



City of Timmins  
State of the City 2020  
Mayor George Pirie  
To  
Timmins Chamber of Commerce  
Thursday, January 23, 2020  
Porcupine Dante Club  
Timmins, Ontario  
12:00 p.m.

Welcome, Bienvenue, Wachay!

Thank you Dr. Gibbons, for the kind introduction. Dr. Gibbons and I go back to our high school days at RMSS.

Fred, as you all know, is President of Northern College and he recently announced his retirement effective June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. Fred has been and I expect will continue to be a tireless advocate for our college system and Northern College has flourished under his leadership. The most recent addition is the Innovation Hub to which Kirkland Lake Gold has donated \$500,000. Congratulations Fred on your career. The College is in great financial health and you will be missed.

Additionally I would like to thank Northern as today's sponsor. As I finish up my term as Chairman of the Board of Governors I want to express my appreciation to the staff here today. I will miss working with such a dedicated and visionary team.

To my colleagues on council, members of the Chamber of Commerce, members of the media, invited guests; it gives me great pleasure to be here today to share with you my State of the City address as Mayor. I want to thank you all, including the members of the City of Timmins Administration, for being here today.

Before I start I want to emphasize a few things. In every interview I have stated this but it does not get the attention it deserves. First the City has a very good council. They are all very hard working and not self-serving. I said that this council was committed to be the best that they could be to serve the citizens of Timmins. They have been doing exactly that. Their first thoughts are always to the benefit of the city. It has been my pleasure and honour to work with them.

Secondly, the City has a very good administration led by Dave Landers. He and his team of dedicated department heads have delivered a very good budget. Mr. Landers had been leading the Continuous Improvement initiative and achieved significant results, not just in cutting costs but growing revenues through regional initiatives. We of course have

more to do and to better understand exactly the task at hand; a scenario analysis will be finished in the second quarter of this year that will give us the base, likely and upside potential over the next five years.

We have very strong department heads. With them we will meet our objectives and more. Everyone has a keen understanding of our challenges.

Just as I said last year it is an honor to stand here today as the Mayor of the City of Timmins. It is a responsibility I take on with great humility and respect for the mandate granted to me by the citizens of this great city. It is a trust never to be betrayed and a duty to be executed with vision, vigor and vigilance. I stepped into this position knowing that I may not always be the most popular person in the room, nor will I be able to please every resident but I have promised to execute my responsibilities dedicated to the greater good of every resident of this city. There have been a few of those instances this past year but we managed to negotiate a good contract at the airport and we are still curling at the Mac. In fact the McIntyre hosted a tremendous senior's event the weekend prior to last where I participated in the opening ceremonies. Some of the best in the Province were there including the Ice Man!

I want to talk about the tough social issues first.

### **Opioid crisis.**

This is not going away. This is already a generation crisis and the pressures on our social system will only increase.

Why? There is too much money to be made. A solid block of fentanyl can be purchased for \$12,500. In powder form it is worth \$250,000. This powder can be made into a million pills which have a street value of \$20,000,000. Our law enforcement officers have never seen anything like this.

The large pharma companies in the U.S. have been successfully sued in some jurisdictions and the Province of Ontario has passed legislation and joined other Provincial jurisdictions in such actions. We are investigating whether or not we can join

these actions. Our health care system is complicit in this problem by over prescribing this pain medication. These are issues we have to deal with at the highest levels within our Provincial government. Two of the deaths we had last year related to this crisis were individuals in their late fifties and early sixties.

This is having a direct effect on the costs of running CDSSAB EMS as the crisis calls have doubled in three years.

A year ago I mentioned that we should have a safe injection site. I was informed that in effect they do not solve the problem of abandoned needles. However the community has responded with needle depository sites located strategically in the community and programs initiated by various agencies to pick them up. This is a start but not a solution.

Simply put we have to get in front of this problem. Interaction on the weekly meetings of the situation table will start to analyse data so an intervention officer can proceed to an expected trouble spot and perhaps eliminate the need for an ambulance. There is now perhaps enough data to do this.

### **Homelessness.**

The latest numbers continue to show that these numbers continue to grow in our region. This issue is unique here. 90% of our homeless are Indigenous. Many of these individuals arrive here with effects of generations of failed attempts at social engineering initiated by senior levels of government. These types of problems are generational. These types of problems demand significant resources, resources that we in this region are not receiving. Most of the individuals that I am in contact with at Living Space need some type of counselling. I have talked about this before, our CDSSAB receives \$648 per homeless person; Kenora receives \$3,500; Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury and North Bay receive from \$5,500 to \$7,500; Hastings receives over \$12,000; Windsor receives over \$40,000 per person.

Recently the Niagara Region, in trying to position themselves for more funding, calculated that on a population based formula they were only receiving \$17.60. On that same basis Timmins receives less than Niagara, just over \$16.

There are two issues here the first and most obvious is that we need more provincial funding; secondly we need more federal funding. The Indigenous population are moving from federally funded jurisdictions. Simply put the funds have to follow the feet.

Our Federal member is aware of this and has promised to chase this down as he has excellent relations with all departments in Ottawa.

### **Crime.**

I am not going to get into statistics here. What I do want to talk about is the proactive measures to deal with our changing social situation.

First of all let me say that we have tremendous leadership at the Timmins Police Service. This is an organisation where status quo is not the option. The leadership there knows the challenges and is responding.

Anyone here who was at the BIA sponsored event at the museum knows that the initiatives the TPS have taken on are progressive, designed to work with every other agency in the city to respond to this situation. The “Lock It or Lose It” is a Provincial campaign based on common sense. For years if your vehicle was stolen and it was unlocked then it is difficult to get a claim processed. Of course there are incidents where locked vehicles and home are getting broken into. I totally endorse the neighbourhood watch initiative. I certainly endorse alarming your premises with cameras. I have.

I have described the opioid crisis and why it is not going to go away. At the same session, the Chief described how they can be 100% effective and the criminal still ends up back on the street. You all would be aware of a recent armed robbery with a knife at a gas station on Algonquin. TPS apprehended that individual the same night and the courts had granted him bail and on the street before the end of the next day. The only solution I

see is that we have to take back our neighbourhoods. There is no possibility for the TPS to be all places at once. Neighbourhood watches used to be a standard thing. Make sure you have gatherings and get to know your neighbours.

However the most progressive thing we are doing is developing the Community Safety and Well Being Plan. This is an initiative that is legislated by the Provincial Government with full recognition of our changing social environment and evolving Policing.

Remember that by the time a Police Officer is talking to a criminal our system has already failed. A Community Safety and Well Being Plan by definition has to be owned by all citizens of Timmins. It has to be a working, living, evolving plan with defined objectives actionable on the ground. Silos will be broken down as we move from being reactionary in nature and to a system which is focused on up-stream early preventative multi sector collaborative initiatives to make our city a safe and healthy place to live for all our citizens.

Here's an example of what this initiative must do for us. In the City Hall parking lot by my Jeep, I engage, as I usually do, with two individuals admiring the vehicle. Both were thirty and neither had finished high school. Both had children and neither were actively engaged in parenting. Obviously the concern is for the Mother and the children. The Community Safety and Well Being Plan will develop a methodology to identify and coordinate the response so those kids do not fall between the cracks as they are doing now.

The Community Safety and Well Being Plan is the initiative we need to coordinate all the agencies, communicate critical information to our citizens so they are engaged in the right activities at the right time to insure our neighbourhoods are safe!

Let's revisit the situation just described about the individual that commits armed robbery and gets bail the same day. How would the Community Safety and Well Being plan in place respond to this? Well, this individual, as I understand it, is gainfully employed, making more than enough money never to have to rob a convenience store or gas station. The well-being plan, if effective, would have the necessary mechanisms in place to reach

out to this individual's employer. It would seem obvious to me that this individual has an addiction problem. The employer's role in this, as it would be right now, would be to get him involved in some sort of treatment program. It is only through tackling the underlying cause of this activity that we can hope to arrive at a solution.

My point to the community is this: that you are either part of the solution or part of the problem. If you want to continue to be a victim, you are effectively part of the problem. If you chose to become involved with your neighbours, with the community safety and well-being plan and get actively involved then you are part of the solution. Collectively, this community has resources and the strength to find the solution for these social problems.

One more point I want to make on this topic. Whenever or wherever there is a vulnerable population such as those at Living Space there will be predators. The Living Space brand has no place for the predators. The workers there understand that as do the TPS. It is not a zero barrier setting and in fact if there is to be any success in helping those that need it the predators have to, will and are being dealt with.

### **Provincial Budget.**

Last year as I stood before you and I had just made a pre-budget presentation. We have not had that opportunity yet and really do not expect any major changes to what we seen over the last 18 months. In fact the Province did not grant, as was expected, a funding request from the ROMA board. Provincial funding will be based or defended on one criteria: jobs and the economy.

We are not expecting any surprises to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. Largely cuts in one area like the TPS have been offset by increases to other areas like the OICF. In fact this year we expect to receive approximately \$36,000 more from that fund. This not to be confused with the funding for the connecting link. I do not expect any change in this. We have brought it to the province's attention for 17 years and nothing has changed. So we must move to creating our own solution.

As you all know the next phase of this construction will disrupt the whole city. The reason is clear as we will need to shut down traffic on Algonquin Blvd. This will affect not only every business on Algonquin but every business east and west of the bridge. It will affect our citizens on the proposed by-pass routes. It will affect our major industrial players who truck their feed to their mills. It will be extremely deleterious to the roads designated as by-pass routes which quite frankly need repairs now.

Discussions are taking place now and I have been disappointed with one aspect of them. There has been an obvious need for a by-pass in Timmins for years. A few attempts have been made at making this happen but obviously it has not. We can see the results every single day of excessive heavy truck traffic on infrastructure which was not built to handle it. Round numbers it will cost our large industrial users in additional transport fees \$3,000,000 per year to get their feed to their mills. My disappointment is that our large industrial users do not seem to be interested or at least able to develop a consensus on doing this. The city owns the land and there is no shortage of material to do the job.

It would seem to me that if we delayed this portion of the construction the large industrial users could volunteer to create a fund over three or four years to create at least a private industrial access road to the south of the city. Failing that then the city will explore ways and means to create toll roads over this time to get this road built.

In my opinion we are wasting good money by replacing our infrastructure through the city without addressing the fact that it will never achieve maximum life with the ore and logging trucks travelling through the Algonquin portion of this vital link. We know that we are not going to get the funding from the Province. We know the affect that this spend has on our overall budget and our ability to repair our infrastructure in other parts of the city. We know that this is not an expenditure that our rate payers can sustain. I have said repeatedly that we need to have the tough conversations. This obviously is one of them.



## **Population.**

We talked last year about a declining population and relatively speaking we have stayed the same with a small increase due to an increase to the Indigenous population choosing to live here. However we are still projected to decline by 4.5% in this decade.

Compounding the problem of the declining population and residential tax base is the shrinking of the industrial, commercial base as a result of the consistent success in the appeal of the MPAC assessments by this group which has seen a 50% reduction in the property tax from the large industrial mines in the area. This is a severe problem for Timmins as we will incur a 6% reduction in our tax base levy by 2021 resulting from these successful appeals. This is the same information that I gave you last year but it is critical when you consider our ability to afford our infrastructure and consequently the concept of toll roads. Quite simply the money has to come from somewhere.

Now I want to go back to the increase in our Indigenous population. Currently this demographic makes up 11% of the population which is higher than the national average. This is good news as the average age for our Indigenous population is a decade younger than the Ontario general population. Although the average age of our population will increase, the Indigenous populations are growing at the fastest rate in the country and as such provide the potential to fill the employment roles. Timmins is a service hub for the Indigenous populations along the James Bay and lower Hudson Bay coastal areas. Timmins is where they come to live and visit, to access health care, education, and social services. You will be aware that Timmins was the city of choice for evacuation requirements from flood and fire during the spring and very early summer.

You will be aware that the Indigenous population is over-represented in a few categories: on a reserve, poverty is 4 times the national average which will lead this population to migrate to cities such as ours to pursue opportunities. As I mentioned earlier the Indigenous population is over represented in our homeless statistics and many of these individuals arrive here with health problems associated with generational issues associated with failed social engineering initiatives from the higher level of governments.

We see this manifested in the incarceration rates in our prisons. With less than ten percent of the population, Indigenous males represent 30% of males incarcerated and Indigenous females represent 40% of the females incarcerated. This is a national shame and failure.

This is why the joint initiative with Mushkegowuk and Timmins to eliminate homelessness, poverty and increase economic development is critical for our region. This initiative talks about self-determination and this is a critical element of reconciliation which I support unequivocally. There is no light switch to flick to change the reality on the ground but the vast wealth on these lands will and should generate the wealth to support healthy populations. I have been consistent that if the economic well-being of the populations is to be maximized then the resources that are to be developed in their territories have to be processed in their territories.

Last year I said that what we do over the next four years will lay the foundation for our future. I said that the world will come to us and ask how we can invest in this region. I firmly believe this.

The Federal Government announced in a paper that they want to triple the population by the end of this century. That is an increase of over 70 million people in 80 years which is a phenomenal rate. I have said many times that this region has everything the world wants: fresh air, water, rich soils and unlimited resources.

Right now the region is largely empty. The world's population is approaching 8 billion people. We have in this vast area a little over 70 thousand. If you engage the students we have in this region who have come from half way around the world to study here they will tell you they like the room and fresh air. I am certain that our decedents will look very different than we look now and this is a good thing.

With this as a basis what is our direction to be? Well a very precise answer can be found in the works of the Northern Policy Institute where they talk about the future of this region. Simply, they say that our future would be much brighter if we opened up to the rest of this world. They state that the local Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders have to take the

region in a different path. The region needs to take charge themselves by partnering more and differently with the private sector and using the existing mechanisms of government more effectively and more selectively.

Dr. Charles Conteh has come to a broadly similar conclusion, noting, “The region is thus at a crossroads: It can continue to rely on the provincial and federal governments to respond to legitimate requests and hope that the answer is both timely and positive; or it can chart a course to making the structural changes in its economy to meet present and future challenges”.

This is what we are doing with our Indigenous partners. This is the structural change that will secure this region and their lands. How do we open up to the rest of the world? Well the first thing is we have to see where we are in relation to the rest of the world and what is happening out there. Trade routes are being and have been opened through the Arctic. They are not going away. There was little dispute that this was Canada’s territory and for most of the time there has been a country called Canada. However, now it is being claimed that this territory’s shipping lanes are international. Canada is on the wrong side of this dispute with the U.S. and China. It is unlikely that development of these lanes will be halted. In fact last year was the highest level of shipping tonnage in history. Additionally the Inuit, the people of the region, support the development. They are sea faring people who have always relied on these waters for their sustenance. Furthermore Canada cannot defend it. So what is this region’s opportunity? Obviously Moosonee and the development of a containerised sea port there. The U.S. and China are inching towards a trade deal. The shortest route to the heart of this continent, shipping from Europe of Asia, is through the bottom of James Bay at Moosonee and then rail. Billions of dollars are available to make this happen just as they were to make the Bay James project happen for the Quebec Cree.

### **About Timmins.**

I want to move on now to some important issues right here that have been of concern.

We have talked often about the Porcupine sewage pumping and treatment system. We expect that to be wrapped up in the spring and functional in the fall of this year. A legacy project that we are all happy to see completed, and we have to thank our director of Engineering Pat Seguin for grabbing control of that and making it happen.

Timmins was selected as one of 11 communities in Canada as a pilot project for immigration. This is being coordinated through the TEDC. The key feature here is that the immigration comes once employment is secured.

We are not anticipating that Glencore will be able to extend the life of the Kidd Creek Mine. We know if they are not successful the community will lose over \$100 million in annual payroll and over \$50 million in annual goods and services spent by 2022. This is one of the drivers regarding our aggressive regional approach to economic development. There will not be, within the lines on the map we call Timmins, the discovery of a world class ore body like Kidd or the major gold operations, Hollinger, McIntyre or Dome.

We know that we are still in the hunt for the ferrochrome facility.

Detour, who spends \$165 million in local Northern Ontario purchasing, will shortly find out if they have a new owner, Kirkland Lake Gold. If KLG is successful this has the opportunity to be very good for Timmins. This asset is equivalent to approximately 50% of the value of the Ring of Fire and it is serviced largely out of Timmins.

Pan American Silver recently announced an expansion to its Bell Creek facilities. This expression of confidence in the ore body and the city is appreciated.

Newmont is now well established in the city. The corporation recently sold the Red Lake assets but has elected to retain their operations here. There will be no announcement from the corporation regarding the Century project; they will instead rotate the Pamour Pit into the production profile to dove-tail with the completion of the Hollinger project. This of course means that the billion dollar project will not be added to our assessment base.

We must remember that the Century project only had a fourteen year life. However, I am very optimistic about this development. I believe they will think strategically about the mining and exploration potential in the Porcupine and would recognise the inherent value of the land position and operational assets of the Pan American Silver assets in the region. I believe they will recognise the value in the approximately 20 million ounces of refractory ore in the area and they have the skill set to capitalise on this potential. I believe they are here because they see the opportunities from Chapleau to Quebec. They mined here before at Harker Holloway and they are back in my opinion because they liked what they saw then and like the opportunity now.

Timmins West has obtained the financing required to advance their project. They have an open house scheduled tonight at 6:00 p.m. at the McIntyre to advise the residents of their progress.

I am convinced that I AM Gold will be making an announcement on the Cote Lake Project. They have de-risked the project financially and continue to grow the production profile. The leadership and community of Mattagami First Nation support this. We will be able to ask Minister Rickford about this next Monday when he is town to talk about the health of the mineral sector.

Directly north of us if you travel on Highway 655 to Highway 11, you will note significant drilling activity. Although this is beyond the city limits it is a project which has the potential to be of significant benefit to the city. Canadian Nickel is drilling a very large, very low grade polymetallic nickel deposit. It has the potential to be the largest nickel mine in the world. It would be an open pit and be serviced from Timmins if it succeeds.

Northern College will be proceeding with the development of a 23,000 square foot Innovation hub to house its applied research, innovation and entrepreneurship activity that will benefit local industry while providing experiential learning opportunities for its students.

Timmins is home to a campus of Université de Hearst. Université de Hearst is affiliated with Laurentian for academic standing but is completely autonomous financially. Since its transformation in 2014 centered on the Block System, mobility agreements with France and international recruitment in French Africa, in class and workplace experimental learning and interdisciplinary studies, Université de Hearst has doubled its enrollment. 40% of the student population is comprised of international students. This academic year, the Business and Administration program was reopened at the Timmins campus and a student residence was purchased and renovated.

Université de Hearst is innovative and progressive. The Block system allows for learning experiences in and out of the classroom. Last spring a three week course was offered in the UK. The Université has created InnovaNor which houses our Centre for psychosocial evaluation and intervention as well as research and intervention centre in community and economic development. These centres offer much needed local services as the demand on current agencies and waiting lists continue to grow.

The federal and Ontario governments have just reached a deal to fund a new French-language university in Toronto. While this is a positive agreement and great for the francophone community, I am disappointed that this university was not located in Timmins.

Collège Boréal was established in 1995 and will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. Approximately 612,000 Francophones call Ontario home. It is the largest francophone community outside of Quebec. In 2008 Collège Boréal became the first post-secondary institution designated as an official French language service provider under the French Language Services Act. The Timmins campus offers diplomas in business and community services, trades and applied technology, environment and natural resources and school of health sciences. Additionally apprenticeships, employment services, immigration programs, applied research, academic upgrading, continuing education and contract training are all offered. Collège Boréal is in final negotiations with the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to offer services to new comers come April 1<sup>st</sup>.

We continue to be very enthusiastic about the agricultural sector. Again in driving to Matheson you will note more land being cleared along Highway 101. I will say again, once tilled these soils are incredibly productive. The world needs to be fed and the Great Clay Belt can be a significant contributor, especially with climate change to this need. I will repeat what I said last year.

The Ontario Climate and Agricultural Assessment Framework paints a much warmer future for the Clay Belt over the next 30 years. They are projecting an increase in growing days which would make our growing season longer than what is currently enjoyed in Eastern Ontario or Manitoba today. The combination of longer growing seasons in the Clay Belt and higher land prices in Southern Ontario has already prompted renewed interest in the area. With an arable land base one and a half times the cropland area of Manitoba, it is possible to surmise that the Clay Belt could support a similar population and economy. Prosperity and population in the Clay Belt will pull the economic centre of balance much further north. Timmins is perfectly situated to take full advantage of this opportunity.

The forestry sector in our city is very well represented by EACOM. They are a very well run efficient plant. I attended what was to be a strategy session on the forestry sector last week on the back of proposed changes to the way this sector is to be managed. I was dismayed to learn that this province, the second largest by land mass and with 90% north of a line from Parry Sound across to the Quebec border is 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> in exports of forestry products to the USA!!

Alberta, a prairie province exports more than us!! This was stunning information and I can only surmise that a strategy session with government officials that watched or participated in this demise was folly. If we are to have a value added aspect to this sector then we will have to go get it ourselves. I think there is tremendous possibilities in cross laminated timber. The only plant right now in Eastern Canada that I know of is in Chibougamu, Quebec. Wood construction now is approved up to 16 stories.

Imyers Talc continues to prosper despite the parent company seeking bankruptcy protection.

Certarus, a fast growing Compressed Natural Gas company continues to execute on their business plan and grow the client base.

Ineos Calabrian is another example of a corporation that continues to thrive here in Timmins.

The Canadian Space Agency and Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales again conducted their Stratospheric Balloon launch campaign here and continues to be a favoured site of the scientific community due to its latitude, wind and weather conditions, on-site infrastructure and geography.

To capitalize on these opportunities we must work together as a team dedicated to continuous improvement, committed to disrupt our way of thinking, committed to disrupt our way of solving problems and working together, council and the leadership within the city, to address the issues we face. Respect and trust are paramount. As I have stated reasonable people should be able to disagree reasonably and then get on with the business at hand. We must be prudent stewards of the present to preserve our ability to capitalize on all the opportunities available to us in this vast and magnificent land.

### **Within the City of Timmins.**

#### Service Timmins

What I want to say about Service Timmins is that it is working. As identified in in the 2015 Service Delivery and Operational Review one of the City of Timmins' corporate strategic priorities is to "improve customer satisfaction, customer communication and expand community engagement with Stakeholders." On September 17, 2018 the City of Timmins opened Service Timmins, its new customer service center which allows residents to come to one location to handle numerous frontline services provided by the City of Timmins. Service Timmins was designed with the goal of providing customer service excellence by



providing consistently effective, accessible, reliable, and responsive customer experiences for the community. Administration, working through the continuous improvement initiative and with a small working group of councillors, is continually developing better service strategies. If there is a better way of doing things then it will be done. There is no defensiveness in any of this. The group that has been most affected are the councillors, one of whom has just suggested that they be informed of complaints registered by individuals in their wards so they can follow up on them. Great idea and I am sure it can be done.

### Public Utilities and Environmental

Pilot textile diversion program diverted 28,000 lbs of clothing and textiles from our landfill.

### Committees

There were a number new committees formed in 2019.

The Porcupine Watershed Public Liaison committee was created to meet the commitment to interact proactively on this very important asset with in the city. It is functioning as planned.

We just formed the Francophone Liaison committee. I am excited about potential of this committee. It will be regional in scope and I hope results in development of excellent relations across the northern corridor from Hearst to Val Dor. I believe that through this committee we can be the centre or Francophone culture in the north. I believe that through this committee we can discover what Quebec has done right and bring that back here.

We will shortly be forming the committees require for the MAT tax. Again I am very positive about what this can do for the city.

Again I believe passionately in the future of our City of Timmins and will work tirelessly to achieve its potential.

What we do next the will lay the foundation for our future, a future where the world will come to us to ask us how we did what we did and most importantly how can we invest in this city.

As I said it is our future to seize.