

Mayor Lefebvre: *Moving our City Forward*

October 24 2023

Thank you for joining us today, on the one-year anniversary of the 2022 municipal election. A special thank you to all the Councillors for being here this morning.

Today, I want to share with you some of the many accomplishments since the last election, and provide you with an update on how Greater Sudbury is lining itself up for sustainable, positive growth.

Many of you are familiar with my goal to grow our population to 200,000 by 2050. Why do I keep talking about this?

My vision of Greater Sudbury is an inclusive and affordable community, with great cultural and recreational amenities and a supportive economic environment for both small business and large industry.

We welcome and embrace newcomers, and we promote job opportunities for young professionals and skilled workers to grow their careers.

We have a variety of housing options to meet the needs of our growing and aging population.

We protect our natural environment's biodiversity and celebrate our 330 lakes.

In short, my vision of Greater Sudbury is the best place to live, work, and play in Canada.

THE CHALLENGE

Greater Sudbury is an amalgamated city with many communities and a sprawling legacy of aging infrastructure to maintain. We have a massive infrastructure across the city with a large service area to cover – 3600 km of road lanes, enough to get us to Mexico.

We have 14 arenas that range in age from 30 years to 73 years old. Of the five city-run pools, the youngest is 40 years old. In addition, we have 181 playgrounds, 24 emergency service stations, 90 lift stations... and so much more.

All of this infrastructure with low density.

Obviously, a larger residential and non-residential tax base will help pay the costs of maintaining and improving our existing infrastructure. Rather than relying on the existing tax base to pay these increasing costs, we need to have a larger pool of contributions.

I also believe that the responsible way we increase the population is by encouraging new residential units in serviced areas that can accommodate more development. We need to focus on gentle infill. Focusing on encouraging more townhouses, condos, and mid-rise purpose-built rental apartment buildings is an affordable and strategic way to achieve this.

We must focus on what we want this City to look like 25 years from now, not what it was 25 years ago. We can only do this by moving forward together.

I have hosted 10 town halls including one last night in Garson. I have been in Coniston, New Sudbury, Hanmer, Levack, Azilda, West End, Flour Mill, Minnow Lake. The common themes that come up again and again were roads and infrastructure, housing, the mining sector and economic development, helping our most vulnerable, downtown....

I, along with Council members, have heard from residents.

Today, I am here to outline how I believe we can address these challenges.

Let's start with what we have accomplished together in this almost-year we have worked together.

HOUSING

The housing supply strategy is nearly complete. The strategy will provide a roadmap of how we will build the mix of housing we know we need --- from purpose-built affordable

rentals to multiplexes and seniors' housing to single detached bungalows. We have already seen the analysis of projected residential supply and demand and begun reviewing zoning and bylaws.

Staff are developing property tax relief program for multi-residential development in areas with existing infrastructure capacity, within our nodes and along our corridors.

I am very confident we will meet the local housing target of 3,800 new housing units that was set by the province – and I am hopeful we will even exceed this.

The Future-Ready Development Services Committee continues to be constructive and solutions-oriented. We are currently hearing from experts in engineering, planning, law and real estate about their ideas to overcome common challenges or perceived barriers to residential and non-residential development projects. We are also incorporating insight from the report prepared by Economic Development staff and the Chamber of Commerce on the need to reduce red tape. We want to ensure that Greater Sudbury is a welcoming place to invest and do business.

Next month, council will receive a report outlining the impact that short-term vacation house rentals have on our local housing supply. We will review our options for regulating these rentals and protecting the safety of both hosts and tenants.

I am happy to announce that the one-stop shop for volunteer and community initiatives will be implemented early in the new year. This team will consist of staff dedicated to providing resources, support, and assistance as community groups navigate the process to bring their projects, events, and initiatives to fruition. We must encourage all our volunteer associations, such as the Community Action Networks, to continue their important work of creating activities for our citizens.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your work and dedication to our community. I look forward to meeting with these groups in the new year.

The City has hired Christian Naponse as our Indigenous Relations Specialist, a very important position.

There is a current job posting for a new senior climate resilience position. This position will have responsibility and authority to move forward our existing climate change emissions reductions and adaptation plans across all departments and divisions of the city.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Council has made historic investments in Community Safety. Our completion of the Emergency Stations review earlier this year resulted in the first investment in new infrastructure for fire services and paramedics since amalgamation, almost 20 years ago.

We've also heard at town halls about the need for community safe, and we've made investments in policing, adding more officers to assist our police force. We have also hired additional municipal enforcement officers.

These are just some of the examples of how we are fostering positive and constructive conversations about our community's development. I am proud of a Council that continues to identify solutions and collaborate on a way forward.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Another important item that this Council has focused on is the way we promote and support economic growth in our City.

We know that Greater Sudbury has the strongest economy in Northern Ontario. Now, we want to show potential investors that we have the land, the talent and the resources to continue growing our economy and creating good paying jobs. Why do we need to grow, some may ask?

So that the next generation of Sudburians WANT to stay here, work here, are able to raise a family, and assist with their aging relatives. Mes parents sont venus ici pour être plus proches de nous.

Council is actively working on implementing new policies that will support business development and allow us to seize new opportunities.

For example, our Employment Land Strategy is about identifying and preparing industrial areas to ensure they are investment-ready. We are already home to many global leaders in the mining supply and service sector, including a number of OEMs – Original Equipment Manufacturers. My message to companies that want to locate or expand their operations here: we have the land, the talent and the ability to attract additional talent, housing opportunities ... and we are ready to accommodate them and offer responsible financial incentives.

Earlier this month, our Economic Development department launched an Innovation Blueprint, a road map outlining short-term and longer-term actions to foster Greater Sudbury's economic growth. Innovation Blueprint reiterates that we have the land, the talent, and the resources to be a leader in the battery electric sector and the critical minerals supply chain.

And it is the value-added part of the supply chain that increasingly captures my attention. For generations, Greater Sudbury residents have lived with the environmental consequences of mine waste; we have learned to accept it as a trade off for the job opportunities and community prosperity.

But the tailings ponds and slag piles shouldn't be the only lasting legacy of the decades of mining activity in our city. Local researchers have pioneered techniques in land reclamation that have received international attention for improving the quality and health of our landscape. Bioremediation and bio-mining have shown promise to remove precious resources from what was previously seen as waste.

These are a few examples that demonstrate the ingenuity and innovation that characterize Greater Sudbury. We have the right people, and we are the right location, to be doing more than just extracting base metals and then sending those materials off somewhere else to be made into something else.

We are the world's largest industrial mining complex, with 9 operational mines, 2 smelters, 2 mills, a refinery and more than 350 mining supply and service companies and growing. We are the right place in Canada to locate other parts of the value chain, including advanced processing of critical minerals that go into battery cell production.

Greater Sudbury already possesses a world-leading concentration of talent and expertise to focus on recycling efforts for a circular and green economy. The Glencore smelter is already starting to do some of this through secondary feed processes. It makes sense to invest in these processing facilities right here as we develop a made-in-Ontario supply chain of battery electric vehicles.

My message to the federal and provincial governments is that Greater Sudbury is much more than a resource hinterland to southern Ontario's manufacturing core. We are an integrated and integral part of the supply chain, from extraction and refining, to manufacturing, recycling, and decommissioning.

The City is now doing its part, but we can't do it alone. We need both levels of government to partner with us if we are to take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity for Canada and Ontario, right here in Greater Sudbury.

INFRASTRUCTURE

While we continue to attract new industrial development and welcome more skilled workers and their families to our region, we still have the day-to-day operations of keeping the city running. I've mentioned the infrastructure deficit we face, and how my push to increase our population to 200,000 is because we need to increase the tax base to help pay for its modernization. Otherwise, we will need to continue raising the tax rate of our existing population higher than anyone wants.

Past councils have taken other approaches to keep property tax rate increases low. Notably, some did this by taking money from the reserves and capital funds to subsidize operational costs. This is not sustainable... and the bill was always going to come due. We are paying for it now in the form of aging public assets and deferred maintenance to our facilities... all within the context of rising interest rates and a depleted reserve fund that was supposed to set aside for a rainy day.

Crucially, we will be reinvesting in our infrastructure in a measured and planned way. For the first time, Council is undertaking multi-year budgeting, a process which provides a longer-term view of how all capital projects fit together. It is another way to ensure we prioritize business growth in key industrial areas. It can help us ensure we have the right conditions to accommodate residential units where demand is high, for example.

Multi-year budgeting also allows us to consider upgrades and plans that contribute to our other strategic priorities. Taking the longer view and planning in advance may help us reduce emissions and ensure our community is adaptive and resilient in the face of a changing climate.

Creating a multi-year plan for infrastructure development and capital projects makes fiscal and environmental sense --- but it also makes sense to me from a communications and community engagement perspective. It is a way to provide clear signals to residents about which projects will be going forward and when.

In addition, Council has asked the City's Auditor General to review our procurement policies and governance structure to ensure project success. This is particularly important as we begin a period of investing in our downtown.

DOWNTOWN

People sometimes ask me why I focus so much on the downtown? My answer is that I believe that every growing, vibrant, attractive city needs a central area that provides a concentration of arts, entertainment, hospitality, where people can congregate. The reality is that the City has to do its part in its revitalization if it expects others to want to invest in it.

Other residents may take the view that I don't care ENOUGH about the downtown.

Over the past few months, housing instability has become increasingly visible in our community, particularly in the downtown core. This is a complicated issue, impacted by rising costs of living and complex health and addictions challenges.

Open street drug use has also become more commonplace, a situation that is distressing to many residents who witness this behaviour. Overdoses continue to stretch the capacity of our first responders.

We are far from the only community to experience the devastation of the opioid crisis and the rising mental health epidemic. Many cities across the country are also recording greater numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness.

What *IS* different in Greater Sudbury is our community's demonstrated spirit of generosity and compassion as we continue to develop solutions to help our most vulnerable.

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Panel is a coordinated effort of community leaders who are working closely with one another to address these big challenges. Outreach workers and navigators from the City and other organizations meet unhoused individuals and other vulnerable populations where they are, and connect them with services and support. The Homelessness Network maintains the by-

name list, working to connect those who are ready with longer-term transitional housing opportunities. In addition to the work of the City, many community groups and organizations offer temporary shelter, meals, clothing, or harm reduction services, such as the Sudbury Action Centre for Youth, Samaritan Centre, Salvation Army, Inner City Homes, the Go Give Project, reseauACCESS... and so many more.

Greater Sudbury Police Services and Health Sciences North have partnered on the Mobile Crisis Response Unit to assist those in need of de-escalation during a mental health crisis. And the city has recently hired additional staff to assist with bylaw enforcement and with waste collection in the downtown core.

The City has partnered with Health Sciences North to create Assertive Community Treatment Teams, which offer wraparound clinical and social services for residents with complex mental health and addictions needs. The Lorraine St. project, slated to open in 2024 with 40 transitional housing units, will have an on-site ACT team. I expect there will be other similar projects in the years to come.

Recently, my co-panelist at a public event said that they wished they could spend more time downtown but that they didn't feel safe walking around. I know that that is a feeling or perception shared by many of our residents.

Personally, I walk through downtown every day – I will pass through Memorial Park on my way to grab a coffee. I will have dinner at one restaurant with my wife, Lyne, and then we will meet up with friends, our kids, or my parents to see a show at the Refettorio or Place des Arts. We already have so many wonderful things going on downtown, imagine if we could change the narrative and draw even more people downtown.

We know that having more people around generally makes a public space safer for everyone. And today, we are on the cusp of making unprecedented investments in our downtown that will encourage people to visit and stay. I also believe these changes will attract further investments and create a key driver for tourism and pride of place.

Look up, look around you. This foyer is a gorgeous place, with natural lighting and open concept floors. We're next to a huge courtyard, a large and open outdoor space that can accommodate all kinds of gatherings and community events.

Tom Davies Square is – and should be – a natural gathering place for our citizens.

At council's direction, staff are currently developing detailed plans to redevelop Tom Davies Square into a Cultural Hub. This vision includes a multi-use facility that brings the library, the art gallery, and the Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association under one roof. It would be the cultural heart of the City for the first time. Combined with STC, Place des Arts, Refettorio, the awesome hospitality ... this area becomes the arts, entertainment and cultural hub of the downtown.

Again, why? The economic potential of a thriving downtown will support the tax base.

This building is already owned by the City, is serviced by plentiful parking, and has been maintained in good condition but also needs capital repairs after 40 years. By adapting this building for a new use, we will maximize existing city assets and stretch each operating dollar.

Staff workstations will be moved to accommodate a redistribution of staff between this municipal building and 199 Larch. The tower has more vacant office space since the pandemic. Residents may not realize that this tower is owned by the municipality.

Existing municipal citizen services, like the One Stop counter here in the foyer, would remain so that residents could still access the City Hall they need in a familiar location.

These services would be complemented by immigration and settlement services. The Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association would also have offices and programming space to celebrate and support cultural diversity in our community.

The Greater Sudbury Library downtown branch would be located on these upper floors, with book collections, computers and digital archives, as well as meeting rooms and spaces for special events. The hub would also house the unique collection of the Art Gallery of Sudbury. A centralized, large location would make it easier for more families and individuals to access multiple municipal services and programs easily downtown.

Downtown is also the home of the Sudbury Community Arena, which is 73 years old and is showing its age. I have been firm in repeating my conviction that our community arena and event centre should be located downtown, in the historic heart of our city. In

addition to the event centre, we must prepare the surrounding lands in the south district of downtown for future development opportunities. Attracting residents and visitors is key to sparking interest from the private sector to invest in other necessary facilities – like hotels or a convention centre, new restaurants, and new residential developments, as well as more job opportunities.

It is now up to the City, to Council, to show what is possible for a revitalized downtown, to show that we believe in its future and make the necessary strategic investments. We must lead the way. If not us, who will?

So after less than a year, clearly Council is working on housing opportunities for all, investing in upgrading our massive infrastructure needs, attracting new businesses, attracting the talent to fill those jobs, modernizing our recreational facilities, making strategic investments in downtown while supporting our most vulnerable... and we know there is much more to come.

I believe the time is right for us to invest in ourselves, our children, and our future with short-term financial strategies and a longer-term capital plan. This will require courage and hard work by all.

As we look at the next 25 years, these are very exciting times for the residents of Greater Sudbury and I know we are up to the task.