basic, crucial principles:

- Open and direct communication and engagement with businesses and stakeholders;
- Cost control;
- Harmonization of city and agency services;
- Diversity, attraction, retention, and a housing strategy; and
- Business growth.

These philosophies are the driving force behind business priorities. Chamber supporters have outlined in Driving Business Growth, which The Chamber will use to focus the conversation with all municipal candidates in the lead-up to the Oct. 24 election and beyond.

This collaborative approach with our elected officials has been the cornerstone of The Chamber's work in serving as the voice of its members, and we look forward to continuing that approach in the months and years to come.



**Dan Ayotte**  
2022-23 Chamber President

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### Open Communication and Engagement with Business

Narrative matters. When communication and information are shared broadly—even in the spirit of insight, it lends to the belief that we are all in this together, achieving common benefit from a common set of purposes and gaining strength from acting together. Now, more than ever, as we propel through digital information sharing, the City should look to new platforms to adapt how they share information.

As an organization, the Chamber does all it can to address internal communication barriers by improving on existing policies but seeks to find where a new generation is consuming information externally. Investing in sound communication strategies and technology to share your message to a broader audience will do well to dispel misinformation that can potentially tarnish a community's reputation. We also encourage the City to consider new forms of information sharing, be it through social media or other means, as it keeps a population at the forefront of success stories and critical investments from the municipality.



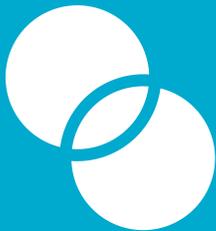
## Cost Control

As businesses continue to face growing financial challenges from all levels of government, it is crucial that the municipality focus on limiting future tax increases through diligent efforts to control the City's overall costs. By focusing on fiscal responsibility as a guiding principle, City Council can use the following priorities to help maximize the benefits of every tax dollar and protect businesses that have chosen to invest in Timmins.

Due diligence must be conducted at all stages of any large-scale project, from selection to planning to implementation. This philosophy should apply to all intended initiatives related to infrastructure, events, or economic development. Proceeding with significant investments in non-essential, public-facing projects should only occur once appropriate research and stakeholder consultations determine the municipality's ability and desire to bear all related costs. This determination should include a full and public assessment of the required financial commitments for all project stages, including any long-term costs relating to maintenance, debt, or financing.

Specific, aggressive low-tax budget targets should be set and met annually in conjunction with council and department management. These efforts should focus on careful analysis and balancing city priorities through firm decision-making rather than relying on city reserves or tax stabilization funds.

The municipality's annual budget process must be open and transparent to the public in a way that does not impede its general efficiency. This must be done in a way that allows for a public understanding of the specific spending priorities selected by council; this should include public availability of departmental reports outlining annual projects and initiatives that will impact their ability to meet council-set budget targets.



## Harness the opportunities to identify areas of harmonization of city and agency work pillars

The 2015 KPMG City of Timmins Service Delivery and Operational Review presented a moment of opportunity to review the alignment of City and arms-length agency services such as a consideration, based on research and engagement with similar Ontario communities with similar natural-resource-driven economies, a blending of services between planning and economic development.

It is crucial that the municipality focus on limiting future tax increases through diligent efforts to control the City's overall costs. Conducting an internal or third-party review of all municipally funded departments and agencies to identify where improvements are needed and with a business lens in mind. It was noted that between 2019 and 2021, business owners cited a 5 percent decrease in satisfaction and accessibility concerning business-focused city services. Striving for greater accuracy in job costing may also provide some greater fiscal efficiencies for municipal projects and alleviate some of the pressures seen on specific infrastructure initiatives throughout the year.



## Diversity, Attraction, Retention, and a Housing Strategy

A municipality can act as a catalyst for change and lead a community to be a great place to live, work, learn, and play. Businesses and the broader community follow suit when the municipality takes hold of that leadership.

Ensuring that Timmins remains a great place to invest will strengthen the existing firms that have built our economy and help attract new businesses, especially as we look toward economic recovery. This leads to more significant opportunities for our workforce, bolsters our tax base, and ensures Timmins businesses continue to support the community in many other ways. Appropriate and responsible investment in a community is also the cornerstone of its growth. With this point of view, we continue to advocate for continued spending on economic diversification. There has been much discussion about the investment in a perimeter or bypass road. While there have been several efforts put forward by this council to mitigate the speed of traffic on our main thoroughfare, the strain this places on large rigs comes at a significant cost to our natural resource industries. It would be prudent to consider the need for a bypass road—creating a safe and efficient corridor of commerce that skirts the City and removes potential or perceived danger from our main street. This will be one of the most important investments our community makes.

On the housing front, Timmins currently boasts a 6.9 per cent vacancy rate, which is quite competitive given the current national rate sits at 3.4 per cent. The availability of desirable housing hinders the region's ability to attract newcomers. Most of Ontario's purpose-built rental supply is now 40 years old or more — 85 percent of all purpose-built units were built in 1980 or earlier. Timmins identifies these statistics as well. If the natural resource sector is to see a boom, as markets indicate, our region will be in dire need of an affordable housing strategy to meet the growing demand and adhere to attraction campaigns so desperately needed for our region.

Like many rural and Northern communities in Canada, Timmins faces challenges in attracting and retaining a new generation of talent. With an imminent demographic shift, many business owners, operators, skilled labourers and support workers look to retire; Timmins must address the net outflow of youth from the region by undertaking a campaign effort to address the coming gap. While Timmins has much to offer young families, we found that more can be done to celebrate and support those who have decided to call Timmins home as a means to a significant community attraction initiative. Additionally, the Chamber encourages the City to do all it can to realize the success of programs such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot to continue to grow our community and, by extension, our tax base. It is essential to understand that the City that secures a successful solution is the City that wins, and we need to be that City.



## Business growth through an "Open for Business" Motto

Ensuring that Timmins remains a great place to invest will serve to strengthen not only the existing firms who have built our economy, but it will also help to attract new businesses; this adds jobs, bolsters our tax base, and helps to make sure that Timmins firms continue to support the community. The following priorities are based on that philosophy and offer broad ideas on how to help our businesses grow and thrive.

Indeed, businesses serve as the economy's backbone, providing jobs, property taxes, and financial support for local sports teams and non-profit organizations. Ensuring that current tax ratios are maintained will help ensure that Timmins remains a great place to do business.

To ensure that it provides the best possible environment in which to do business, the City of Timmins should continue working with local industry to regularly conduct analyses of its public-facing processes. These results, in conjunction with business feedback and municipal best practices, should form the basis of an ongoing effort to provide the best possible customer service to the business community.

Continuous improvement allows for better business performance and an ever-stronger reputation for service and excellence. Ensuring an optimal environment for growth benefits the City and residents alike through greater salaries, an enhanced tax base, and financial and social capital they invest as an integral part of the community. The City can consider how partnering with the Timmins Economic Development Corporation to develop a concierge service geared to business will provide a coordinate, one-stop-shop for entrepreneurial success.



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### **About The Chamber**

With 630 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.

