

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

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 20th 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.

	2014 Calculated Need	2014 Funding	2014 Gap
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
Total	\$145.2 Million	\$106.4 Million	\$39.3 Million

	2022 Calculated Need	2023-24 Funding	2023 Gap
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
Total	\$159.373 Million	\$120.897 Million	\$38.476 Million

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? **Yes, I would advocate for increased funding.**

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%
Yellowknife	338	19,569	1.7%

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? **I would work with the City to ensure harm reduction programs are funded.**

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? **I would lobby the Ministers to implement any initiatives that have been identified from their report.**

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"¹.

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 support this initiative.**

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? **Are there any reports available to review to see if the actions and programs we have implemented are working? I would prioritize an addictions centre in the NWT and to provide adequate housing first for all NWT residents.**

¹ <https://yukon.ca/en/news/government-yukon-and-yukon-rcmp-team-launch-new-mobile-crisis-response-team>

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 the first investment in our economy should be building homes. If we look at Nunavut's 3000 plan, they have committed to spending over 2 billion dollars to re-stock and repair houses. This investment would ensure money is being spent in the North, develop homegrown skilled trades people, and replenish our depleting stock of reliable homes. Secondly, I would want the Mackenzie Valley Corridor developed with a road and a pipeline. We could run linear infrastructure alongside the road which would take the communities in the Valley off diesel and open a massive area for exploration.

I agree that economic diversification is important to a stable economy, but it needs to run parallel with the mining and exploration sector. The mining and exploration sector has gotten the NWT to where it is today. We need to settle land claims, simplify the permitting/exploration process, and build necessary infrastructure to support big industry. The residual economy that a robust mining and exploration sector provides is invaluable to Yellowknife. We are the service hub for not only the NWT but for Western Nunavut.

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

Lobby for additional funding for Northern artists and tourist operators while taking an aggressive approach to promoting our Northern artists and Makers, lobby for tax breaks on small businesses,

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

I would advocate for a thorough review of the BIP Registry to ensure only true northern businesses can be considered for work, implementing a procurement policy much like Yukon's Bid Value Reductions, and having a northern workforce pool so we aren't flying workers from the South up.

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.”*²

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 would lobby for the GNWT to take on more responsibility in developing and funding emergency management plans and ensuring communities are training to those plans. We need to hold communities and the GNWT accountable for training to the plan.
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 would need to review the Protection Plans and determine if they are out of date and need updating or if the information is still relevant before I can commit to this funding.**

² https://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/sites/maca/files/resources/nwt_emergency_plan.pdf

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? **We have a lot of legislation to review in the NWT and I would need to review the list before I prioritize legislative reviews.**
2. If you support prioritizing this legislation, will you work with City Council to advocate for change within this legislation? **I would work closely with Council to ensure we have the proper legislation for the communities. I understand that if we can have separate legislation for our Market communities it would free the GNWT to focus on communities that need more help.**
3. Is there other Legislation that you will be looking to review or create, and why? **Not at this moment.**