



Member Priorities for the
2022 Municipal Pre-Budget Deliberations
Chamber Deputation to Timmins City Council
Thursday, December 15, 2022



Chamber Representative:

Dan Ayotte
2022-23 Chamber President

About the Chamber

With 640 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.

Presentation:

Good evening. My name is Dan Ayotte, and I am the President of the Chamber. As the voice of business in Timmins since 1949, the Chamber is proactive in conveying our supporters' most significant barriers to business.

First, I want to congratulate each of you on running successful election campaigns, and I look forward to our work together.

Every year, the Chamber is pleased to offer our members' priorities for consideration during City Council's budget deliberations. Given the ongoing projects and current economic climate, we understand the considerable challenges you face in approaching this year's budget. 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. Our presentation this evening will be built upon five pillars that focus on the recommendations for the City's portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax for attraction and retention purposes, the implementation of the Small Business Property Tax Subclass, the blending of city and agency services to promote business excellence, reiterating the need for a new governance model for the Timmins Victor M. Power Airport and subsequent Master Plan, and campaigns for growth, investment, and harnessing the power of genuinely being Open for Business.

City Council's Discretionary Use of the 50 Percent Reserve Funds Derived from the Municipal Accommodation Tax

It is clear that this tax levy has the potential to support some world-class community initiatives and sound infrastructure investments for our City. Since its implication in 2019, the City has seen the collection of just over \$1.8 million— over \$900,000 to populate the fund for community events and \$900,000 to be spent at the discretion of Council, and derived from local hoteliers and their clients to benefit several community-driven, tourism-based events. As the City continues to see revenues generated as a direct result of the investments made by our hoteliers,

we must continue to support and promote their properties and regional tourism by highlighting Timmins as a viable, safe, and healthy destination so that we can continue to reap the benefits of this levy.

The Chamber has been pleased to hold a seat on the Timmins Municipal Accommodation Tourism Grant Committee and see the excellent community events and organizations that have benefited from the funds. We also want to congratulate Councillors Black, Robin, and Whissell on being appointed to the Municipal Accommodation Tax Advisory Committee, which will oversee the distribution of the remaining 50 percent. The Chamber and our supporters have formulated our recommendations for how the City's discretionary portion of the MAT funds can be used to support key infrastructure investments and initiatives that will support and promote Timmins as a premier destination for tourism in the north.

1. Investing in a Community Safety Strategy that Embodies the Principles of a Safe and Healthy Tourist Destination

As you have just heard from the previous presentation, safety—perceived or real, directly impacts how downtowns and other business complexes thrive. Without overly reiterating what we've just heard, the Chamber is again encouraging Council to carefully review the proposed Community Safety Strategy Pilot and approve its funding so that we may begin the pilot project and assess its inevitable success. This model has proven outcomes in communities of similar size and demographic, and we look forward to working with the City, the Downtown Timmins BIA, and social service partners to see its implementation.

2. A Historic Capital Campaign, led by City Council, to Build a World-Class, Multi-Purpose Arts, Sports, and Recreational Facility for the City of Timmins

Timmins indeed holds the designation of a City by definition but lacks some final, key pieces of critical infrastructure to adhere to the definition of a fulsome community genuinely. As one of the few regions in Ontario to cite negative population growth, we know that as partners, we must do all we can to strategically invest in amenities, projects, and initiatives that will act as powerful attraction and retention outcomes for Timmins.

We have recently heard from our partners in the natural resource extraction sector that they are facing historic gaps in their workforce that are now having a measurable impact on their bottom

line and impeding their ability to grow. One of the largest barriers to retaining employees in our community is the lack of access to amenities, be it sports, culture, or arts-based. This gap leaves us vulnerable and at a disadvantage to our southern counterparts.

As our current sports and recreational facilities continue to age to the point of costly repair, the question has now come—how does Timmins invest in new facilities to increase the quality of life while ensuring that they remain economically viable?

A multi-purpose sports, recreation, and arts centre should be explored to gauge its viability and understand how we as a community can begin addressing our ageing infrastructure through shared space and that can see P3 partnerships to develop. There are significant funding opportunities—our mining partners know this. They are ready to invest, the Provincial and Federal Governments have dollars we can secure, and we also have the possibility of reappropriating post-industrial sites for environmental remediation: including the potential adaptive reuse of Hollinger Gold Mine, as an example.

We need to see leadership from this Council to move these investments forward. A portion of a few years' accumulations of the City's portion of the MAT Tax can be used in our lobbying efforts to show that Timmins is ready to invest its portion in realizing the greatly needed legacy project that will undoubtedly act as a strong retention piece in promoting Timmins as a great place to live, work, learn, and play.

The implementation of the Small Business Property Tax Subclass

In November 2020, the Province introduced a property tax subclass that would provide targeted tax relief to small businesses and increase business competitiveness. While the Chamber celebrated the announcement with the City at the time, one that came in tandem with the Business Education Tax rates reduction, we are now encouraging this Council to review the benefits of this important tool and how its immediate creation and implementation can benefit local businesses. This action will allow the municipality to target property tax relief to small businesses in a way that best reflects local circumstances and amplify our "Open for Business" motto by using this mechanism to increase the community's competitiveness.

More importantly, in this year's Fall Economic Statement, the Province made good on their word and automatically matched property tax reductions for small businesses within all

municipalities that adopt the small business property subclass. To mitigate what may appear as a loss of revenue for the City, the Province noted that municipalities might also use reserves to offset the impact or find savings within existing budgets to compensate for the amount of relief and mitigate the associated tax shift to other property owners. As the Province is largely leaving this framework to the City, The Chamber will commit to assisting in defining the program's parameters to support our small businesses—furthering our competitive advantage as a great place to invest.

The Blending of City and Agency Services, Including Expediting Shovel-ready Projects, to Promote Business Excellence

The distinction between economic growth and economic development is worth noting before we delve into this pillar. Economic growth focuses on macroeconomic indicators of how well an economy is doing, as often measured by the expansion or contraction of its Gross Domestic Product. Economic development, however, shifts the focus of well-being from the economy to the people.

Although economic growth is important, the more relevant consideration becomes how it translates into human welfare, measured by factors such as the creation of sustainable jobs, the number of people earning a decent wage, and improvements in general living standards. An Economic Development Corporation, by virtue, is meant to advance community economic development in Timmins and the region by attracting and supporting businesses and organizations and cultivating a desirable quality of life and a diversified economy.

When we recognize that the corporation is not meant to influence local market values but to attract, enrich, and maintain human capital within its catchment area, the idea of what and whom the corporation should serve shifts. Thus, it would be prudent for the corporation to streamline business services, allowing for navigational ease of policies and procedures and seeking co-efficiencies to boost attraction and competition.

A prime example of why this marrying of services to business is needed is the most recent concerns we've heard from our Community Futures Development Corporation. Clients' major obstacles recently have been zoning delays and reviews from the committee of adjustments. Our members have been told that a review is currently a six- to nine-month wait.

As a result, in the past 6 months, several clients have withdrawn their loan applications or deferred loans because the proposed locations do not conform to the current zoning, negating their eligibility. Subsequently, the total value of the withdrawn or deferred loan applications is currently sitting at approximately \$1 million and growing. Unfortunately, as a key funder in our community, the location of these businesses is critical to their viability. Entrepreneurs must prove a confirmation of proper zoning before their funds are approved. A six- to nine-month delay is a significant barrier to the start-up and growth of these businesses and often results in the owner or operator not moving forward with their plans for start-up or expansion. This is an unfortunate loss of job creation or market growth opportunity.

According to our CFDC, clients are referred to the City to confirm zoning requirements for their business before investing time in securing or committing to a location that does not conform to their proposed use.

This leaves critical investment projects languishing in navigating municipal policies and procedures. Again, the number we're citing is currently at \$1 million and growing.

When we streamline services to businesses, we provide the necessary tools for success, particularly in an application that requires rezoning. The Chamber is requesting an internal review that seeks to amalgamate all pertinent municipal services to business under an ABCs purview and reduce red tape and other unnecessary administrative burdens to expedite economic development in our community.

Creating an Airport Advisory Board under the ABCs to Carryout the Airport Master Plan

The Chamber applauds the City and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation for taking the lead in developing the much-needed Airport Master Plan. We know that Timmins is well-positioned to be the world-class hub for transportation and connectivity to the far north. We look forward to our continued participation in the consultation process to see community stakeholders, aviation experts, and Indigenous Communities contribute.

In acknowledging the timeliness of this Master Plan, The Chamber identified that there is yet to be an appropriate oversight committee that can see the recommendations of this plan come to fruition. The role of the Airport Manager is to oversee the operation and management of the airport but what is needed is an Advisory Board charged with leading the deliverables laid out in the coming Master Plan.

To realize the success of the report's recommendations, The Chamber suggests creating an Airport Advisory Board, populated by Indigenous representatives, local stakeholders and aviation experts, and elected officials to see the plan through. This advisory board can, in its initiation, be crafted under the purview of one of the current "ABCs" of Council but would ultimately be transitioned to an independent body that would comprise an Agency, Board or Committee.

The Chamber will also commit to assisting the City in creating the terms of references and seeking community stakeholders to populate its board.

Fully Adopting the "Open for Business" Motto

The Chamber recognizes that Timmins was indeed one of the first to adopt the motto of "Open for Business," and now is the time to fully commit to its operationalization. As you move through your line-by-line budgetary review, we would ask that you do so under the lens of being genuinely open for business and consider how each item may impact our small- to medium-sized enterprises as we advance.

In closing, and especially as we enter the holiday season, I would remind you of the Chamber's Find it in Timmins initiative, which encourages consumers to find goods and services within the community and emphasizes the importance of voting with your dollar. By supporting Timmins businesses, they, in turn, can support various charitable causes, community programs and events. As leaders within our 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. We pursue that work through the coming year and beyond with great eagerness.

On behalf of our members, our Board and our staff, we at the Chamber thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening, and we look forward to working with you throughout 2023.

Thank you.



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