

The City of Yellowknife working for you!

Perched along the northern shore of Great Slave Lake, the City of Yellowknife is located on Chief Drygeese traditional territory of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. We are a lively and inclusive community, home to over 21,000 residents. As the capital city of the Northwest Territories, we are a crossroad for people from across the NWT and serve all people who live, work and visit our community. City of Yellowknife Council and staff work hard to ensure that residents and visitors can count on the best possible municipal programs and services.

Budget 2020 is just one example of this hard work. It continues the City's commitment to ensuring that Yellowknife is a vibrant community with amenities that contribute to a high quality of life for citizens, solid economic opportunities for businesses, and amazing experiences for tourists. **It is a balancing act to meet ongoing infrastructure and service requirements, as well as seek innovations where they make sense, all while keeping affordability and cost of living top of mind.**

Council Leads the Way

The budget development process continued to evolve in 2019. Most significantly, the Budget Policies were given a long-awaited overhaul, and **Council approved a new Budget Policy** in September; its concise and relevant statements provide an updated framework upon which budget recommendations and decisions are based.

There was a concerted focus on providing Council with more extensive budget-related information and insights throughout the year, and a continued emphasis on viewing the budget as the product of corporate business planning. To this end, capital projects are now presented alphabetically, rather than by department, to underline that the outcomes are the result of efforts across the organization and will benefit residents and business throughout the city.

Budget recommendations were also guided by the Goals and Objectives that Council established for their 2019-2022 term:

- Growing and diversifying our economy
- Delivering efficient and accountable government
- Ensuring a high quality of life for all, including future generations
- Driving strategic land development and growth opportunities

Strategies for progress towards these goals have been interwoven with plans for maintaining core services at the level our residents and businesses expect, and with plans for making the right investments for continued sustainability, to create an approach that takes into account the importance of managing today, tomorrow, and the future.

A Balancing Act

The City of Yellowknife's **population growth may have slowed in recent years, but its infrastructure growth has not.** New neighbourhoods, facilities, roads, parks, and trails have been developed over the past decade, and they contribute positively to the fabric of life in Yellowknife. However, they also contribute to increasing maintenance and replacement costs, which are also facing upwards pressure from older, aging assets.

There has also been **growth in external pressures**, especially from a regulatory perspective. The City takes the safety of our staff and residents very seriously, and willingly implements the increasingly rigorous **safe work practices** legislated by the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, however these add time and cost to many routine activities. The **Giant Mine Remediation project** will contribute to the City's economy and will benefit area residents in the long run, but for the foreseeable future, it will also consume considerable City resources as staff work to ensure that the project's progress is consistent with the best interests of our citizens and businesses. Similarly, it is expected that the City's **upcoming water**

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license renewal process will be the most stringent yet, requiring considerable time and financial resources.

There are also ongoing citizen concerns with **social issues**, especially in the downtown core. While these are not within the City's municipal government mandate, their impact requires the City to find new and innovative ways to collaborate on solutions.

Counterbalancing all these growth pressures is the reality that **development has slowed in recent months** and the City's total taxable assessment is expected to be only about 0.51% larger than it was in 2019, which is the most modest increase in many years. So while the City strives to respond to emerging growth and pressure, without an increased assessment base, even minor cost increases can translate more directly to a property tax increase.

The challenge is amplified by the **ongoing formula funding shortfall**. In 2014, the Government of the Northwest Territories identified and acknowledged that its communities are underfunded by a total of \$40 million. Of this \$40 million shortfall, the City of Yellowknife is underfunded by \$11 million each year, which significantly reduces 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, and to develop a plan in writing to close this funding gap.

Working to Enhance the Quality of Life

Reliable, safe, and cost-effective provision of essential services remains the City's core priority. These responsibilities also encompass seeking more efficient ways to provide services, and proactively identifying new opportunities to improve how the community's infrastructure is acquired and maintained, and deliver more of what citizens expect.

Top of mind for 2020 is the **proposed Aquatic Centre**. In 2018, Council approved the Aquatic Centre Advisory Committee's Pre-Design Plan that outlined what could be included in the new facility, and committed 2019 funds to move the process through the Design-Build process. A final design will be developed in 2020 and – subject to Council and voter approval – construction could begin in the latter part of the year.

The City's **submarine water intake** line has reached the end of its life expectancy, and staff have been preparing for this eventuality for several years. In 2019, the City was successful in securing \$25.8 million in federal funding towards the project, and staff continue to seek external support for the remaining \$8.6 million of the anticipated cost. In the meantime, 2020 will see ongoing design and preparation for this critical piece of infrastructure that ensures safe drinking water for area residents.

In 2019, Council approved the **Accessibility Audit** implementation plan, and Budget 2020 recommendations include an allocation to proceed with the first full year of work to remove barriers identified in the audit and enhance accessibility throughout City facilities.

Citizens have entrusted the City with the care and maintenance of a significant array of assets. These assets are crucial to the reliable delivery of municipal services and programs, and represent significant investments. Budget 2020 includes recommendations that will help the City formalize **our asset management processes** so it can ensure that its buildings, roads, pipes, parks, trails, and technology are properly looked after to obtain maximum benefit from each investment.



Similarly, several Budget 2020 recommendations focus on looking after what the City already has:

- **Ongoing Water and Sewer and Paving Programs** help ensure this linear infrastructure continues to support reliable and cost-effective core services.
- **City Hall upgrades** will repair the exterior concrete staircase to make them safer and extend their serviceable life.
- **Fleet Management** investments will redeploy existing units and acquire new ones to maximize lifespans and help reduce service interruptions.
- **Information Technology** investments will help ensure this vital infrastructure continues to meet growing demands as residents and stakeholders look to the City to provide easily accessible services and information.
- Design work will look at how best to introduce redundancy in the **Sewage Force Main System** for improved reliability.
- Investments in backup generators at liftstations and replacement lagoon control structures will support the City's **compliance with environmental and water licence regulations**.
- **Replacing the flooring at the Library, Arenas, and Curling Club** will help ensure the facilities are maintained to a reasonable standard of care.

Other Budget 2020 recommendations more directly contribute to the quality of life in Yellowknife by addressing and improving services, programs, and safety considerations that directly serve citizens and stakeholders:

- The **Columbarium expansion** will address growing demand for this service.
- **Tommy Forrest Ball Park** upgrades, done in collaboration with the Yellowknife Fastball Association, will enhance the facility for all users.

- New **FDM software modules** will extend functionality and contribute to more efficient record keeping and staff deployment at the Fire Hall, and Email Management software will integrate with the City's document management system to help ensure that all digital information conveyed by email is properly retained.
- Replacing the **Fire Hall's Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus** equipment is necessary to properly equip Fire Fighters, and adding a backup power generator will help ensure their facility remains operational during outages.
- **Traffic light upgrades** will make intersections safer for vehicular and pedestrian traffic by continuing the installation of vide detection and countdown pedestrian timer technology.
- Upgrades to the **Parker Park Field Outfield** will improve the safety of the fields and increase the number of playable days each season.
- The ongoing **Pump Replacement Program** helps reduce outages by proactively replacing this crucial equipment.
- Upgrading the **Multiplex Ice Plant** and replacing the faulty electrical control panel will reduce service interruptions, and installing an ammonia safety system at the facility will improve staff and citizen safety.
- Replacing key components of the **audio visual and webcasting equipment** in Council Chambers will improve the reliability of this service.
- The **Multi-Purpose Asphalt Surface** will help create a multi-generational recreation experience within the Lakeshore development.
- The **Parking Structure Feasibility study** will assess options for downtown parking, including the potential of better utilizing existing surface lots.

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Looking Ahead

As Council's most important policy document, Budget 2020 reflects plans designed to achieve Council's strategic objectives, while at the same time ensuring that the services are delivered in a reliable and cost-effective manner. It embodies a realistic plan to address both the challenges and opportunities faced by the city, and balances the ongoing requirements to sustain and enhance infrastructure and services with the pressures to pursue new opportunities – all part of the City, Working for You.

