



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

Monday, November 10, 2025 at 12:05 p.m.

Report of a meeting held on Monday, November 10, 2025 at 12:05 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber. The following Committee members were in attendance:

Chair: Mayor B. Hendriksen,
Councillor S. Arden-Smith,
Councillor G. Cochrane,
Councillor R. Fequet,
Councillor R. Foote,
Councillor C. McGurk,
Councillor S. Payne, and
Councillor R. Warburton.

The following members of Administration staff were in attendance:

K. Thistle,
C. Caljouw,
D. Gillard,
C. Greencorn,
T. Mackenzie,
C. Saunders,
E. Thompson,
C. White, and
S. Jovic.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>
	(For Information Only)
1.	Mayor Warburton read the Opening Statement at the Special Council Meeting held immediately preceding this meeting.
	(For Information Only)
2.	There were no disclosures of conflict of interest.



(For Information Only)

3. Committee heard a presentation from Brian Patterson, a representative of Uban Systems Ltd., regarding Yellowknife Transportation Plan - Existing Conditions Interim Report.

(For Information Only)

4. Committee deferred a memorandum regarding whether to adopt for information the Climate Action Plan 2026-2036 as prepared, and direct Administration to use the plan for long-term decision making and investment in Climate change mitigation and adaptation to an upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting.

Committee noted that the Climate Action Plan ("the Plan") 2026-2036 replaces the Corporate and Community Energy Action Plan (the "CCEAP") 2015-2025 and is the City's first climate plan encompassing both mitigation and adaptation efforts to address climate change and negative impacts on the community. Action items will be brought forward through an implementation plan with budget and/or funding allocations in alignment with the schedule outlined in the Plan.

The review of the CCEAP has revealed the prior actions have led to a 20% decrease in Yellowknife's community GHG emissions from 2009 to 2023. This reduction resulted mainly from a decrease in air travel and decrease in emissions from residential buildings due to fuel switching for heating. However, our emissions are trending upwards from 2021 to 2023, with a 16% increase over two years. GHG emissions from off-road transportation i.e. air travel (40% or 108,195 tCO₂e), Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) buildings (24% or 64,026 tCO₂e) and on-road transportation (20% or 53,965 tCO₂e) represent the major contributing sectors to the City's 2023 Community GHG emissions estimates. Together, these three sources account for approximately 84% of the City's Community GHG emissions and approximately 89% of Community energy use. There is a long way to go to reach net-zero – a commitment made by both the federal government, through its *Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, and the GNWT.

Continuing with business-as-usual is not an option; substantial additional action is needed to put us on track. The forecast to 2050 shows a decrease in our emissions of 23% from 2023 which would put us nearly 200,000 tCO₂e over our net-zero target.

Yellowknife is experiencing the impacts of climate change. These include community-wide evacuations from wildfires, costly infrastructure damage due to permafrost thaw, and changes to our way of life and individual well-being. In the coming years, Yellowknife is expected to see increasingly warmer and shorter winters, more precipitation in the form of snow, further permafrost degradation, hotter and drier summers, more intense wildfires, and more extreme weather among other climate hazards. By proactively planning for climate change, we can be better prepared for, and have increased resiliency and capacity to respond to, the impacts of climate change – and save money down the road. Acting now will help prevent disruptions to our daily lives, service delivery, and economy, and keep Yellowknife safe for all.



The CCEAP included aspirational emissions reduction targets; the City has not met our own targets and are not on track to reach national and territorial commitments. This has been in part due to a lack of detailed, concrete actions within the plans and a failure to fund initiatives that would substantially reduce our emissions. The Plan, while it does not contain an overarching emissions reduction target – aside from a commitment to net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, has taken a new methodological approach. It outlines feasible and effective actions, qualitative measures for success, mechanisms to report progress and ensure accountability, and opportunities to create realistic but ambitious targets down the road. Budget 2026 includes money to begin the implementation and projects as identified in the Plan. In future years, funding and budget considerations will be required to support the Plan.

Council Strategic Direction/Resolution/Policy include:

Strategic Direction #1: People First

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| Focus Area 1.1 | <u>Reconciliation</u>
Continuing to nurture positive and respectful relations with Indigenous governments, organizations and peoples. |
| Focus Area 1.3 | <u>Liveable Community</u>
Supporting all residents to participate in the social fabric and physical space of our community. |
| Key Initiative 1.3.3 | Supporting design standards that are multi-modal including recognizing Yellowknife's advantages as a winter city. |
| Key Initiative 1.3.4 | Providing public transit that meets user needs. |
| Key Initiative 1.3.5 | Advocating for enhanced outreach and social support services. |
| Key Initiative 1.3.6 | Working with all partners towards a safe, supportive and compassionate community for all. |

Strategic Direction #2: Service Excellence

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| Focus Area 2.1 | <u>Asset Management</u>
Planning, implementing and maintaining assets to reliably, safely and cost effectively deliver services for current and future community needs. |
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Strategic Direction #3: Sustainable Future

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| Focus Area 3.1 | <u>Resilient Future</u> |
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	Enhancing Yellowknife as a great place to live, visit, work and play now and into the future.
Key Initiative 3.1.1	Advancing energy initiatives, including district energy options to energy retrofits.
Key Initiative 3.1.2	Implementing the Solid Waste Management Plan.
Focus Area 3.2	<u>Growth Readiness</u> Ensuring land development supports economic readiness and community priorities.
Key Initiative 3.2.2	Completing land development tools and strategies that support growth readiness.
Key Initiative 3.2.4	Sustaining infrastructure capacity for future growth.
Focus Area 3.3	<u>Robust Economy</u> Doing our part to stimulate and amplify economic development opportunities.
Key Initiative 3.3.4	Implementing the Food and Agriculture Strategy.
For Information Only	Administration presented the progress update on Climate Action Plan 2026-2036 at the June 24, 2025, Governance and Priorities Committee.

Applicable legislation, by-laws, studies, plans include:

1. *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*;
2. *Cities, Towns and Villages Act SNWT 2003, c.22*;
3. *GNWT 2019-2023 Climate Change Action Plan*¹;
4. *GNWT 2030 Energy Strategy*²;
5. Community Plan (2020), By-law No. 5007, as amended; and
6. Corporate and Community Energy Plan 2015-2025.

Plan development process

In fall 2024, the City officially launched the development of the Climate Action Plan and began working with a consultant, Stantec Consulting Ltd. Over the course of seven months, Stantec completed a literature review, produced two key background reports, and began the engagement process.

¹ https://www.gov.nt.ca/ecc/sites/ecc/files/resources/128-climate_change_ap_proof.pdf

² https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/sites/inf/files/resources/gnwt_inf_7272_energy_strategy_web-eng.pdf



Multiple public, stakeholder, and rightsholder engagement opportunities took place from December 2024 to March 2025. Strategies for engagement included invitation letters to Indigenous governments from the Mayor (3 sent), a public roundtable (8 attendees), a public survey (149 responses), and stakeholder meetings with NAKA Power, GNWT Energy, GNWT Environment and Climate Change, and several local NGOs including Ecology North, Alternatives North, and Seniors for Climate.

Based on the information collected from the engagement sessions, the City drafted actions for the Plan and completed a second round of engagement from April to July 2025. This round of engagement included rightsholder meetings with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and North Slave Métis Alliance, a public survey (56 responses), a public roundtable (20 attendees), a presentation to the True North Rotary Club, and stakeholder meetings with GNWT Energy, GNWT Environment and Climate Change, Arctic Energy Alliance, Yellowknife Community Garden Collective, and the Bottle Shop Recycling Depot. This phase of engagement informed revisions to the draft Plan.

City administration from various departments provided technical expertise throughout the development of the Plan and participated in targeted staff workshops.

Structure of the Plan

The first section of the Plan encompasses context for climate action in Yellowknife, including the results of the Energy GHG Emissions Inventory, the Climate Vulnerability Assessment, previous City energy plans, and alignment with other City, territorial, and federal plans and policies.

Next, is an outline of the plan development process and the vision and guiding principles. These principles, that build upon existing City approaches and Council's Strategic Directions 2023-2026, include:

- a) *Partnership-Driven Action*
- b) *Feasible, Measurable, and Impactful Projects*
- c) *Advocacy and Policy Support*
- d) *Community Engagement and Education*
- e) *Resilience and Adaptation*
- f) *Community Wellbeing and Social Capital*

The body of the Plan is made up of six themes, each with goals, strategies, and actions. The six major themes are:

- 1. Sustainable Transportation
- 2. Waste Management
- 3. Resilient and Efficient Buildings and Infrastructure
- 4. Responsible Land-Use and Planning
- 5. Governance and Accountability
- 6. Community Preparedness and Emergency Response



Actions within the Plan focus on both corporate (e.g., City-owned or operated) and community assets and include direct actions the City will take, opportunities to incentivize and educate residents, prospective partnerships with community groups or Indigenous governments, and areas to advocate for policy changes or resource-sharing from other levels of government.

Lastly, the Plan includes implementation processes that provide mechanisms to achieve the actions, timelines, and reporting requirements.

- **Energy & Green House Gas Emissions**

While this Plan does not provide a specific estimate of GHG emissions reductions to be expected through implementation, actions in the Plan were selected in part for their ability to directly reduce GHG emissions. Through end-use fuel switching, energy efficiency improvements, and energy source decarbonization, these actions are expected to reduce emissions and costs of electricity and fuel bills for the City and residents. The City will continue tracking GHG emissions throughout the implementation of the Plan.

- **Environmental**

Actions within the Plan are expected to have several benefits for ecosystem health. This includes maintaining, expanding, or improving green spaces, preserving our natural stormwater and sewage management capacity, increasing the longevity of landfill cells at the Solid Waste Facility, and improving air quality.

- **Public Safety**

Preparing our community members and adapting our infrastructure for the impacts of climate change inherently improves public safety. Actions within the Plan include increasing the fire resistance of buildings, FireSmart landscaping, educating residents on how to prepare for climate impacts, and increasing access to Better Air Facilities during smoke and extreme temperatures.

- **Traffic & Transportation**

One of six themes in the Plan is geared towards making transportation more sustainable. This includes increasing public transit services, enhancing active transportation infrastructure, and decarbonizing on-road vehicles – both personal vehicles and City fleet. Combined, these actions will reduce GHG emissions, reduce traffic congestion, and advance equity by increasing transportation options for the third of residents who do not have a drivers license in Yellowknife.

- **Cost of Living**

Several actions within the Plan may lead to reduced cost of living for residents in the long-term. For example, increasing local food production may reduce food insecurity, incentivizing developers to build energy efficient and resilient buildings lowers energy costs for future occupants, and retrofitting existing buildings reduces those costs for existing occupants. In addition, expanding public transit and increasing access to active



transportation may reduce the need for individuals to own, operate, and maintain private vehicles. Every effort should be made to ensure that Plan implementation does not result in cost-of-living increases in the short-term.

- Legislative

The *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act* establishes a legally binding commitment for the Government of Canada to reach net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. The Act also establishes a GHG emissions reduction target of 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030.

The GNWT has committed to reduce GHG emissions 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The GNWT is also in the process of developing an integrated adaptation and energy strategy expected to be released in Spring 2026.

- Aligning City Plans

Climate change affects all aspects of the City's operations and planning in some form, and therefore climate action must be a collaborative effort from all City departments and be integrated into all City plans. The Plan aims to align with and build upon existing City plans to streamline energy and emissions reductions and adaptation measures. Forthcoming plans, such as the Community Plan Comprehensive Update and the Transportation Plan, also provide an opportunity to incorporate a climate lens across departments. The Plan outlines avenues to build mitigation and adaptation efforts into these forthcoming plans.

- Financial

Related budget will be reviewed and allocated each year according to actions that are planned to be undertaken by responsible departments throughout Plan implementation. The amount required will be presented during annual budgeting process.

Committee noted that human-caused climate change poses serious risks to our infrastructure, natural environment, and human health and well-being. Addressing the causes of climate change requires that all levels of government take immediate action. Both the Government of Canada and the Government of Northwest Territories have already committed to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Making up roughly half of the territory's population, Yellowknife has a significant role to play reaching these goals.

The Plan hinges on partnership-driven action, primarily with the GNWT, local Indigenous governments, and community organizations, and was designed in part through engagement with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the North Slave Métis Alliance (**Focus Area 1.1**).

Seeking to advance equity and reconciliation, the Plan includes actions that support those most vulnerable to climate change, including unhoused people, tenants, the elderly, and low-income individuals, by reducing energy and food costs, increasing access to clean air in homes and in the community, and improving access to more affordable modes of transportation (**Focus Area 1.3**).



The Plan promotes responsible asset management through monitoring and budgeting for climate impacts and rethinking our design and procurement of new assets to ensure resilience to our changing climate going forward **(Focus area 2.1)**.

Finally, the Plan seeks to implement impactful solutions that reduce our emissions while enhancing resilience to climate change to make Yellowknife a healthy, resilient community for all, now and into the future **(Strategic Direction #3)**.

(For Information Only)

5. Councillor Arden-Smith left the meeting at 1:14 p.m.

(For Information Only)

6. Committee continued its discussion regarding a memorandum regarding whether to adopt for information the Climate Action Plan 2026-2036 as prepared, and direct Administration to use the plan for long-term decision making and investment in Climate change mitigation and adaptation.

(For Information Only)

7. In response to a question from Committee, Administration noted that they had conversations about Climate Action with ECC and GNWT regarding legislative policy and will maintain these dialogues. Administration undertook to provide a defined metric of success for prior plans or initiatives.
8. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.