

The City of Yellowknife was founded in 1934, located on the northern shore of Great Slave Lake, on Chief Drygeese traditional territory of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. It was designated the Capital of the Northwest Territories in 1967, and has since grown to become home to over 21,000 people. Our city is a lively and inclusive community known for its welcoming vibe and community spirit.

The City of Yellowknife is committed to making sure Yellowknife continues to be an amazing place to live, work, and visit. City Council and Administration work side by side each and every day to contribute to this goal, and Budget 2019 will form an important part of our community's roadmap going forward.

A budget is Council's single most important policy document and as such, must embody a realistic plan to address both the challenges and the opportunities faced by the City and our community. In particular, Budget 2019 must balance the ongoing requirements to sustain and enhance infrastructure, services and programs with the pressures to pursue new opportunities, all the while keeping affordability and cost of living top of mind.

### **Considerations**

The City of Yellowknife has experienced substantial infrastructure growth in the last decade. New neighbourhoods have been developed, major facilities have been built, essential infrastructure has expanded and additional parks and trails have been created. All of these enhance the quality of life in the community, but they also create the need for increased maintenance efforts and expenditures in the short term and eventual overhaul or replacement investment over time.

External changes have placed considerable time and money

pressures on the City. For example, the City's water license must be renewed by 2022, and a significant amount of investment will have to be made between now and then to meet the stringent requirements imposed by regulators. Increased safety legislation introduced by the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission is welcome because it offers added protection for the City's staff and citizens but it has also created more robust, and costly processes. The recent legalization of cannabis necessitated considerable preparatory work for the City, and ongoing monitoring and enforcement will have to be absorbed by City staff, even though the territorial government will not be passing any of the resulting tax revenues on to the City.

Citizen expectations are expanding, particularly with respect to social issues. There are growing concerns, especially about the City's downtown core, and as a result, growing expectations that the City will address them – even those that are beyond the municipal government's mandate.

Tourists are discovering what Yellowknifers have known for a long time – this is a beautiful part of the world that offers both undisturbed nature and well-developed services. The influx of visitors to view the aurora and enjoy our beautiful City is proof of the area's natural attraction; now, the challenge is to ensure the appropriate infrastructure is in place to properly support this growing opportunity and to spread the word about the year-round attractions that are here. The City has lobbied for several years for legislative changes to support an accommodation levy that will fund a Destination Marketing Organization to promote Yellowknife and help attract visitors to Yellowknife. The City also stepped up during 2017 to fill a gap in services and ensure continuity of Visitor Services to help them once they arrive.

## BUDGET MESSAGE

As the City strives to be responsive to emerging pressures and growth, our ability to do so is impacted by the continued formula funding shortfall. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) identified and acknowledged in 2014 that NWT communities are underfunded by a total of \$40 million annually. Of this \$40 million shortfall, the City of Yellowknife is underfunded by \$11 million each year. This has a huge impact on the City's ability to deliver services and maintain infrastructure. The City continues to pressure the GNWT to consider its fiscal allocations to better support strong communities and a diversified economy, as well as develop a plan in writing to close the funding gap.

### **Opportunities**

While the City is seeking creative and effective ways to manage these challenges, there are also exciting initiatives and opportunities being advanced that will enhance the quality of life in Yellowknife. The proposed Aquatic Centre will be the largest single capital undertaking in the City's history. Extensive consultation and the efforts of a dedicated advisory committee contributed to the recent Pre-Design report that reflects what this facility could look like and the features and services it could provide.

The recent Accessibility Audit identified a number of barriers in City facilities, and established a ten-year plan to address them. The Implementation Plan recommends a phased approach that resolves the most significant issues first.

Downtown revitalization has the potential for positive spinoff effects that far exceed the investment reflected in the City's budgets. At the same time, the possibility of a University in Yellowknife is being advocated by the City, and would bring both

economic benefits and the option for Yellowknifers to advance their educations without leaving the community.

The Giant Mine Reclamation project is expected to contribute significantly to Yellowknife's economy over the coming decade. The City of Yellowknife is a key stakeholder and will continue to be actively involved in the processes.

Cost of living is a concern for many citizens, especially utility costs, and the City is working to keep these costs as low as possible. Administration has lobbied the GNWT for several years for the authority to implement an Energy Retrofit program that will allow citizens to obtain funds for energy-saving upgrades on their homes and repay the money through a local improvement charge. As well, the City's electricity franchise agreement with Northland Utilities is up for renewal, opening up a range of possibilities, and the City will be looking for options that reduce costs to citizens.

Partnerships continue to be a crucial way to move forward: collaboration with the Climbing Club sparked the installation of the Climbing Wall at the Fieldhouse; partnering with the Yellowknife Fastball Association is resulting in significant enhancements at the Tommy Forrest Ball Park; and work is underway with the Yellowknife Mountain Bike Club to create a Bike Park.



### Looking Ahead

Budget 2019 presents a fiscally responsible plan that addresses both the need to take care of what the City already has and does, and the requirement to provide for what our community will need

in the future. It reflects the ongoing challenge of balancing the maintenance and enhancement of existing facilities, programs, and services with the desire to introduce new facilities and expand offerings. Some highlights of this plan include:

- Implementing recommendations from the Accessibility Audit.
- Pursuing the architectural and engineering phase of the Aquatic Centre development.
- Continuing the Community Plan development.
- Updating the City's Economic Development Strategy.
- Advancing the paving program.
- Continuing proactive replacement of water and sewer infrastructure, including twinning the sewer force main.
- Enhancing City trails.
- Conducting a water and sewer piped services expansion study.
- Exploring the feasibility of a centralized pellet boiler to service City Hall and neighbouring buildings.
- Continuing with the implementation of the Theia report recommendations regarding the 50/50 lot.
- Rehabilitating the Folk on the Rocks main stage.
- Conducting a Fire Hall Building Capacity study.
- Updating and formalizing engineering and development standards for construction.
- Beginning implementation of the Solid Waste Management Plan.
- Researching innovative approaches to public transit.
- Continuing support for the Homelessness Employment Program, the Street Outreach Program, and the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

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