

ENCOURAGING GROWTH: ELIMINATING RED TAPE AT THE MUNICIPALITY

Recommendations from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce Red Tape Task Force

Task Force Mandate

The Red Tape Task Force was formed to analyze, respond to and monitor the Future Ready Development Services Ad-Hoc Committee of Council recommendations, with the goal of improving municipal development approval and permitting processes.

Background

To support a more open-for-business environment, the Chamber conducted a thorough review of the City's Future Ready Development Services Ad-Hoc Committee final report and recommendations.

This work was informed by:

- Roundtable consultations with local businesses.
- Ongoing member engagement and tracking recurring challenges
- Research into successful initiatives in other municipalities, including Thunder Bay, North Bay, Barrie, Guelph and Kelowna.
- Analysis of municipal data and reports.

The Chamber recognizes the City's progress in reducing barriers to development, including the introduction of partial online permitting, a one-stop development desk, a pilot program for one-day permits and improved public information and reporting. These changes have improved the permitting and development processes and show a shared commitment to supporting business growth and economic development.

The recommendations in this report, which were touched on in the Chamber's presentation at the Future Ready committee meeting on November 12, build on that momentum and align with the City's strategic goals of continuous improvement and customer service excellence.

Recommendations

Organizational and Staffing Improvements

- 1. Reorganize staff structures at all levels within relevant departments to better improve customer service and support digital transformation and improvement initiatives.**

Restructuring municipal service areas to better integrate planning, building and economic development services throughout the entire approvals and permitting process would streamline decision-making, reduce delays and improve coordination. There has been some progress here but with no added costs, further changes would streamline operations and ensure that technology initiatives are managed with broader economic outcomes in mind.



- 2. Redesign SPART as collaborative and solution focused.**

Revamping the Sudbury Planning Application Review Team (SPART) into a collaborative, solution-focused team would streamline complex development approvals by involving only key decision-makers early in the process. With no added cost, this shift would reduce redundant feedback cycles, decrease incomplete permit rates and foster a more open, customer-oriented culture through in-person dialogue and clear action plans.
- 3. Prioritize staffing in key areas where capacity gaps are limiting progress.**

Reallocating existing resources or adjusting for peak times would address staffing bottlenecks and improve development approval timelines and service delivery. With minimal cost, this approach ensures staff are focused where they are most needed, supporting faster approvals and a more responsive experience as online permitting continues to evolve.
- 4. Implement a single-point-of-contact business partner for high value or complex development projects.**

Implementing a business partner model for major development projects would assign a dedicated staff member to guide applicants through the entire approval process, coordinating across departments and ensuring clear, consistent communication. With no added cost, this concierge-style approach would simplify approvals, reduce procedural delays and build a more responsive, trust-based relationship between applicants and the City. This recommendation is included in the Future Ready recommendations; to maintain service standards, steps should be taken to ensure seamless coverage and support when that staff member is unavailable.
- 5. Implement reporting on staff time efficiencies through technology improvements.**

As technology automates manual processes, staff roles must evolve to reflect new efficiencies. By reallocating duties and tracking changes, the City can improve turnaround times for approvals and permits, reduce red tape and ensure software investments deliver clear public value. This approach supports expanded online services and maximizes the impact of digital transformation without additional staffing costs
- 6. Evaluate and implement collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and internal policy changes to improve organizational capacity.**

Reviewing internal policies and collective bargaining agreement provisions, including remote work, shift flexibility and cross-departmental assignments, would strengthen the City's ability to meet applicant needs and modernize service delivery. With low to moderate cost, this approach could improve timelines, support better customer service and create new opportunities for staff while enhancing overall efficiency.

Digital Transformation

- 1. Accelerate roll-out of digital systems with standard project management and public reporting.**

Improving the City's IT project management structure, especially for delayed systems like Pronto, would help accelerate implementation timelines and shift from manual processes to more efficient digital workflows. With no added cost, this change would reduce red



tape, enhance transparency through regular public reporting and strengthen communication with stakeholders, ultimately delivering better service outcomes.

2. Align technology and program implementation with process reviews to eliminate redundancies and standardize procedures.

To maximize the benefits of new digital systems, the City should conduct thorough business process reviews that prioritize user feedback and avoid replicating outdated workflows. With no added cost, this approach ensures technology drives meaningful change, resulting in clearer, more consistent processes that reduce red tape and accelerate approvals for businesses and developers.

3. Accelerate the digital transformation of the permit approvals process with end-to-end online applications, status tracking and interdepartmental coordination.

Expanding the City's e-permitting system to include remaining service areas and introduce features like AI plan reviews, e-signatures and online payments would make approvals more efficient and user-friendly. With low implementation costs, a fully integrated digital platform would reduce red tape, lower compliance burdens and improve accountability, resulting in faster, more reliable service for businesses and applicants.

4. Expand and formalize same day permitting for simple permits.

Establishing a permanent same-day permit service for simple applications like decks, sheds and pools would significantly reduce red tape by clearing backlogs and allowing staff to focus on complex files. This fast-track model improves efficiency, supports compliance and offers a more convenient experience for contractors and homeowners, especially during peak seasons.

5. Implement bi-annual Pronto user roundtables and regular surveys to collect feedback and prioritize improvements.

Engaging frequent users of the City's development systems, including architects, contractors and developers, in regular feedback loops would support ongoing improvement of digital tools and processes. This would help identify and resolve pain points and build trust through responsive service enhancements, ultimately strengthening customer satisfaction and system performance.

Policy and Bylaw Modernization

1. Review and modernize the sign bylaw with business consultation.

Updating the City's sign bylaw to reflect modern advertising practices and technologies would make permitting more straightforward and remove outdated restrictions. Guided by input from local businesses and sign companies, this review would reduce reliance on variances and streamline approvals, making it easier for businesses to operate and adapt.

2. Prioritize updates to zoning bylaws to reflect changing land use patterns, especially in areas transitioning from residential to mixed-use or commercial.

Accelerating updates of the City's zoning bylaws would bring regulations in line with current development trends, such as mixed-use and transit-oriented projects, while eliminating outdated provisions that trigger unnecessary variances. While resource-intensive, this work could be supported by provincial grants and would significantly reduce red tape, enabling more projects to proceed as-of-right and unlocking new opportunities for housing, business growth and community investment.



3. Revise parking requirements for businesses within development processes and bylaws to align with current urban planning practices.

Reviewing and modernizing parking requirements for commercial and mixed-use developments would reduce regulatory burdens and support more flexible, cost-effective solutions like shared or off-site parking. With no added cost, this change would eliminate a subtle but impactful form of red tape, lowering project expenses and accelerating approvals for developments that contribute to local economic growth.

4. Implement a permit grandfathering policy.

Introducing a legal non-conforming policy for historical building permit issues, such as old open permits or unpermitted structures, would ease property transactions and reduce regulatory burdens for owners. With minimal cost, this change would align Greater Sudbury with best practices in other municipalities, protect existing uses from retroactive enforcement and help prevent delays that hinder home sales and business activity.

Procurement Reform

1. Revise procurement bylaws to eliminate unnecessarily complex insurance and bonding requirements that deter participation by local small and medium-sized businesses.

Adjusting procurement policies to scale insurance and bonding requirements based on project risk would level the playing field for local businesses and reduce unnecessary barriers to bidding. This change would encourage broader participation, speed up procurement processes and eliminate red tape that disproportionately affects small and medium-sized vendors.

2. Revise procurement documents and structure.

Simplifying procurement documents and processes by using plain language, streamlining requirements and introducing smaller bid categories would make municipal contracts more accessible to small and medium-sized businesses. With no added cost, this change would lower barriers for vendors unfamiliar with government procurement and encourage broader local participation in the bidding process.

3. Provide quarterly reports to the Finance and Administration Committee of Council on all contract awards.

Expanding public reporting to include all municipal contract awards, regardless of value, would enhance transparency and accountability in procurement. With no added cost, this change would build trust, address concerns about fairness and ensure consistent adherence to bylaws by making contract details like vendor, value and method openly available.

