

## Mayor Lefebvre's 2024 State of the City address – Investing in Ourselves

Members of City Council and distinguished guests: good afternoon, bonjour, Aaanii.

Thank you to our wonderful hosts at the Caruso Club. It's a pleasure to be here with you all to share and celebrate our agenda for growth, our housing and land development strategies, and the special projects we are embarking on to ensure Greater Sudbury is the best place to live, work, and play in Canada.

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, and that the large area we consider Greater Sudbury also exists within and adjacent to the territorial lands of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Sagamok Anishnawbek. We honour, recognize and respect these Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the lands which we share today.

I would also like to acknowledge the Métis and Inuit People for their contributions to the land and our community.

Of course, this year we're missing two of our friends and colleagues, the late Councillors Michael Vagnini and Gerry Montpellier. Both Michael and Gerry were known as passionate and fierce advocates for the communities they represented, Wards 2 and 3, respectively.

Michael was beloved for his unique sartorial sense, and his care for the community was evident in his annual No One Eats Alone community Christmas Dinner.

Gerry was a visible presence at so many community events, and he certainly knew his way around a classic car.

I look forward to providing further details about our plans to honour them with public dedications soon.

I also want to give a special recognition to outgoing Chamber CEO Debbie Nicholson. Debbie, you have been a tireless advocate for businesses in our community and I know even in your retirement, you will continue championing our city.

To Chamber Board Chair Geoff Hatton and all members of the board, thank you for your service to our city and for your tireless advocacy of the business community.

And a special welcome to our new peers around the table, Councillor Eric Benoit for Ward 2, and Councillor Michel Brabant for Ward 3.

Both have demonstrated a sincere desire to represent the interests of their constituents and have proven they can dive in headfirst and deal with important decisions at the Council table.

### *Vision*

As you'll hear today, I am excited and very optimistic about the future of our community.

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

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

Where we have a variety of housing options to meet the needs of our residents in all life stages and in all economic situations.

Where we protect and preserve our natural environment's biodiversity.

And where our health care services can provide high-quality primary care and specialized medicine for residents across Northern Ontario.

In short, my vision of Greater Sudbury is a place where we believe in our potential, invest in ourselves, and cultivate pride of place.

I am fortunate that this vision is shared by my dedicated Council colleagues and our talented City staff. I am proud that our Council continues to identify solutions and collaborate on a way forward.

On that note of collaboration, I also want to recognize and thank MP Serre, MP Lapointe, MPP West and MPP Gelinias.

I thank you for being here and for your ongoing partnership and support of our community and the people who live here.

### *Cultural Hub and Event Centre*

Alive and thriving cities need a healthy downtown – a destination for people to congregate, celebrate, and enjoy entertainment, arts, sports, and good food.

Since the initial Downtown Master Plan in 2012, which is now being renewed, we have seen several exceptional projects take root in the core, such as the School of Architecture and Place des Arts thanks to many of the community builders in this room.

And there's no secret the last couple of months have been monumental in our city's history, including City Council's unanimous decision to build a new event centre in the South district of our downtown.

The new event centre will serve as a multi-generational asset for Greater Sudbury. We're talking about the next 65-75 years.

We are the major hub in the region and it's time we have a venue that meets our needs for recreational and competitive sporting leagues, as well as provide additional opportunities to host larger concerts, special events, and attract provincial, national, and international events.

I look forward to having more updates to share with all of you in the coming months on this exciting chapter in our city's history. This has been debated for decades and it's time we move forward and get it done.

In addition to the new event centre, I am thrilled that design work has commenced on our new Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square.

This modern and accessible hub with the downtown branch of the Greater Sudbury Public Library, the Art Gallery of Sudbury, and the Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association will be a welcoming and inclusive space for all and further the City's commitment to art, multiculturalism, and environmental sustainability.

On that note, I want to thank the family of Franklin Carmichael, for their generous donation of over 40 works of art and for their patience during this process.

This is one way we are delivering the infrastructure and amenities needed for our growing city and the opportunities to spur further investments from the private sector and create a key driver for tourism and pride of place.

## *Economic Development*

On the topic of being ready for future development, in 2023 I committed to create an ad-hoc committee of Council to help spur investment in the community and be a competitive place to do business.

Just this week, the Future-Ready Development Services Committee presented a report with 54 Calls for Action across six thematic areas:

- Clarity and Consistency in Messaging
- Transparent and Customer-Focused Process
- New Engagement Opportunities
- Staff Empowerment and Internal Coordination
- Continuous Improvement
- Alignment with Broader Economic Development Goals

The Committee has identified additional opportunities for streamlining communications, processes, and policies in support of development in Greater Sudbury.

Those who participated in the Committee's study, including many of you here today, responded positively to the opportunity to provide input, build relationships, and contribute to a collaborative strategy for development.

Perhaps the most prominent commentary to emerge from the consultation process is that both City staff and community stakeholders have reiterated their commitment to helping grow, promote, and improve Greater Sudbury.

Investors locally and from around the world know now more than ever that we are serious about investing in ourselves and 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.

Our local economy and industries need people to grow. It's evident in the record number of approved applications we received since the launch of the Rural and Northern Immigration Program, representing 2,518 new residents including their families in our community, helping industry meet demand.

This represents 1,294 jobs filled directly since the program launch, and preliminary results from the Northern Policy Institute show that in addition to the direct jobs that have been filled, hundreds of additional spin-off jobs are being created as well, leading to an estimated \$40 million in earned wages in 2023 through this program alone.

These results indicate the significant positive benefits that the RNIP program has had in Greater Sudbury, not only from initial jobs and wages created but also from the additional economic benefits which resulted from filling these jobs.

At the same time, we have been working hard to attract French-speaking individuals as part of our recruitment strategy through the RNIP Program and are anxiously awaiting the launch of the Francophone Community Immigration Pilot and Rural Community Immigration Pilot.

Our participation in these programs will allow us to address specific immigration needs, such as promoting linguistic diversity, supporting economic development in minority communities, and addressing labor shortages in rural areas.

My Task Force on Labour Attraction and Retention will strengthen existing partnerships and help develop new strategies to encourage skilled workers to seek career opportunities in Greater Sudbury. The Task Force is also working to ensure that new residents and their families are welcomed and supported as they settle into their new home.

Stay tuned, in the coming months, I will be making a special announcement as part of our Greater Together Project to enhance our economic attraction and welcoming efforts while outlining our actions to embrace diversity and inclusion.

Our local mining supply and service sector is going to need people to help us take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity for Canada and Ontario, right here in Greater Sudbury with the transition to a battery-powered and low carbon future.

The City recognizes the unprecedented investments being made by the mining sector in our region and my message to companies that want to locate or expand their operations here is that we are ready to support you and offer responsible incentives to make it

happen like we're doing through our Employment Land Strategy and upgrades to the Lasalle/Elisabella Industrial Site.

While I congratulate Mayors of all the communities who will be benefitting from the newly announced \$15 billion announcement by Honda Canada, including \$2.5 billion from both the Province and the Feds.

What we need is for the Provincial and Federal Government to recognize our contributions to the BEV supply-chain because there is no Canadian BEV industry without us.

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, while we are responsible for the clean-up and accepting the legacy. Greater Sudburians deserve to be full participants in the prosperity of the clean energy transition.

I also want to stress how important Indigenous participation and involvement is in this process.

It's something that was emphasized at PDAC during my luncheon with local mining leaders, Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Gimaa Nootchtai, Wahnapiitae Chief Roque and many other Indigenous and Government officials.

Local business owners like Mario Grossi with Technica Mining are setting an example for inclusion with Indigenous peoples and I am eager to see this relationship building continue.

Other industries and sectors are growing too, and the City's new Innovation Blueprint is the most recent guiding document that outlines the steps we will take to achieve it.

Consider the incredible innovation happening locally whether that be through HSNRI, the Innovation Quarters, SNOLAB, Mirarco, or NORCAT.

Together with Council's Strategic Plan and investments made by the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation, we are charting a path for continued economic growth.

Take our local tourism industry which has emerged from the pandemic and is demonstrating steady growth.

In 2023, Greater Sudbury hosted several events, including multiple events for Curling Canada and the Travel Media Association of Canada's annual conference this past June which saw a direct economic impact of \$227,500.

To keep up with the demand, I am also very pleased to share that Sandman Hotel Group has received their conditional permit from the City to begin work on their new \$28.6 million dollar, 223-suite hotel development which will include two new restaurants at the site of the former Ambassador Hotel.

Again, another fantastic development in our community that will serve to only enhance our local tourism and business industry needs.

Remember, this is all before shovels have gone in the ground on the large projects.

### *Roads*

Residents of Greater Sudbury deserve safe, accessible, and quality infrastructure, including on their commutes.

We are an amalgamated city with many communities and a sprawling legacy of aging infrastructure to maintain.

That is why during this past multi-year budget cycle, Council decided to implement a new special 1.5 per cent tax levy dedicated to improving our infrastructure.

This follows many years of taking from our reserves and funds earmarked for capital projects to subsidize operations which has left us with the infrastructure deficit we have today.

With longer budget cycles, we can assure residents, business owners and developers that we have a schedule to fix our roads and put in new sidewalks and bike lanes where they are best required.

In fact, over the next four years, a total investment of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars will go towards road construction and repairs to maintain the transportation network.

This includes funding from the \$37.1 million accelerated infrastructure renewal levy.

Take for example our work along the Kingsway or the construction slated to take place this year on replacing the Nelson Street Pedestrian Bridge and the Paris/Notre Dame Bikeway.

The 2024 budget also allows for enhancements to the pavement rehabilitation program and provides an opportunity to reintroduce different asphalt treatments and technologies to extend the useful service life of our roads.

These projects will have big impacts on motorists, pedestrians and cyclists and will help our community achieve our emission reduction goals.

I thank City Council for this commitment to address our infrastructure deficit and repair and maintain our road network.

At the same time, I also want to make it clear that respecting taxpayers' dollars by getting value for money and holding contractors accountable for the work that they perform for our municipality is a top priority.

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 embark on these large projects downtown and in the construction season ahead.

It's also important that I mention that our plans for growth consider the need to reduce emissions like we're doing through the City's Energy and Emissions Plan as well as my Task Force on 30x30.

The 30x30 initiative, in line with the Federal Government's strategy, is about protecting and preserving 30 per cent of land and water by 2030.

This is a joint-community effort that builds on the incredible Sudbury Regreening Story and the great work that community groups, researchers, business owners, and volunteers are doing already.

This is about recognizing and celebrating our land, our water, and our biodiversity. As one of the only municipalities taking this on, we have an opportunity to continue being a leader in this space for others to follow and I want to thank all of the members of my 30x30 Task Force for their contributions.



## *Housing*

Housing has been a focus of conversation at all levels of government across our country.

My goal to increase the city's population to 200,000 over 20 years relies heavily on our ability to provide residents with access to all forms of housing across Greater Sudbury.

Greater Sudbury was awarded funding from the Province for exceeded our 2023 housing targets by 156 per cent and we are well on our way of meeting our target of creating 3,800 new units by 2031. In fact, I am confident that we will surpass this goal.

Consider our recent statistics.

Since this term of Council started in November 2022, 1,163 new residential units, 244 retirement home rooms and 320 nursing home beds have been granted approvals by the City Council.

In 2023 alone, 1,290 residential building permits were issued, and 675 residential and long-term care units were created, which is an increase of 47.7 per cent from 2022, and represents a total permit value of \$213.5 million, the highest annual number in the last five years.

As you have likely traveled past already, construction is well underway on the \$113 million Manitou project downtown which is slated to create 349 units in total, including 105 affordable units for seniors.

Another project that I've talked about for many years now and something that I hear wherever I go is about the site of the old hospital.

Just a few days ago in fact, Panoramic Properties officially presented its proposal at Planning Committee for a new three-tower residential re-development at the old General Hospital site on Paris St.

Panoramic is seeking to build a total of 109 retirement home guest rooms, 421 multiple dwelling units, up to three levels of underground parking and restaurant space.

I look forward to planning staff bringing forward a recommendation for Council's consideration later this summer and I want to commend Panoramic Properties for their commitment and hard work to get the project to this stage. I look forward to doing all that I can to help it advance.

All these projects and the countless others going up across our community are fantastic housing developments in our community that cannot be built quick enough.

The landscape of our community is changing. We are growing and growing the right way.

Gentle density and conversions will be part of adding quickly to our housing supply. Staff will be returning with a report to Council in the fall to outline more detailed options when it comes to encouraging the redevelopment of vacant buildings.

This would provide Bylaw officers, property owners, investors, and neighbours more clarity about the expectations of property standards of vacant buildings as well as laying out timelines for redevelopment or demolition.

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.

I also recognize ensuring our community has access to safe, accessible, and attainable housing options at all stages of their lives is imperative.

To me, this also includes the need to address our aging population, through dedicated senior living and additional long-term care opportunities.

I think we can reflect on our own families and what we've all been through during the pandemic and realize just how critical LTC beds are to the health of our community.

I am pleased that the brand-new Extendicare Home on Algonquin has recently opened, and that both Pioneer Manor and Finlandia Village are renovating and expanding their number of long-term care beds.

### *Community Health*

Alongside our focus on growth and future readiness, I am equally focused on social programming and how to better serve the unhoused community in our city.

I work downtown, and I hear from citizens and business owners: the number of individuals experiencing homelessness is increasingly visible. This is a complicated issue, impacted by rising costs of living, the pandemic, and complex health and addictions challenges.

I am at the table with other Mayors and leaders across the province on this issue and we are far from the only community to experience the devastation of the opioid crisis, the rising mental health epidemic, and 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, together.

Council has requested that staff present us with a strategy to end homelessness in our community by 2030, but again, our community is far from simply sitting back until then.

GSPS and HSN have partnered on the Mobile Crisis Response Unit to assist those in need of de-escalation during a mental health crisis and we have seen excellent results from the work of the Assertive Community Treatment Teams, a partnership between the City and HSN, which offers wraparound clinical and social services for residents with complex mental health and addictions needs.

City staff also continue to work with partners to assist our most vulnerable residents in accessing services like the affordable housing development for seniors on Sparks St and transitional housing at the Lorraine St. project which will include an on-site ACT Team, as well as emergency shelters, warming spaces, and drop-in centres like we've been doing through the Reaching Home Program.

This is about empowering individuals to overcome challenges, access resources, and rebuild their lives. One of the ways we will do that is responding to our community's health needs including addressing the physician shortages hurting our region.

We are anticipating welcoming a number of new family physicians to our community this year, with approximately 12 potentially starting in the community by fall, which also includes four candidates from the new Practice Ready Ontario program, which streamlines the process for internationally trained family physicians or general practitioners to practice in Ontario.

Based on the current complement of family physicians in the community, our anticipated recruitment levels for 2024, and potential attrition levels, we expect to see an overall increase of family physicians in the community to address the number of citizens in our community who don't currently have a primary health care provider.

We are actively working to bring in more and continue to work closely with the Chamber and NOSM on the recruitment of more family physicians as well as HSN on the recruitment of specialists, which I am very happy to say has 15 specialists anticipated to be starting in 2024.

### *Conclusion/Call to Action*

As you've heard me say many times now today, and the message I want everyone here to leave with is that now is the time for us to invest in our community, ourselves, our children, and our future.

Council has demonstrated courage and vision through many recent decisions and direction for policy development that will foster an environment that is conducive to local growth and development in all areas.

Everywhere I turn in our city, I witness individuals coming together, pooling their efforts, and envisioning a brighter future with unwavering optimism, resilience and solidarity.

To truly construct an inclusive Greater Sudbury though, this spirit of collaboration must continue and grow.

This is where I draw my optimism for the future from and my updates today on the State of the City mark just the beginning.

I am committed to ongoing dialogue and engagement, eager to hear your insights and innovative ideas as we collectively shape the future of our beloved city.

Thank you all so much. Merci. Miigwetch.

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