



DOWNTOWN: WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR, AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO

A message from Mayor Mark Heyck on building partnerships to help reclaim the heart of the City

Yellowknife is a great place to live. At least that's what I think, as do more than nine out of ten Yellowknifers who were polled by Ipsos Reid this past May. We know our city has warm people, incredible facilities for a community our size, awesome events that make us unique and a quality of life that's pretty great. The 2017 Citizen Survey definitely confirmed how much residents love Yellowknife.

At the City of Yellowknife, we get this, and we feel honoured to build on this community pride in everything we do – from movies in the park to outdoor skating rinks, from high quality drinking water to support for festivals, from progressive composting and waste reduction efforts to energy projects that reduce our carbon footprint. It's a real privilege to be able to work every day to make the place we live in – and love – even better.

The Citizen Survey also made it clear that while Yellowknifers love our city, they are also very concerned about social issues like homelessness, public intoxication and poverty, particularly in the downtown core. We know that things have gotten worse, and it's a stark reminder when the pollsters at Ipsos Reid are surprised that this concern has almost doubled since the last survey in 2014.

When I read through the 2017 Citizen Survey, I take pride in seeing that the issues which the City has direct control over are going pretty well: residents are pleased with



water, roads and sidewalks, fire protection and recreation. They feel that they're getting good value for the money they pay in property taxes. However, it's the issues beyond the City's control – the tough ones that nobody has yet solved – that require many partners to step up.

That's why we are looking to other orders of government, as well as the private sector, NGOs and individual citizens, to come to the table and work with us in tackling homelessness, poverty and addictions in Yellowknife.

The City, like many community governments across the country, is stepping into the realm of social policy because we have to, and because our residents have asked us to. We're the order of government closest to the people, and residents and visitors alike ask: what are you doing to deal with these problems?

AS A CITY, WE'VE STEPPED UP. HERE'S WHAT WE'RE DOING:

- On homelessness, we developed **"Everyone is Home - Yellowknife's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness,"** working with a range of partners like the Community Advisory Body on Homelessness (CAB), NGOs, the GNWT and the private sector. As a result of this work, we now have a long-term vision and plan.
- **Housing First Program:** Since October 2016, the City has funded a range of Housing First projects, through the CAB, which have already yielded positive outcomes for single women and men, families and youth who were previously homeless.
- On public intoxication, we've launched our **Street Outreach Services (SOS) program**, which provides transportation to a shelter or the sobering centre for intoxicated individuals who require assistance. If you see someone who requires assistance, please call **445-7202**.
- **Creation of a Sobering Centre:** We have collaborated with the GNWT to provide a temporary location for the sobering centre at the YK Community Arena. We were pleased to make the offer, given how important this is.

In concert with all of these initiatives, we must also remember that most of the mandate to deal with these issues rests with other orders of government, and we need to remain vigilant and maintain pressure on these governments to live up to their responsibilities. You, our residents, can play an important role in this, by contacting your MLAs and Member of Parliament and emphasizing the importance of supporting and investing in solutions to address homelessness. Your local government has heard your concerns loud and clear, and now it's time for all of us to work together on solving these challenges.

As well, City Council is finalizing our vision for downtown revitalization which includes a number of actions, some of which we've fast-tracked to roll out this summer. Our **summer patio** grant has been welcomed by a couple of cafes and our support

to businesses or NGOs that will open their **washroom facilities** to the public is gaining traction. We've also introduced a number of **litter control** initiatives to keep our downtown clean and beautiful, and we are engaging with business and industry partners in the **Win Your Space** contest to bring a new entrepreneur to our downtown. Overall, we want to support our downtown to be a lively, welcoming, vibrant and inclusive city centre that serves our residents and welcomes the world. Your City Council has made all of these issues a top priority for the City, and we'll continue to work hard on addressing the concerns of our constituents. Stay tuned for more updates on this work and we will count on Yellowknifers to continue to provide us with advice and good ideas.

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