



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

## GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

**Monday, September 25, 2023 at 12:05 p.m.**

Report of a meeting held on Monday, September 25, 2023 at 12:05 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber. The following Committee members were in attendance:

Chair: Mayor R. Alty,  
Councillor S. Arden-Smith, (via teleconference)  
Councillor G. Cochrane,  
Councillor R. Fequet,  
Councillor B. Hendriksen,  
Councillor C. McGurk,  
Councillor T. McLennan,  
Councillor S. Payne, and  
Councillor R. Warburton.

The following members of Administration staff were in attendance:

S. Bassi-Kellett,  
C. Caljouw,  
C. Greencorn,  
C. MacLean,  
K. Pandoo,  
K. Thistle,  
C. White,  
G. White, and  
S. Jovic.

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<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>
1.	(For Information Only) Mayor Alty read the Opening Statement.
2.	(For Information Only) Committee agreed unanimously to amend the agenda to include an in camera personnel matter and to move item No. 7 on the agenda, a memorandum regarding whether to authorize the Mayor and City Manager to enter into a two (2) year contract renewal with Dragon Toner for the services of Integrity Commissioner for the City of Yellowknife, before item No. 6, a discussion regarding Access for All.



(For Information Only)

3. There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

(For Information Only)

4. Committee heard a presentation from Susan Henry and Simon Bradley, representatives of Canada Task Force 2, on Yellowknife Recovery Framework. They noted that typically there are three (3) phases to recovery with different general objectives:

- Short term: Stabilizing;
- Medium term: Rebuilding & Rehabilitation; and
- Long term: Revitalizing & Resilience Building.

They provided information regarding recovery principles, recovery considerations and phases of emergency recovery. They outlined the key recovery pillars: people, community, services, policy and process, finance and infrastructure.

5. **Committee read a memorandum regarding whether proceed with an After Action Assessment: 2023 North Slave Complex Wildfires.**

Committee noted that 2023 has been an extraordinary year for wildfires in the Northwest Territories. Since May 2023, Yellowknife has been an evacuation centre for residents of Hay River, K'at'l'odeeche First Nation, Wekweeti and Behchokò who were all required to leave their communities due to the threat of wildfire. There has been a constant fire ban in place in Yellowknife since July 12, 2023. The City's Emergency Operations Committee started meeting daily on July 25th, first to coordinate the evacuation centre for Behchokò evacuees and then to undertake the proactive response for the protection of Yellowknife as per the City's Emergency Plan and other framework documents.

In August 2023, a complex of wildfires in the North Slave region threatened the City of Yellowknife, requiring an emergency response and ultimately, the planned evacuation of the City. Preparatory work to address the risk began in late July, in collaboration with the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) Environment and Climate Change (ECC) wildfire experts, as well as with the GNWT Emergency Management Organization (NWT EMO). Planning and initial work got underway in early August on fire breaks and sprinkler defenses around the City, based on expert advice from ECC Values Protection experts. On August 8, 2023, at a Special Council meeting, Council approved the expenditure of funds on an emergency basis for wildfire mitigation/risk reduction within the municipal boundary.

The City declared a State of Local Emergency on August 14th which enabled a significant amount of additional contract resources to be available/deployed for the construction and installation of the firebreaks and sprinkler defenses. An Evacuation Alert was issued by the City on August 15th for the western side of Yellowknife. That same day, the City formally requested additional support from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) including:



- Evacuation support from the GNWT (operating the Multiplex reception centre) for sheltering in community;
- Evacuation planning beyond sheltering in community, if Yellowknife residents have to be evacuated out of the community;
- Support for the City's Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) – Director-level support for operations, advance planning, supply personnel and logistics; and
- Additional structural Firefighting capacity to supplement the capacity of the Yellowknife Fire Division (YKFD).

Extreme winds and dry conditions drove the fire known as ZF015 towards Yellowknife, which along with the fire threat for Highway 3, Dettah, the Ingraham Trail and the South Slave, resulted in the GNWT declaring a Territorial State of Emergency on August 15th given the wildfire threat. An Evacuation Order for Yellowknife, Dettah and the Ingraham Trail was issued by the GNWT commencing August 16th, triggering the evacuation by road and air over August 16th – 18th.

The City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), supported by Canada Task Force 2 from August 19 to September 6, implemented the Incident Command System (ICS) and continued to work with GNWT, military, essential utility providers and other essential personnel to conduct the emergency response throughout the period of the Evacuation Order, from August 16th to September 6th.

Committee noted that Council's policies, resolutions or goals include:

Council Motion #0106-23      That Council approve the expenditure of funds on an emergency basis for wildfire mitigation/risk reduction within the municipal boundary.

Committee noted that applicable legislation, by-laws, studies or plans include:

1. *Cities, Towns and Villages Act*;
2. Emergency Management Act and regulations;
3. Emergency Management By-law, Emergency Response and Fire Protection Services By-law;
4. City of Yellowknife Emergency Plan; and
5. Council-Administration Round Table (CART) presentation on Emergency Management June 15, 2023 <https://yellowknifent.new.swagit.com/videos/242258>

### Context

An After Action Assessment (AAA) is a qualitative review of actions taken in response to an emergency event. An AAA is a means of identifying and documenting best practices and challenges demonstrated by the response to the emergency event. AAAs are not intended to assess individual performances or competencies, but rather to identify organizational and functional challenges to be addressed and best practices to be maintained. The intent is to identify actions that need to be implemented immediately to ensure better preparation for the future, as well as medium to long term actions needed to strengthen and



institutionalize the emergency response capabilities. The AAA will, at a minimum, consider four questions:

- What was expected to happen?
- What actually occurred?
- What went well and why?
- What can be improved and how?

AAAs are a best practice and part of the emergency management cycle where governments can assess what transpired in order to continuously improve emergency planning and response capacity. This is especially important in our current context where wildfires, floods and evacuations are becoming more commonplace.

#### Intergovernmental

Emergency planning, management and response are shared responsibilities across the local, territorial and national levels. Each order of government has its respective role to play and consideration needs to be given to how seamless this can be in the midst of an emergency. The GNWT was a collegial partner in working with the City on the wildfire emergency response, evacuation and re-entry planning. The federal government provided support as requested and other partners, including Canada Task Force 2, supported emergency response efforts in Yellowknife.

The City proposes to undertake this AAA to review City emergency response plans, frameworks and processes within our mandate and legislative scope, while also recognising that the GNWT has been a key partner in this process. GNWT has indicated its intention to undertake an AAA that reflects its mandate and NWT-wide scope. The City looks forward to collaborative working relationship with the GNWT on our respective assessments.

#### Financial Considerations

Costs for this Assessment are not currently budgeted for in Budget 2023. The City is inquiring to see if this could be an eligible expense under Disaster Financial Assistance post emergency funding by either the GNWT or Canada. In the event that it is not, the City will identify costs from within budget variance.

#### Scope of Work

The scope of the AAA will focus on the following areas and will include engagement with stakeholders and residents as appropriate:

1. Examine the wildfire event in the context of the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and propose strategies to mitigate new and existing disaster risks for the City of Yellowknife.
2. Review the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Z1600-14 (*Emergency and Continuity Management Program*) and contrast CSA Z1600-14 to the City's response to the wildfire.
3. Review the National Research Council National Guide for Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Fires to understand and minimize the impact of WUI fires by reducing their



likelihood and severity, inhibiting their spread, and improving the effectiveness of community response.

4. Review the City's existing framework for emergency preparedness (including the Emergency Management Bylaw, Emergency Response and Fire Protection Services Bylaw, Emergency Plan), management and response from a best practices perspective, considering Yellowknife's remote location, geographical area, demographics, and population, and define lessons learned or propose changes to warning notices and/or readiness levels.
5. Review and analyze the territorial emergency management components (*NWT Emergency Management Act/NWT Emergency Plan*) for the legislative and process application for the City of Yellowknife. This should include the Territorial Emergency Measure Office (TEMO) and the North Slave Regional Emergency Measures Office (REMO) interoperability in coordination with the City of Yellowknife.
6. Review and summarize disaster recovery legislation, regulations, and standards that apply to the City of Yellowknife to outline best practices for future hazards in the community.
7. Review the declaration of state of local emergency and impact of territorial state of emergency, including how the expert advice of subject matter experts (ECC in this case) is used to determine.
8. Propose recommendations for community-based evacuation plans that recognize the northern, remote and limited means of egress for the community. Factors include legislative authority and legal framework, territorial agreements, information flow, risk management, decision-making process, resource capacity, and engagement and communications processes.
9. Assess lessons learned for the implementation and operations of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), including organizational structure and resourcing; command and control, including the roles of the Director of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and communications structures; evacuation management; consequence management; and information management.
10. Assess lessons learned for the implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS).
11. Review the domestic animal/pet strategy that was implemented through response and recovery.
12. Review the role of volunteers in emergency response during an evacuation order.
13. Analyze the effectiveness of the recovery framework utilized.
14. Review the decision-making process to understand the associated risks better, examine the decision framework for the "evacuation" alert, the conditions for which Environment and Climate Change (ECC) assign evacuation orders for wildfires and how ECC's values protection advice informs the actions of the City.
15. Assess and propose lessons learned for the City to use, access or integrate with available wildfire forecasting and predictive planning tools (including, but not exclusive to, infrared technology and fire weather modelling technologies).
16. Assess and propose lessons learned for the transition from prepare, and respond through to recovery, specifically the setup of governance and organization, clarity



of command and control, transition from reactive to proactive planning cycles, and flow of information.

17. Identify actual or potential gaps in the City's financial capacity in dealing with the current wildfires.
18. Assess the City's ability in absorbing and recovering from future wildfires – both short term and long term (based on risk exposures and current financial resources).
19. Review, analyze and recommend planning and preparation structures to enable adaptive, scalable, and flexible emergency management systems.
20. Prepare an After-Action Work Plan that can be used to capture the lessons learned/follow up actions from the AAA and recommend prioritization so that those lessons can be organized meaningfully and recommended actions, activities, or tasks can be assigned for follow-up/implementation.

The successful proponent shall provide the following deliverables:

- A. An AAA Report on the City's prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities as they relate specifically to the August 2023 North Slave Complex Wildfires. The recommendations from the AAA Report will seek to inform and develop future strategies developed in the City's emergency management and response program related to overall threats as well as to wildfire threats.
- B. An After Action Work Plan that identifies and prioritizes recommended follow-up actions required
- C. A Presentation of the findings and recommendations to Yellowknife City Council.

#### Procedural

Administration will issue a Request for Proposal seeking proposals from consultants with experience in emergency management and assessment. Historically, large management consultancies have undertaken this work for municipal and provincial governments.

Committee noted that AAAs are a best practice for governments to undertake after a significant emergency or disaster in order to identify successes and challenges encountered, and recommendations for change that should be implemented going forward. The City of Yellowknife is seeking to undertake an AAA as a continuous improvement opportunity. Utilizing the expertise of an external consultant to undertake the AAA will ensure that best practices and standardized approaches are used to assess the efforts of the City in responding to this emergency.

Committee requested that the scope of AAA be amended to include the following: public consultation, approach, timing, budget, re-entry analysis and interim report, including adjustments to #6, #8, #13 of the scope of work for the AAA.

Committee requested that Administration bring RFP for the 'After Action Assessment: 2023 North Slave Complex Wildfires' to GPC on October 10, 2023 for a review.



**Committee recommends that Council direct Administration to seek external expertise to complete an 'After Action Assessment (AAA): 2023 North Slave Complex Wildfires Emergency Response'.**

#### **MOVE APPROVAL**

(For Information Only)

6. Committee read a memorandum regarding whether to authorize the Mayor and City Manager to enter into a two (2) year contract renewal with Dragon Toner for the services of Integrity Commissioner for the City of Yellowknife.

Committee noted that in 2017, the City of Yellowknife completed a governance review resulting in recommended amendments to the Council Procedures By-law and the adoption of a Council Code of Ethics By-law (the "By-law"). The purpose of the By-law is to establish standards for the ethical conduct of Council members relating to their roles and obligations when acting as representatives of the City and a procedure for the investigation and enforcement of those standards. The By-law also provides for the appointment of an Integrity Commissioner: an independent and impartial individual that will adjudicate complaints filed in accordance with the By-law.

In September 2018, the City issued a request for proposal for the services of an Integrity Commissioner and Dragon Toner was the successful proponent. Subsequently, Council authorized the Mayor and City Manager to enter into a 5-year contract with Dragon Toner for the services of an Integrity Commissioner. That 5-year contract expired on September 25, 2023, and includes an option for a two-year renewal, which is the direction administration is seeking from Council.

Committee noted that Council's policies, resolutions or goals include:

##### **Strategic Direction #2:**

##### **Service Excellence**

Policy  
Policy

Respectful Workplace and Anti-Harassment Policy  
Whistleblower Policy

Motion #0318-18

That Council authorize the Mayor and City Administrator to enter into a five (5) year contract with Dragon Toner for the services of Integrity Commissioner for the City of Yellowknife.

Committee noted that applicable legislation, by-laws, studies or plans include:

*Cities, Towns and Villages Act*; and

Council Code of Ethics By-law No. 4976, as amended.

##### Legislative

Section 35 of the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* states that Council may adopt a code of ethics for council members.





Council Code of Ethics By-law No. 4976, as amended, contemplates the appointment of an Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner is responsible for performing the duties set out in the By-law and reports directly to Council for all such matters.

#### Financial Considerations

The current contract annual retainer is \$30,000.00 and includes:

- Preparation and delivery of orientation to Council;
- Preparation and provision of an annual report to Council; and
- Advice and/or rulings on ethical challenges for Council.

The annual retainer amount does not include investigation and adjudication of complaints and policy review and development. These issues and items are billed in addition to the annual retainer.

Under the By-law, complaints and investigations dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner are confidential, except for those matters that in the Integrity Commissioner's opinion are necessary for reporting to Council.

The following is a breakdown of Integrity Commissioner fees and annual report features over the course of the current contract:

Year (Sept. 25 – Sept. 24)	Total Fees Incurred	Report Features
2018 – 2019	\$19,840.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed Council orientation, by-law and policy review</li> <li>- Informal advice/opinion to Council Members (x3)</li> <li>- Public inquiry re. complaint process (x1)</li> <li>- No complaints initiated or investigations into Council Member conduct</li> </ul>
2019 – 2020	\$10,280.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed training refresh for Council Members</li> <li>- Informal advice/opinion to Council Members (x3)</li> <li>- No public inquiry re. complaint process</li> <li>- No complaints initiated or investigations into Council Member conduct</li> </ul>





Year (Sept. 25 – Sept. 24)	Total Fees Incurred	- Report Features
2020 – 2021	\$4,940.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informal advice/opinion to Council Members (x3)</li> <li>- No public inquiry re. complaint process</li> <li>- No complaints initiated or investigations</li> </ul>
2021 – 2022	\$54,182.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complaints about Council Members (x7, less 1 withdrawn. These 6 complaints were dealt with in a separate report of the Integrity Commissioner, dated February 10, 2022)</li> <li>- Public inquiries re. complaint process (x4)</li> </ul>
2022 – 2023	\$23,826.50	Report forthcoming
<b>Total Fees (5 years)</b>	<b>\$113,069.00</b>	

Committee noted that the role of the Integrity Commissioner is set out in the Whistleblower Policy and Council Code of Ethics By-law No. 4976 including, but not limited to:

- i) Help ensure Members of Council perform their functions in accordance with Council Code of Ethics By-law No. 4976, as amended;
- ii) Provide advice and rulings on ethical challenges faced by Members of Council;
- iii) Deliver an orientation to Members of Council regarding ethical obligations and responsibilities of Members;
- iv) Investigate and adjudicate Whistleblower complaints pertaining to Members of Council and alleged breaches of the Council Code of Ethics By-law;
- v) Provide an Annual Report to Council summarizing the activities of the Integrity Commissioner;
- vi) Review the Whistleblower Policy and Council Code of Ethics By-law and make recommendations for improvement.

The continued appointment of an Integrity Commissioner will ensure that Council Members receive uninterrupted guidance with regard to their obligations under the Council Code of Ethics By-law and Whistleblower Policy, and that complaints are dealt with in a fair and impartial manner.

Committee recommended that Council authorize the Mayor and City Manager to enter into a two (2) year contract renewal with Dragon Toner for the services of Integrity Commissioner for the City of Yellowknife.



Committee noted that this matter will be dealt with under New Business that evening.

7. **Committee discussed Access For All Policy.**

Committee noted that on April 24, 2023, Council tabled a motion to adopt Access for All Policy. Committee further noted that on June 12, 2023 Council removed a motion from table and referred Access for All Policy to the Governance and Priorities Committee for discussion.

Committee requested that the household income cut off to be eligible for Access for All be changed to the Low Income Measure (LIM) from the Northwest Territories Market Based Measure (NMBM); that household income be changed to net income from gross income; and the time period for the Access for All Program be extended from 24 months to 36 months.

Committee recommended that the Policy be amended as follows:

1. "Access for All Program" definition - means **three years** of an annual Transit Pass and three years of an annual Individual or Family Flexi Pass provided free of charge to Yellowknife residents who qualify under this Policy;
2. That the definition section be changed from "Northwest Territories Market Basket Measure Threshold" to the "**Yellowknife Low Income Measure**";
3. Section 4.1.1.a - The applicant's household income is at or below the applicable **Yellowknife Low Income Measure threshold** for the number of people in the household;
4. Section 4.1.2 - In this Policy, household income is determined by adding together all **net income**, as set out in the Notice of Assessment(s) from the Canada Revenue Agency, for the year immediately preceding the application for all household members over the age of 18.
5. Section 4.2.4 - Access for All passes are valid for **36 months**; after which time, a resident must reapply.

Committee recommended that a revised Access for All Policy be brought forward to Council on July 24, 2023 for adoption to allow members that will be absent from the next Council meeting on June 26, 2023 to participate in discussion.

At Council Meeting on July 24, 2023 Council referred the Access for All Policy to the next Governance and Priorities Committee meeting.

At Governance and Priorities Committee meeting on August 14, 2023, Committee tabled a discussion regarding Access for All to a future Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting.

Committee discussed a revised policy and recommended that the definition be amended to include that that metric will be updated every 5 years as revised by Statistics Canada.



Committee requested that any revenue impacts be accounted for in the 2024 budget and that Access for All Policy be effective as of January 1, 2024.

**Committee recommends that a revised Access for All Policy be brought forward to Council on October 10, 2023 for adoption.**

#### MOVE APPROVAL

(For Information Only)

8. Councillor Cochrane moved,  
Councillor Warburton seconded,

That Committee move in camera at 4:02 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter.

#### MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

(For Information Only)

9. Committee discussed a personnel matter.

(For Information Only)

10. Councillor Payne left the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

(For Information Only)

11. Committee continued its discussion regarding a personnel matter.

(For Information Only)

12. Councillor Warburton left the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

(For Information Only)

13. Committee continued its discussion regarding a personnel matter.

(For Information Only)

14. Councillor Arden-Smith left the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

(For Information Only)

15. Committee continued its discussion regarding a personnel matter.

(For Information Only)

16. Councillor Hendriksen moved,  
Councillor Fequet seconded,

That Committee return to an open meeting at 5:30 p.m.

#### MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



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(For Information Only)

17. There was no business arising from the in camera session.
18. The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.