Paul LEFEBVRE

Mayor

# Accountability is staying. The model is changing.

**By Paul Lefebvre**

It has been suggested that Council's unanimous decision to close the Office of the Auditor General as part of the 2026 budget deliberations means ending accountability at City Hall. This is one of the many false and misleading claims being circulated during this campaign.

As Mayor, I recognize the importance to the community of how the City organizes its oversight functions and as a business owner and former tax lawyer, I understand sound financial controls and professional standards. What actually matters is having effective safeguards in place, ensuring concerns are addressed appropriately and the City reports transparently to Council and the public.

We are moving to the same oversight models used by the overwhelming majority of municipalities in Ontario, except for five including Ottawa and Toronto. Council's decision does not eliminate independent financial audits, Council's ability to commission external or forensic audits, or residents' ability to raise concerns through Ombudsman Ontario, an independent body that provides oversight of municipal administration within its mandate.

The City has also undergone significant changes to its senior leadership during the current term of Council, including the appointment of a new Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer, both Chartered Professional Accountants with extensive experience in other Ontario municipalities. Their professional expertise is an important part of the City's leadership, alongside the controls, independent oversight, and transparent reporting that must support their work.

The Auditor General's office cost nearly $500,000 annually to operate. Like any municipal service, it is Council's responsibility to regularly review how the City delivers its functions and whether there are more effective ways to use taxpayer dollars. This decision came as Council worked to reduce the planned 2026 property tax increase from 5.6 percent to 3.9 percent.

With a comprehensive plan coming in the first quarter of 2027, the next City Council will have an opportunity to provide clear direction on how the core functions of the Auditor General's Office will continue, where resources should be focused and how success will be measured. This includes internal audit responsibilities, employee whistleblowing, public complaints and transparent reporting on findings and corrective actions.

As mayor, I will work with the next Council to establish clear expectations, set key performance indicators, and ensure appropriate resources are in place to support these functions. My goal will be to ensure an effective, practical approach to oversight that makes responsible use of existing resources and delivers measurable results that Council and residents can see.

The City's financial reporting also continues to receive independent scrutiny. In June 2025, KPMG presented an unqualified opinion on the City's financial statements. The firm's engagement partner described it as the highest level of assurance available under Canadian auditing standards. This is an important measure of the City's financial reporting, while recognizing that sound governance also requires ongoing scrutiny and a willingness to address concerns.

Residents have every right to expect accountability from their municipal government. City Council has a responsibility to review how the organization operates, how taxpayer dollars are spent and how concerns are addressed. We changed the model, not the responsibility. The next Council's obligation will be to ensure the right safeguards are in place, to be transparent about the results, and to deliver on these services for Greater Sudbury, and under my leadership I am very confident we will do so.

*Paul Lefebvre is running to be Mayor of Greater Sudbury as the incumbent.*