

Introduction

A Budget is Council's most important policy document. It 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.

The City's budget process is a year-round cycle, beginning in January with Administration's semi-annual update on Council's Goals and Objectives and the current Year's Work Plan priorities, and culminating in Council's approval of the final document in mid-December. This document is a financial plan that prescribes planned resource allocations for a future period.

The Cities, Towns, and Villages Act requires the City must adopt a balanced budget in advance of the fiscal year, which matches the calendar year.

Budget Concepts

The City's financial constructs and practices are consistent with municipal government best practices, and follow public sector accounting standards. Many of these are specific to the non-profit nature of the organization and the associated mandate for transparency. In particular, funds, reserves, tangible capital assets, and financial statements are important and interrelated components of the City's financial plans and position.

Funds

Many of the City's revenues are collected or obtained for specific purposes, and expenditures must be matched to those purposes.

The City uses groups of accounts called funds to achieve this. These following funds are currently in use:

General Fund: The General Fund is used for the provision of day-to-day services such as fire, ambulance, parks, recreational facilities, transit, roads, and sidewalks. Typically, about 75% of the money needed to provide these services comes from property taxes, while user charges contribute most of the balance.

Capital Fund: The Capital Fund pays for major acquisitions that support the long-term delivery of programs and services. Most of the money in this fund comes from other orders of government.

Solid Waste Management Fund: The Solid Waste Management Fund covers the costs of handling the community's garbage. About one-third of its revenues come from the associated monthly charges on water bills, while two-thirds comes from tipping fees charged at the Solid Waste Facility.

Water and Sewer Fund: The Water and Sewer Fund is used to maintain and operate the infrastructure related to water distribution and sewage disposal. Almost all of its revenues come from monthly water bills.

Land Development Fund: The Land Development Fund supports the acquisition and development of land for resale; its revenues come from land sales and leases.

Service Connection Failure Assistance Fund: The Service Connection Failure Assistance Fund helps property owners pay for repairs to water and sewer lines between customer buildings and City mains. The money comes from fees collected on monthly water bills.

READER'S GUIDE

Reserves

The City maintains a number of reserves that enable it to set aside money for specific purposes, thus levelling its expenditures and avoiding the extreme peaks that could otherwise be associated with major initiatives. They are funded through all of the City's financial assets: cash on hand, accounts receivable, and land held for resale.

The City currently maintains the following reserves:

Information Technology Reserve: The Information Technology Reserve is used to maintain consistency in information technology infrastructure expenditures. Money is transferred into the reserve each year in anticipation of upcoming requirements, and information technology capital expenditures approved by Council are funded from the reserve.

Major Community Facility Reserve: The Major Community Facility Reserve is used to set aside money in anticipation of large future expenditures on City facilities. Money is transferred into the reserve each year, based on facility plans. As well, the revenue from the infrastructure replacement fee – introduced in 2011 and charged on all facility rentals – is transferred into the reserve on an annual basis. When the City undertakes the development of a significant facility – such as the proposed Aquatic Centre – it is partially funded by this reserve.

Mobile Equipment Replacement Reserve: The Mobile Equipment Replacement Reserve enables the City to level out the costs of renewing its mobile equipment. Money is transferred into the reserve each year in anticipation of the replacement requirements, and annual fleet replacements approved by Council are funded from the reserve.

Downtown Development Reserve: The Downtown Development Reserve was established by Council in 2002 to fund future projects that impact the downtown area. Currently, 25% of parking meter revenues are transferred to this fund each year.

Heritage Reserve: The Heritage Reserve is used to fund projects that recognize and celebrate Yellowknife's heritage. If there are unexpended funds in the Heritage Committee's operating budget allocation, they are transferred into this reserve for future use on projects approved by Council.

Samuel Colley Donation Reserve: The Samuel Colley Donation Reserve was established in 2003 by a donation from the estate of Samuel Colley, and is used for the purpose of improving the environment and the resources of the Yellowknife Public Library.

Revitalization Initiative Reserve: The Revitalization Initiative Reserve was established by Council in 2016 to fund land assembly in support of revitalization initiatives within the Downtown, Old Town, Old Airport Road, and Kam Lake areas by transferring 30% of land sales into the fund. In 2018 Council discontinued the transfers.

Community Grant Reserve: Annual unused grant funding is transferred to this reserve for future use.

Tangible Capital Assets

The City has numerous facilities, buildings, and other infrastructure (e.g. roads and sidewalks), as well as equipment, that it uses in the provision of municipal services; these are referred to as tangible capital assets.



Each year, changes occur in these assets: new ones are acquired, existing ones are enhanced, and older ones may be retired. In addition, amortization – the equivalent of depreciation in the private sector – is recorded for all of them, with the exception of land.

Financial Statements

The City's financial statements report the results of the financial plan outlined in the budget by providing a point-in-time summary of the City's financial and physical assets and liabilities.

The City's budgets are cash-based so capital expenditures are expensed. However, the Canadian public sector accounting standards that govern the preparation of the financial statements require that assets be set up as tangible capital assets and amortized over time. These differences mean that a balanced budget – where overall revenues match overall expenditures – can lead to an increase in the City's net worth, reported in the financial statements as a surplus.

The difference between the City's assets and its liabilities is referred to as its accumulated surplus, or net worth. When the City's accumulated surplus is larger than it was the previous year, the financial statements consider that difference the surplus for that year. Most years the City records an annual surplus because investments in assets increase its net worth.

Organizational Structure

Yellowknife City Council is made up of one Mayor and eight Councilors who collectively represent the municipality at large. The Senior Administrative Officer is the link between Council and staff,

where Council is responsible for governance and staff are responsible for operations.

Mayor and Council are elected for four year terms. At the beginning of the term they adopt goals and objectives to create a framework for their decision making.

City of Yellowknife staff are grouped into seven departments that reflect the overall nature of their responsibilities and contribution to the provision of City services and programs: Administration, Community Services, Corporate Services, Economic Development and Strategy, Planning and Development, Public Safety, and Public Works and Engineering. Each department, with the exception of Administration, is led by a Director, and these Directors report to the Senior Administrative Officer. Most departments are composed of multiple divisions to enable them to focus resources in specialized areas.

Definitions

Activity: A function that contributes to the specific services and programs provided by the organizational unit

Assessed Value: A value placed on property for the purpose of allocating property taxes

Budget: A financial plan that prescribes planned resource allocations for a future period, with a focus on where these resources come from and how they will be allocated to provide programs and services

Budget Policy: A clear and sustainable framework for prudent financial management of the City's resources

READER'S GUIDE

Consumer Price Index (CPI): A statistical description of price levels provided by Statistics Canada and used as a measure of the increase in the cost of living (i.e. economic inflation)

Debt Service: Money paid to reduce a financial obligation entered into by the City

Deficit: When expenses (money out) are greater than revenue (money in) over the budgeted period

Evergreen Strategy: A practice which aims to replace 25% of the City's information technology infrastructure each year

Expenditure: Money spent by the City on a particular project, program or service

Fiscal Year: The 12 months which the year's budget covers. In the City's case, the Cities, Towns and Villages Act stipulates that this is the calendar year from January 1 to December 31

Formula Funding: Money transferred to the City by the territorial government, according to a specific formula

Full-time Equivalent Position (FTE): A part-time position expressed as the equivalent of a full-time position. For example, a casual Administrative Assistant who works three weeks full-time during a year would be equivalent to 0.06 of a fulltime position

Gas Tax Refund Program: A federal program, administered through the GNWT, which provides a partial rebate on gasoline taxes to communities for environmentally friendly programs

Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP): The uniform minimum standards for financial accounting and recording

GNWT: The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), the territorial government which governs the City through legislative acts and regulations

GFOA: Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada

Infrastructure: Roads, buildings, water and sewer systems, parks, trails, and information technology hardware and software

Levy: Property tax revenues that support government activities

Mill Rate: The mechanism for allocating property taxes among property owners. Each property is assigned a mill rate which is multiplied by the Assessed Value to determine the amount of property tax to be paid for that property

Object: A group of expenditures that is common across all organizational units

Capital Expenditure: An investment that acquires or improves a major asset that provides a benefit for more than one year, and requires an expenditure of \$50,000 or more

User Charges: Fees paid by the user of a specific service provided by the City, such as water and sewer services or access to recreational facilities

