Geordie Sabbagh:

2. For this Council, I would have approached the two-year budget differently.

Council established a maximum tax-rate increase before the final budget was developed, ultimately approving increases of 4.84% in 2025 and 4.87% in 2026.

I understand the desire to give taxpayers predictability, and there were real cost pressures and infrastructure needs behind those budgets. But there will always be more things that are desirable — and even important — than taxpayers can reasonably afford. That means Council has to prioritize, make tough decisions and be prepared to stand behind them.

I would start by determining what Huntsville actually needs, what our priorities are and what we can reasonably afford before setting a tax-rate target.

What do we need? What can wait? Where can we find efficiencies? And what provincial, federal or other outside funding can we secure before asking taxpayers for more?

I don't believe we should start with an arbitrary spending increase, but I don't believe we should start with an arbitrary cap either. A predetermined number shouldn't make difficult decisions for us.

Look at the big picture. Set the priorities. Make the tough calls and have the courage to stand behind them.

I also want residents to be able to see much more clearly where their money is going and what they're getting for it.

Financial discipline means making every dollar work harder while protecting key core services, including roads and fire. We should determine our priorities first and then build the most responsible budget we can around them.

3. Four years from now, I want residents to be able to see that Huntsville is safer, stronger and better prepared for growth — and to be able to measure the progress we've made.

That means visible progress on roads and infrastructure, strong essential services that keep pace with growth, and better recreation and gathering spaces for our kids and families — and maybe the occasional sidewalk so they don't get run over.

It also means doing more about homelessness, mental health and community safety. People who are struggling need somewhere to turn, and residents and businesses need to feel safe in their neighbourhoods and downtown. These are complex problems and Huntsville can't solve them alone. I would support Huntsville joining municipalities across Ontario in the Solve the Crisis campaign and pushing senior governments for the funding, treatment, supportive housing and services our community needs.

As a firefighter, I would also like to see a clear path forward for our fire department that matches Huntsville's growth. We need to understand what our community will require five, ten and fifteen years from now and have a plan for the people, equipment, facilities and resources needed to get there.

And residents should be able to easily see where their tax dollars went, what major projects were supposed to cost, what they actually cost and what we got for that money.

People aren't expecting everything to be fixed overnight. They want to see progress, and they want to know they're getting value for their money.

Four years from now, residents should be able to look at what we promised, what we spent and what we actually delivered.