

THUNDER BAY FORWARD

Building Our Growth Story

2026-2030 | STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



Thunder Bay is located on the Traditional Territory of the Fort William First Nation, signatories to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850.

We also acknowledge the contribution of the Métis people in this area.



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“We are committed to supporting businesses at every stage of growth, building the infrastructure that attracts and retains new residents, and showcasing Thunder Bay as Canada’s premier outdoor city”

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO, JAMIE TAYLOR

The Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission’s 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan sets out an ambitious and exciting path forward for our city. Built on extensive research and community engagement, this plan reflects our vision to grow and diversify Thunder Bay’s economy while strengthening the foundation of what makes our community unique.



Over the next five years, we will focus on three key pillars: business, community, and tourism. Together, these priorities will drive new investment and job creation in key sectors, foster inclusive entrepreneurship, and position Thunder Bay as a hub of opportunity in Northwestern Ontario. We are committed to supporting businesses at every stage of growth, building the infrastructure that attracts and retains new residents, and showcasing Thunder Bay as Canada’s premier outdoor city — a four-season destination where visitors become part of our story.

Our values — inclusivity, innovation, collaboration, adaptability, strategic thinking, and integrity — are the foundation of this work. By embracing these values, we will strengthen partnerships with Indigenous organizations, entrepreneurs, investors, and community leaders. We will ensure that Thunder Bay continues to grow as a welcoming, resilient, and competitive city.

This is more than a roadmap. It is a collective commitment to prosperity, population growth, and raising Thunder Bay’s profile across Canada and beyond. Together, we are not only preparing for the future — we are shaping it, building a city where people, businesses, and visitors can grow.

– Jamie Taylor

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR, ROGER SOUCKEY

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am proud to share the Thunder Bay CEDC's 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan. This plan represents the hard work, insights, and aspirations of our community and partners who all share a common goal — to see Thunder Bay grow, diversify, and prosper.



As a Board, we are committed to ensuring that this plan delivers meaningful results by guiding strategic investments, advancing business opportunities, and strengthening the fabric of our community. We believe that Thunder Bay's future lies in collaboration — in working alongside our Indigenous partners, entrepreneurs, industry leaders, and residents to create an economy that is inclusive, resilient, and full of opportunity.

This is an exciting time for Thunder Bay. With focused leadership, strong partnerships, and a clear vision, we are confident that this plan will help elevate our city's profile, attract new people and businesses, and position Thunder Bay as a destination of choice to live, work, invest, and visit.

Together, we look forward to the next five years of progress, innovation, and achievement.

– Roger Souckey

“We believe that Thunder Bay's future lies in collaboration — in working alongside our Indigenous partners, entrepreneurs, industry leaders, and residents to create an economy that is inclusive, resilient, and full of opportunity.”

Economic Reconciliation

COMMITMENT

We are committed to advancing economic reconciliation by building meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities and supporting opportunities for shared growth.

ACTION

Through programs, collaboration, and specific initiatives, the CEDC works to include Indigenous voices and businesses in shaping Thunder Bay's economic development.





A NEED FOR GROWTH

The Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission's (CEDC) 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan outlines a bold path to strengthen and diversify the economy by driving investment, supporting business growth and attracting residents. Anchored in three pillars — Business, Community, and Tourism — the plan builds on the Phase 1 Economic Growth Assessment with clear strategies to raise Thunder Bay's profile as a place to live, work, invest, and visit.

This work is complemented by the City of Thunder Bay's Growth Taskforce and its Smart Growth Action Plan — a 10-year strategy led by 25 community leaders focused on expanding the city's tax base, modernizing policies, and ensuring the community is ready to welcome and support new businesses. Together, the CEDC's

focus on investment attraction and the City's commitment to creating a supportive environment position Thunder Bay to achieve its growth goals — building prosperity, increasing population, and raising the city's profile regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Strategic Pillars

BUSINESS

Attract and retain investment while supporting the success of new and existing local businesses.



TOURISM

Advance tourism development and increase visitor attraction to the community.

COMMUNITY

Foster placemaking and talent attraction while promoting Thunder Bay as the top small city in Canada to live and work.



VISION

To grow and diversify Thunder Bay's economy.

MISSION

To enhance Thunder Bay's prosperity, population, and profile by fostering partnerships, sharing knowledge, and utilizing resources that benefit our businesses, community, and visitors.



COLLABORATIVE



INCLUSIVE



INNOVATIVE



ADAPTABLE



STRATEGIC



INTEGRITY

Business



1

GOAL: Strengthen Thunder Bay's economy through industry investment and job creation in key sectors.

1

Pursue industry development opportunities in key growth sectors that leverage Thunder Bay's regional assets and logistics capabilities.

2

Capitalize on Thunder Bay's strategic location as Northwestern Ontario's mining hub to attract key service providers and suppliers in the mining sector, with a focus on critical minerals

3

Promote awareness of biomass opportunities in the forest sector including advancing value-added processes in engineered wood and bio-based materials development.

4

Enhance and foster supply chain participation across key sectors to drive innovation and economic development.

5

Collaborate with local and regional stakeholders to develop and promote Thunder Bay's value proposition for prospective investors.

6

In partnership with the City of Thunder Bay, ensure an adequate supply of Employment Land Areas across heavy industrial, light industrial and commercial zones



2

GOAL: Drive and foster inclusive entrepreneurship to enhance community economic vitality.

1

Promote new and existing business growth through tailored guidance and initiatives

2

Design and implement financial support programs to assist business start-up, expansion and succession planning for entrepreneurs

3

Enhance collaboration and partnerships with local and regional stakeholders to advance the business development network

4

Position Thunder Bay as the commercial, retail and hospitality hub of Northwestern Ontario.

5

Encourage intensification and promote business development in community improvement areas

Community

3

GOAL: Grow Thunder Bay's population by fostering workforce opportunities and strengthening social infrastructure to attract and retain residents

1

Promote Thunder Bay as a destination of choice to live, work, and do business through enhanced place branding initiatives

2

Advance population growth by leveraging economic immigration pathways to attract and retain new residents

3

Provide labour market data and insights to post-secondary and workforce institutions to align programs with current and future workforce demands

4

Partner with Educational Institutions and Indigenous Organizations to create stronger pathways between job seekers and employers.

5

Collaborate with partners to expand welcoming and retention initiatives that connect new residents to the workforce, business networks and essential services

6

Strengthen social infrastructure through investment and advocacy to support access to essential services that contribute to a vibrant, high-quality community life.



4

GOAL: Support economic infrastructure developments that strengthen Thunder Bay's competitiveness

1

Provide evidence-based insights to support municipal decision making on infrastructure, land use and economic development priorities

2

Lead community economic infrastructure projects that support a welcoming, growing and resilient community

3

Strategically support revitalization planning to maximize economic benefits

4

Collaborate with the City on strategic waterfront land development projects to drive economic growth

5

Promote economic infrastructure investments to highlight Thunder Bay's growth story

Tourism



GOAL: Enhance Thunder Bay as a four season tourism destination

5

1

Pursue Destination Master planning to support future tourism investments

2

Advance business and sport event capacity to support growth initiatives

3

Lead inclusive, sustainable, and regenerative tourism development efforts

4

Capitalizing on Thunder Bay's culinary and agritourism strengths, support the expansion of the local producer, supplier and creator ecosystem

5

Develop Thunder Bay as an international travel trade destination

6

Support year-round destination development growth through tourism program delivery



GOAL: Increase tourism by positioning Thunder Bay as Canada's premier outdoor city

1

Promote Thunder Bay through engaging content driven communication strategies across leisure, culture, sport, business and travel trade segments

2

Expand convention, culture, sport and travel trade opportunities by leveraging strategic industry events

3

Highlight Thunder Bay's inclusive and welcoming community through targeted marketing partnerships and strategies

4

Support wayfinding and visitor services to enhance the tourism experience

GLOSSARY



Travel Trade

The commercial network and distribution system in the tourism industry, where various professional entities like travel agencies, tour operators, wholesalers, and online travel agencies (OTAs) facilitate the buying, selling, and promotion of travel products and services such as accommodations, tours, and attractions.



Social Infrastructure

The physical places, programs, and organizations that support community life, well-being, and social connection, including schools, hospitals, community centers, libraries, and parks, as well as the less visible social networks, such as mutual aid groups and volunteer organizations.



Employment Lands

Areas zoned and protected for commercial and industrial development, providing space for businesses that support the economy through job creation and various functions like warehousing, manufacturing, and logistics.



Regenerative Tourism

A transformative travel philosophy where visitors actively work to leave a destination in a better state than they found it, fostering the restoration of ecosystems and communities, rather than just minimizing harm.



Wayfinding

The process of orienting oneself and navigating from a known point to a destination, using a combination of signs, maps, colors, landmarks, and other design cues to find your way through a physical environment.