

Dear Candidates,

Thank you for putting your name forward in the upcoming Territorial Election. The City values our partnership with the Government of the Northwest Territories, and we believe that when we work together, we can accomplish more.

As a City, we believe the following issues are important and we would like to hear from candidates on how they would work to address them in their term:

1. Community Government Underfunding
2. Social Support
3. Economic Development
4. Emergency Management
5. Legislation

These issues are all directly related to City Council's recently approved 2023-2026 Strategic Directions; we encourage you to review them here: [https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/resources/City\\_Council\\_and\\_Mayor/Council-Strategic-Directions-2023-2026/Council-Strategic-Directions-2023---2026.pdf](https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/resources/City_Council_and_Mayor/Council-Strategic-Directions-2023-2026/Council-Strategic-Directions-2023---2026.pdf)

We are asking all Yellowknife candidates to answer the questions below. Once received, answers will be posted on the City's website by the next working day. We will be notifying residents of the webpage via social media and other communication channels, and we will be encouraging them to read the answers before Election Day.

Once again, thank you for putting your name forward and we look forward to working with the successful candidates during the 20<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Sincerely,

Yellowknife City Council

### **Community Government Underfunding**

#### **Background:**

In 2014, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and the Northwest Territories Association of Communities (NWTAC) completed a review of community funding policies with the participation of a stakeholders group of community leaders and administrators representing a cross-section of Northwest Territories (NWT) communities. The Funding review process was completed in a transparent, inclusive and comprehensive manner.

The review found that communities in the NWT were underfunded collectively by \$40 million annually in annual Operations & Maintenance funding, Capital Infrastructure funding and Environmental funding. Since 2014, the funding gap has only decreased by \$824,000.

	<b>2014 Calculated Need</b>	<b>2014 Funding</b>	<b>2014 Gap</b>
Operations & Maintenance	\$55.3 Million	\$47.7 Million	\$7.6 Million
Water, Sewer & Waste	\$24.3 Million	\$15.9 Million	\$8.3 Million
Infrastructure	\$65.6 Million	\$42.5 Million	\$23.4 Million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$145.2 Million</b>	<b>\$106.4 Million</b>	<b>\$39.3 Million</b>

	<b>2022 Calculated Need</b>	<b>2023-24 Funding</b>	<b>2023 Gap</b>
Operations & Maintenance	\$60.632 Million	\$51.519 Million	\$9.113 Million
Water, Sewer & Waste	\$27.667 Million	\$20.629 Million	\$7.038 Million
Infrastructure	\$71.074 Million	\$48.749 Million	\$22.325 Million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$159.373 Million</b>	<b>\$120.897 Million</b>	<b>\$38.476 Million</b>

This core funding is required to sustain core services and infrastructure, and not frills. Since the review, there have been small increases but no implementation plan to close the underfunding gap. This shortfall makes it difficult for communities to effectively deliver essential services, maintain infrastructure and assets, and be resilient for future challenges.

In addition, as the Conference Board of Canada’s 2015 report (*Economic Impacts of Community Spending on the Territorial Economy*) calculated, by closing the community funding gap, 220 additional permanent jobs across the Northwest Territories would be created.

Every year that municipal governments are underfunded makes it harder and harder to ensure all of our residents have clean drinking water, well-managed garbage and sewage disposal, safe roads, recreation facilities, fire and ambulance services, and more.

**Question:** Will you promise to increase funding for community governments during your term if you are in Cabinet, or to advocate for an increase if you are a regular member?

- **This is a no-brainer. We must fund communities to deliver quality services to residents and I will be a strong advocate for doing so.**

**Social Support**

**Background:**

The impacts of homelessness, addictions and mental health have always been present in Yellowknife, but recently, the impacts have become increasingly visible within the community. Point in time counts of residents experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife in recent years also shows that more than 90% of residents experiencing homelessness have moved to Yellowknife from another community in Northwest Territories or Nunavut. While significant work is happening to address homelessness, addictions, and mental health, individuals and families continue to struggle with these complex and often intertwined challenges.

Residents Experiencing Homelessness in Relation to Total Population: Yellowknife compared			
City	Residents Experiencing Homelessness	Total Population	Residents Experiencing Homelessness as a % of total population
Calgary	3,117	1,462,927	0.2%
Edmonton	1,636	1,386,788	0.1%
Vancouver*	2,181	2,542,278	0.1%
Whitehorse	195	21,732	0.9%
<b>Yellowknife</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>19,569</b>	<b>1.7%</b>

*Notes: Figures pertaining to homelessness come from each City’s 2018 point-in-time counts. Total population figures are Statistics Canada figures from the 2016 Census. Vancouver figures pertaining to both homelessness and total population refer to Metro Vancouver. Source: Nick Falvo, “Responding to homelessness in Yellowknife: Pushing the ocean back with a spoon.”*

In March 2023, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) released the newest figures (2020) for the costs of substance use – costs to our medical system, justice system, lost productivity, etc. Unfortunately, the cost to the NWT due to substance use has continued to grow from 2017 (\$181 million) to 2020 (\$230.37 million). Per capita, in 2020, this worked out to cost every person in the NWT \$5,080, regardless of age (the average across Canada is \$1,291/person).

City Council recently approved our 2023-2026 Strategic Directions, and specifically prioritized working with partners to address pressing social issues. In particular:

- Advocating for enhanced outreach and social support services
  
- Working with all partners towards a safe, supportive and compassionate community for all

**Question:**

1. Currently, the GNWT does not provide any funding for the Yellowknife Street Outreach program. Through your leadership, would you work with the City to co-fund the program, so that it can be expanded and improved?
  - Yes - I am a believer in this program and the evidence speaks clearly to the benefit in other locales like Whitehorse. I watched with interest the proposal made by the Yellowknife Women’s Society at Council recently. With some work, I believe this

approach could make a real difference in wellness and public safety. The case for funding from the territorial government is clear.

2. The GNWT's recent "A Way Home – A comprehensive strategy to address homelessness in the NWT" has many great initiatives, including:

- setting up Regional Partnership tables;
- establishing long-term funding options to improve operator sustainability starting with zero-based budgeting to help identify and address funding gaps and accurately determine the cost of addressing homelessness through shelter operation in the NWT; and
- increasing GNWT funding for transitional housing programs to improve community-driven solutions to address local needs; and more.

Will you ensure these actions are implemented and funded?

- Yes - I will do everything I can to advocate for this plan to be seen through. We need to lean into Housing First in the territory, and the capital needs to be a priority. As both a long-time downtown Yellowknife resident, and someone wishing to represent the downtown core, the issue hits close to home.

3. In Eugene, Oregon, there is a program called CAHOOTS – which is a two person team consisting of a medic and a crisis worker who have training and experience in the mental health field. They do patrols and respond to calls through 911, and have the tools for a non-violent resolution of crisis situations. There are also many similar models across Canada where a police officer and a social worker respond to calls – including the Yukon's program called "Car 867".

To implement a program like this in Yellowknife, the GNWT must participate as it is responsible for public health, operates 911, and holds the RCMP contract. If elected, would you fund and implement a program like CAHOOTS or Car 867?

- I would like to see engagement and partnership with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation on the final product. However, in principle, I support this program – and I will push for it to get done right.

4. What actions and programs established so far do you think are working, and what needs to be done differently to address these issues of homelessness, addictions and mental health? How would you prioritize or sequence the actions you feel are needed, and how would you balance these with other GNWT priorities?

**Economic Development**

## **Background:**

This year, Council identified economic diversity as a key pillar that we would like to focus on during our time in office. Actions to be taken include establishing an accommodation levy and creation of a destination marketing organization; land development to support growth readiness; modernizing development incentive options; and more.

Diversity is the key to a strong, sustainable and resilient economy. The sustainability and growth of the NWT economy requires strategic investment and diversification; however, it will not be easy.

As the GNWT's 2023-2024 Economic Review states: *"Maturing diamond mines, labour shortages, and a lack of economic diversification will continue to dampen economic growth. These challenges are heightened by high inflation and higher interest rates. Most pressing is the lack of workers that is putting a brake on private sector activity, as well as the impending closure of the Diavik diamond mine. There are currently no other projects on the horizon large enough to fill the economic gap that will be left by the closing diamond mines."*

## **Question:**

1. What is your overall vision for economic development in the NWT?

- I believe that the territory needs to maintain a strong base in responsible resource development, encourage new residents to make the north home, focus on investments which can enhance local employment and prosperity, and encourage a healthy, dynamic small-to-medium-sized business sector.

2. What actions or investments would you take to strengthen and diversify the economy?

- A big area of opportunity is critical minerals – we have a huge proportion of these resources key to the cleaner economy of the future, and we need to capitalize on that.

A big part of that is to provide better support to help settle land claims - especially with the Akaitcho process. This will provide economic certainty for investors and open new opportunities for productive partnerships to get these resources to market.

We also need to attract new residents - and I believe that we have some levers to pull to make that happen. Immigration is one - I would like to see targeted

immigration streams to make the North more attractive for new residents and Canadians.

I would also like to see the elimination of the Labour Market Impact Assessment process for bringing in workers from elsewhere. Time and time again, I've heard from businesses who say this is holding them back from reaching their potential. It would hardly be radical - we've seen it work well in places like Halifax, which saw explosive population growth and improved economic fortunes in the wake of the elimination.

3. With the Giant Mine remediation beginning, what actions or investments would you take to maximize the economic benefits remaining in the north?

- We need progressive procurement policies which consider local capacity in planning to ensure local companies have the time and space to take on more of the work - even if it takes a bit longer to get it done.

Further, we have an opportunity to create a pipeline from our soon-to-be polytechnic university to rewarding, well-paying jobs in remediation. Yellowknife, as a hotbed of this sort of work, could be made more attractive to prospective students from across the north, southern Canada, and abroad. The good jobs in remediation may give them a good reason to stay, build a life, and contribute to our local economy.

## **Emergency Management**

### **Background:**

As the NWT Emergency Plan notes: *"The hazard environment in the NWT continues to evolve, primarily due to the effects of climate change. There is a need for continuous improvement using lessons learned and best practices to ensure the territory and communities remain ready to meet the challenge of new or evolving hazards."*

Over the past three years, communities have activated their emergency plans more and more: COVID-19; floods; wildfires; evacuation reception centers; and more. However, communities receive no core funding for emergency preparedness which makes it difficult for communities to meet the challenge of new or evolving hazards in all phases of emergency management – mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

### **Question:**

1. What actions will you take or lobby for to ensure that communities are adequately prepared for future emergencies?

- I think this comes down to closing the municipal funding gap and understanding community needs. I will always advocate for the appropriate funding for communities to be prepared to respond when emergencies come.

2. All NWT Community Wildfire Protection Plans will be five years old or older in 2024. Will you commit to funding, or advocating for funding, updates to these plans for any community that requests one?

- I understand these are updated periodically to take in new information. It seems to me that this makes sense to do on a predictable timeline rather than through ad-hoc requests - unless there is some significant change to the forest, or the addition of major new developments in communities which may change the calculus in terms of wildfire risk (i.e. necessitating new considerations in terms of risk to people or property which should be mitigated). I will certainly support the funding required to keep these documents relevant and ensure communities have the tools and awareness to take actions to get FireSmart.

### **Legislation**

As Legislators, one of your core duties is to review and approve legislation.

Over the years, the City has advocated for the review or creation of a number of laws, including:

1. Modernizing the *Property Assessment and Taxation Act*;
2. Modernizing and providing more clarity on the *Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief Act*;
3. Drafting a *Building Code Act*, as we're the only jurisdiction in Canada without this Act;
4. Repealing the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act*, and creating a *Cities Act* and a *Municipal Governments Act*; and
5. And many more pieces of legislation.

For more information on why the City is advocating for these pieces of Legislation, please read our resolutions on the items over the years: <https://nwtac.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-NWTAC-Reaffirmed-Resolutions.pdf>

**Question:**

1. Do you support prioritizing these legislative reviews?

- There is a huge volume of legislation which needs to be reviewed. I would support prioritizing the Building Code Act, modernizing the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, and the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief Act. I need to learn more about the importance of repealing the Cities, Towns, and Villages Act to create two new acts and look forward to working with the city on understanding this need better.

2. If you support prioritizing this legislation, will you work with City Council to advocate for change within this legislation?

- Yes. Elected leaders work best when they work together to achieve real change.

3. Is there other Legislation that you will be looking to review or create, and why? Legislation applicable to the City of Yellowknife include

- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls