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SUDBURY IS BRIMMING WITH OPPORTUNITY

By PAUL LEFEBVRE

Consider these simple factors: The rapid electrification of transportation and industry; the emphasis on ethically sourcing critical minerals; the migration of people away from major centres with high costs of living; and finally, the move towards working from home and seeking a better life/work balance.

All of these trends provide plenty of opportunities for a mid-sized Canadian city like Sudbury. And Greater Sudbury has the benefit of being blessed with many assets such as geographically-fixed mineral wealth, a successful mining technology, equipment and supply sector,, and strong educational institutions. We also have a high quality of life here, with access to the natural environment and a thriving arts, festival, and entertainment scene. It is up to us to seize these circumstances and opportunities.

Like any successful enterprise, a municipality must ride the fine line between investment in the future and living for today - within a budget, of course. As a candidate for Mayor, I am listening to our citizens - young and not so young, professionals, businesspeople, and working families - and I continue to look at other successful models throughout this country and abroad. In these conversations, I've found some common themes: People want to live in a community that is responsive to their needs and respectful of their tax dollars. More specifically, people are attracted to cities that are clean and liveable, where opportunities to work, live and play are abundant, and where they can see a future for their children and grandchildren.

This will require that we manage well, plan well and invest wisely. But as I mentioned above, this is a fine line.

Let's consider responsiveness to needs.. Many people I have heard from say that the city has not been responsive to the voices of citizens, business, and investors. Taxes rise, but services don't improve. To address this criticism, we need to encourage economic growth, make strategic investments in physical, recreational, and social infrastructure, and ensure a more responsive and transparent city hall. And, yes, where possible, this may include cutting "red tape".

We have all heard of the unacceptable delays in getting permits, and of other barriers that business, citizens, and investors face when they bring projects forward. My commitment is to ensure we remove unnecessary roadblocks to sustainable growth and development through the creation of performance benchmarks. We need to have clear, simple rules and measurable outcomes. Clarity and accountability help to attract talent and investment that result in economic growth and add value to our tax base.

Just like the familiar concept of a household budget, Greater Sudbury must live within its present means, ensuring that proper maintenance is performed, while ideally putting some money aside for a rainy day.

Indeed, there are many demands placed upon a municipality - most fundamentally housing, roads, water and wastewater. Then there are the things that make for a liveable and attractive city that serves the social, sports, entertainment, and the arts. Both are important for a city to be successful. Jobs and investment are driven by successfully achieving both. While prudent management and value for money assessment and auditing will create better outcomes for both.

To stay within budget - balancing spending and savings goals - we should assess value for money and audit the city's spending. This means we will not always be looking for the lowest price – we will be looking for products and services that provide lasting value, whether it be roads, water infrastructure, or other city services. Only through carefully monitoring and measuring where our tax dollars go - and how they perform - can we better manage our current and future budgets.

Finally, wise investment. Yes, roads are always top of this list and will be a priority. But recently housing – and most importantly affordable housing – has become a very important area of concern. This lack of affordability will directly affect our ability to attract new talent, investment, and newcomers to Sudbury.

The role of the Mayor is to lead through principles of good management, strategic investments, and measurable results. As Mayor of Greater Sudbury, I will act as a Brand Ambassador for our community. To me, this means promoting the city and championing innovation, while encouraging economic growth through attracting talent and investment. I will make it clear to newcomers, businesses, senior levels of government, and investors that Greater Sudbury is a promising and growing community. A big part of the role will be to ask: How can I help you make investments in Sudbury? And then act upon this to make projects a reality to help grow our tax base and create jobs.

I started this article by listing the abundant opportunities ahead for Sudbury. I truly believe that as a council and a community have it within our power to take full advantage of the opportunities ahead. But it will be hard work and it will mean we make hard choices based on fiscal realities and the need to invest to grow. As citizens, we already know Greater Sudbury is a great place to live, work and play - now we need to build on that and ensure the world knows it.

I know that, together, we can make good things happen.

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