CHAPTER 05

A budget you can follow

Show where the money goes, what changes and what we'll still owe later.

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London, Ontario · October 19, 2026

This is the plan I'll bring to City Hall. Putting it into action means securing Council decisions, detailed costs and agreements with the people delivering it. I'll report what gets funded, what moves ahead and what has to change.

05 / A budget you can follow

I'll show what each promise costs and keep spending tied to work people can see. The rail proposal brings planning into year one and sets a separate, limited budget for a physical construction start in year two. The allocations, conditions and later costs are set out here.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Start with the budget we've already adopted

Bring the choices into public view early

Show how we got from one budget to the next

Include what happens after opening day

Pay for the first year plan and a second year start

Know the full rail bill before committing the main works

Count savings when the work has changed

Keep an eye on the next few years

Start with the budget we've already adopted

People should be able to understand why their municipal bill changes and what the money pays for. The budget decides things residents feel every day, from transit to repairs to recreation. I'll seek the lowest sustainable cost for the services London needs. When a better service or an unavoidable obligation needs more money, I'll explain the reason and the options. Residents need enough information to judge the choice for themselves.

London already has a 2024 to 2027 Multi Year Budget and an annual update process. The City's engagement page records that the 2026 update was adopted as amended. [1][2] I'll start with that adopted position, including existing contracts, debt, capital projects and funding agreements. Those obligations continue through an election. A change in direction needs an account of remaining costs, legal limits and the effect on people using the service.

A tax freeze, cut or fixed increase would need to be tested against the books. Inflation, assessment growth, collective agreements, demand and decisions from other governments all affect the result. I'll make the priorities and arithmetic available. If we're using temporary money to reduce a bill, residents should know what replaces it later. That matters when you're trying to plan your own household budget beyond the next few months.

Bring the choices into public view early

Ontario's strong mayor framework gives the mayor a particular role in proposing the municipal budget. London's documents explain Council amendments and the later veto and override stages. [3] I'll use that process to put a clear proposal before Council and residents. Legal obligations and the responsibilities of independent boards still apply. The budget needs real revenue behind its assumptions and a clear account of consequences.

I'll discuss major priorities with councillors early and explain my proposed choices while residents can still influence them. People who use libraries, transit, recreation and other services need an accessible way to describe what a change would mean. A meeting is more useful when the decision is understandable before someone arrives. Summaries, accessible formats and contact information can help people participate without reading hundreds of pages first.

For agencies, boards and commissions, I'll seek comparable explanations of pressures and proposed spending, respecting their legal responsibilities. Council needs to understand what's required, what's discretionary and what risk a lower allocation creates. Disagreements should be discussed with that information on the table. Budget priorities give the mayor a role in oversight, while operational responsibilities stay with the people and bodies that hold them.

Show how we got from one budget to the next

I'll publish a short explanation of each material change from the adopted budget to my proposal, reconciled to the official totals. It'll separate maintaining current services, new or expanded services, revenue changes, capital financing and temporary measures. Each important item should link to the formal decision and say whether the cost continues. The complete documents stay available alongside it, including accessible formats and a way to ask questions.

Examples of household impact need their assumptions written down. A figure for an average residential property won't match everyone's bill. Municipal taxes, education taxes, assessment changes, utility rates and fees need to be explained clearly. Renters have a stake in costs and services too, even if the property tax bill goes to the landlord. I'll want budget communication to speak to everyone who lives here.

A small set of service results should sit beside spending: whether funded transit hours ran, whether a project reached its revised milestone or whether a backlog changed. Each service needs suitable measures and an explanation of their limits. I'll build on existing reporting so the figures can be checked against the City's financial records. A dashboard is useful when it helps someone understand a result and ask a better question.

Include what happens after opening day

A new building, road or program can create bills for decades. For major new commitments, I'll seek a standard decision page showing initial construction or setup, annual operations, staff, maintenance and eventual renewal. Include the funding source, confidence in the estimate, alternatives and the consequence of waiting. London's Strategic Financial Framework and asset management approach already connect those questions. I want them easier for residents to inspect in each proposal. [4]

Grants should be marked confirmed, applied for or possible. A temporary grant needs an exit plan or an identified source to keep the service running. A reserve withdrawal should explain the reserve's purpose and how much future capacity we'd use up. Borrowing needs its repayment cost shown alongside the asset's useful life. These are useful tools when the arrangement suits the investment and residents can see the risk.

Growth needs the same care. New development adds assessment while also needing roads, utilities and services. The costs and revenues can arrive at different times. Staff should show that timing and explain which revenues have restricted uses. Where development charges or another restricted source help fund a project, the proposal should state eligibility and the share still falling to existing taxpayers. We need that picture before treating growth as room for other spending.

Pay for the first year plan and a second year start

Bring the full rail planning allowance forward into 2027 and hold it at $1 million. Allow $200,000 for the records, route and passenger case; $300,000 for targeted engineering and the first package design; $200,000 for consultation and approval work; $200,000 for procurement preparation, funding work and outside review; and $100,000 held contingency. These are proposed spending limits. The first delivery review must show which tasks can be finished within them.

For 2028, propose up to $5 million for a first physical LRT construction package. That allows up to $4 million for identified work, supervision and applicable taxes, plus $1 million held contingency. The work must be needed for the selected railway, be properly designed and permitted, and fit the approved funding plan. This ceiling commits no particular length of track or finished railway. Its purpose is to control the first release of capital while the complete first stage cost is established.

The combined proposed allocation is up to $6 million across those two years. Count staff time assigned to the rail program, consultants, contract management, public meetings and applicable taxes in the

relevant allocation. The two contingencies sit inside their ceilings. Keep any extra planning cost visible and within the planning cap; it cannot quietly move into the construction line. If the required work cannot fit, bring back the scope and schedule before award.

Proposed first rail planning and construction allocations

Year	Defined allocation	Maximum release
2027	First stage planning and first package preparation, including $100,000 contingency	$1,000,000
2028	First physical works: up to $4 million base plus $1 million contingency	$5,000,000
Total	Proposed planning and first physical package only	$6,000,000
2029 and 2030	Later packages need separate estimates and approvals	No allocation set here

Proposed authorization ceilings, subject to Council approval and scoped procurement. They are not a whole railway construction estimate. Assume no grants. Both contingencies are included, and later stages remain unpriced.

Assume no grant revenue in these allocations. Any outside contribution reduces the local share of the approved package. Use an identified municipal capital allocation or a named spending offset, and show the tax effect before approval. The figures here create no authority to spend on later rail stages. Work beyond the first package needs its own complete estimate, funding decision and approval.

BRT already has an approved capital program. Ask for acceleration offers against that program first, then show any added premium and the benefit it buys. A faster finish may need extra crews, shifts, fleet or temporary service. Those costs are still to be priced. Existing contract obligations and grant conditions form part of the comparison. The proposed rail allocations do not cover an unpriced BRT acceleration premium.

Know the full rail bill before committing the main works

Choose a useful first stage and price its actual scope. Include land, utilities, tracks, stations, power, vehicles, maintenance facilities, commissioning, inflation and contingency. Add annual operating support, connecting bus service, renewal and financing. Engineers must identify the assets London can reuse before any saving is deducted. The year two ceiling covers a limited first package; the complete rail stage will need a much larger, separately approved budget.

For context, Waterloo's 2025 business case gives its full Stage 2 LRT option a $3.13 billion cost in 2025 dollars, with $23.8 million in annual operations, maintenance and rehabilitation on that price base. Its route, structures and scale differ from London's. Use comparable projects to challenge an estimate, then obtain current local quantities and prices for the chosen stage. [5]

Before releasing the first physical package, Council needs its measured scope, professional estimate, procurement result, permissions, site rights and funding source. It also needs a credible business case and funding path for the railway that package serves. Choose work that retains useful value if later stages move. A package with no justified route or funding path should wait.

Use specialist contractors where the whole cost and delivery case support them. Show supervision and coordination costs alongside the tender price. The City's procurement policy applies to competitions and contract changes. Any proposed early completion incentive needs an identified benefit and accepted work behind the payment. Count the savings after they appear in the completed work and accounts. [7]

For illustration, borrowing the entire $5 million first works ceiling over 20 years at 5% would require about $401,000 a year in level repayments. That is an arithmetic example, rather than a borrowing proposal or quote. It excludes fees, interest during construction, operations and future renewal. Show the actual financing choice and annual effect with the approval request.

Seek federal and provincial help for eligible work, while keeping unconfirmed contributions out of the budget. Capital grants, ordinary operations and financing have different rules. Existing bus contributions keep their agreed uses. [6] Before the main rail works are committed, publish the complete first stage capital and annual cost, signed partner agreements, local exposure and the effect on other services. The first package ceiling cannot be presented as the total cost of bringing LRT to London.

Count savings when the work has changed

I'll seek a staged review of services selected for cost, risk and impact on residents. Some may have avoidable rework, confusing processes or purchasing that could be coordinated. Each review should start with a question and the evidence needed to answer it. The result may be an efficiency, a service change or a finding that more investment is needed. I'll want the conclusion to follow what the review actually finds.

If outside expertise is justified, I'll seek a capped scope, a public result and an explanation of why staff need the extra help. Recommendations should include transition costs, contracts, implementation time and effects on access. Workers who know the process need to be heard. A smaller budget line can leave residents waiting longer or shift work into a backlog. Those effects belong in the assessment too.

Delivered savings should be measured after costs. Removing a vacant job may still leave overtime or replacement work to pay for. Putting off maintenance creates a future obligation that needs recording. I'll keep a public list of recommendations accepted, declined or still being considered, with reasons and the verified financial and service results. If the expected saving doesn't happen, we'll need to correct the budget and explain it. Thats part of following through.

Keep an eye on the next few years

In the first 100 days, I'll seek a readable account of the adopted financial position, existing obligations, upcoming choices and the format for budget explanations. In year one, I'll bring the full cost decision standard and an initial service review scope to Council. We'll stage that work around capacity. Added reporting or review expenses need their own case and approved funding, just like the other proposals being assessed.

I'll ask staff to show effects over the remaining budget period and the next planning cycle, including what happens if uncertain revenues or costs change. A temporary reduction followed by a large catch up increase can be hard on households. Sometimes spending earlier avoids a bigger failure later. Each case needs evidence so Council can compare the options without assuming every preventive investment pays for itself.

Through the term, I'll report choices, service results and unresolved risks. When an estimate changes, residents should see what changed and the available response. If a proposed saving turns out to be unrealistic, I'll say so and bring the correction into public view. People already have enough uncertainty in their own finances. They should be able to follow the decisions being made with their money at City Hall.

What I'll bring forward

01 / Explain what's changing in the budget

I'll publish a short explanation alongside each proposed budget update, showing the move from the adopted budget to the new proposal, the service affected, the funding source and future costs.

Who can act: The mayor prepares the budget proposal through the statutory process. Council considers amendments and finance staff check the figures.

How we'll pay for it: Use existing budget publishing first. Any extra accessibility or analysis work needs an explicit allocation.

What we'll check: Publish the explanation with the proposal, reconcile it to official totals and separate temporary items from ongoing ones.

What could get in the way: A short version can miss detail. Link each summary to the complete official documents.

02 / Show the full cost before the vote

I'll seek a standard page for major new initiatives covering construction or setup, operations, renewal, staff, funding certainty, alternatives and the effect of waiting.

Who can act: The mayor proposes budget standards, Council approves policy and spending, and staff supply professional estimates.

How we'll pay for it: Use the responsible service's budget where possible. Savings and grants need evidence or confirmation before being counted.

What we'll check: Include the page with major proposals and report changed estimates or obligations that still lack funding.

What could get in the way: Early prices are uncertain. Give ranges and explain what stage the estimate has reached.

03 / Fund a defined rail plan and first construction package

Complete the first rail stage decisions in 2027 within the planning limit, then seek a separate capped allocation for a useful first construction package in 2028. Publish its scope and funding before award.

Who can act: The mayor proposes allocations. Council approves the scope, budget and construction release, with staff checking estimates, procurement and permissions.

How we'll pay for it: The allocations below assume the City may need to cover their full cost. No grant or contractor saving is counted in advance. Keep BRT acceleration costs and the complete rail stage price separately identified.

What we'll check: Report actual spending, accepted work, remaining contingency and approved changes. Price the complete first rail stage and its annual costs before committing the main works.

What could get in the way: A useful and permitted package may not fit the limit or the target date. Revise the scope or schedule through a public decision before making a commitment.

04 / Check services and verify savings

I'll seek reviews of selected services based on cost, risk and resident impact, with public recommendations and a record of savings achieved.

Who can act: Council requests and considers reviews. Administration handles implementation and independent boards keep their legal responsibilities.

How we'll pay for it: Cap any added review budget. Count savings after transition and implementation costs.

What we'll check: Publish quarterly actions, verified ongoing savings, service results and reasons for declining recommendations.

What could get in the way: Reviews use staff time and changes can affect service quality. Consider residents and workers before implementation.

When I'll bring it forward

First 100 days

Put the BRT acceleration costs, rail planning scope and first construction proposal into the public budget process. Show the assumptions, funding sources and delivery constraints.

Year one

Bring the full rail planning allocation into 2027. Complete the first stage decisions and the design and permissions required for its first physical package, subject to the capped scope. Price BRT acceleration separately and show whether the 2027 completion target is supported.

Years two to four

Seek release of a defined first physical rail construction package in 2028 after its funding and permissions are secured. Publish actual costs and delivery progress. Later packages need their own estimates, design, approvals and funding, with the full first stage cost made public before the main works are committed.

Sources and notes

Source numbers refer to this chapter. Publication and access dates are listed below, with notes on what each source tells us. Programs and rules can change, so check the linked source for current details.

1. **Municipal budget**
City of London · Undated; accessed October 2026
Accessed 18 October 2026. Explains the budget covering several years and the annual update and readoption process.
Read source

2. **2026 Annual Budget Update**
City of London: Get Involved London · 2026 update adopted December 2025
Accessed 18 October 2026. Records the 2026 update's adoption as amended and links formal meeting records. Earlier proposed tax forecasts aren't treated as final figures.
Read source

3. **2025 Annual Budget Update: Strong Mayor legislation and budget process**
City of London · October 2024
Accessed 18 October 2026. Explains the mayor's budget role and Council amendments, veto and override stages. Used for the process rather than current financial totals.
Read source

4. **City delivering on transparent, sustainable, and well planned finances**
City of London · 18 October 2023
Accessed 18 October 2026. Records Council endorsement of the Strategic Financial Framework and asset management approach. Historical figures and credit ratings aren't used as current claims.
Read source

5. **Stage 2 ION Initial Business Case: cost appendix, Tables 2 and 3**
Region of Waterloo · 4 November 2025
Accessed 19 October 2026. Waterloo full LRT option: $3.130 billion in 2025 dollars and $23.8 million annual operations, maintenance and rehabilitation in 2025 dollars. The London proposed release ceilings are policy choices, not construction estimates taken from this report.
Read source

6. **Canada Public Transit Fund: Baseline Funding applicant guide**
Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada · Online guide; checked October 2026
Accessed 19 October 2026. Describes eligibility, agreements and cost requirements. Potential planning assistance is not a London award. Normal operations, financing and competing uses of existing allocations must be considered separately.
Read source

7. **Procurement of Goods and Services Policy**
City of London · In force 1 October 2025
Accessed 19 October 2026. Sets procurement and contract change processes, approval authority and supplier competition requirements. Contractor delivery must comply with these rules.
Read source