

Suggested address to Chamber of Commerce – April 2024

Good Day Chamber members and guests:

The City of Greater Sudbury has challenges and opportunities. As your Mayor I recognize this: First the challenges; We are an aging city with over 40 thousand residents 65 plus and 50 percent of our population is over the age of 50. More deaths than births and although there has been a slight population growth the likelihood of reaching 200,000 people in the foreseeable future is, unfortunately, considering all involved in reaching this goal, not realistic even with a sizable number of new immigrants.

We are geographically challenged, which affects us in several ways. New value-creating businesses find it more attractive for a variety of reasons, including our high taxation rates, to locate closer to larger population centers in the south. As for tourism, it is well recognized that most visitors to Sudbury come to visit friends and relatives and almost none to attend concerts, sports, or other events. We are dependent on those within our catchment area.

There are many downtowns throughout Greater Sudbury, but the largest has fallen on hard times with most retail establishments migrating to other locations, in many instances to strip malls throughout the city to escape the deteriorating conditions in the central core.

Affordability is a problem for many, especially those on low and/or fixed incomes. Homes are out of the reach of many and rental costs have skyrocketed. This, along with other inflationary factors, has reduced the quality of living for these individuals and families. Homelessness has increased and food bank usage has reached unprecedented levels

The city has a large infrastructure dept with most citizens concerned about the condition of our roads and for good reason as they reflect on the entire city. They are our avenues of commerce besides resident daily usage. Their maintenance should be a priority.

Also, a priority is the homeless. An opportunity to solve such as a ""Homeless Hub" similar to that in Peterborough with inexpensive tiny homes and supported services on-site in the Energy Court area could help solve this problem, possibly with assistance from the business community.

A property tax deferral for low-income senior homeowners, such as similar programs in other communities is now under consideration by city staff. It would allow those who qualify to stay in their own homes and in the community longer.

We need to respect our history and the buildings that still provide value. This includes the present central McKenzie Street library, the downtown Community Arena, and the Bell Mansion when returned to the city by LU to serve as an Art Gallery and Museum to inform our own citizens and attract tourists. The cost to replace these and dispose or repurpose the existing structures is prohibitively expensive, including capital and interest costs. Instead, renovations as required is the most responsible course of action such as what has taken place for arenas the same age as ours in other communities economically with citizen satisfaction.

I am going to ask Panoramic, owners of the Old Hospital site to accept the offer of a land transfer with one of the current parking areas corner of Paris and York Street and be partners with us in the demolition of the building and the creation of new parking area for the park, preserving the view of the lake for residents and visitors and to do so this year.

As business people, you realize the importance of cost control, and balancing income with expenses. We are a unique community but in analysis, we should compare ourselves with other cities similar such as Kawartha Lakes, an amalgamated municipality second in geographical size to Greater Sudbury including several diverse communities with services similar such as sewage and water supply treatment plants, kilometers of roadways and even a city-run retirement home. Their municipal city staff numbers for a population half our ours is about 1200 while ours is over 3,000.- proportionately could we do with less?

Our primary concern is quality of life and services and amenities that contribute that for all residents wherever they may live in Greater Sudbury. Besides our lakes, waterways, parks, and trails we need to preserve and maintain our arenas, community halls, and recreational facilities. All our communities deserve adequate fire and police protection at affordable cost. Those on the sunshine list at over \$100,000 a year, paid by taxpayers, continue to grow while the average wage in Sudbury is less than half - this needs to be addressed in forthcoming bargaining with union and non-union staff. this gap cannot be allowed to widen.

To conclude we welcome the support of the local business community to achieve our mutual goals to maintain and improve the quality of life for you, your employees and all citizens of Greater Sudbury plus to encourage new development and residents. Together we can "make it so"

Mayor - Greater Sudbury

Composed with respect by citizen John Lindsay, private business owner and President CARP Sudbury