

RESPONSE TO YELLOWKNIFE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RECOMMENDATIONS RE: COVID-19

Presented to: GOVERNANCE AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

APRIL 27, 2020



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Recommendation #1:

Invest some of the \$833,000 in the Downtown Development Reserve and some of the \$2.4 million from the Revitalization Initiative Reserve into a COVID-19 Relief Program. Members of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce's Business Resilience Working Group would be willing to work with the City of Yellowknife to determine the most efficient and effective solutions.

RESPONSE:

- the City's role in supporting economic resiliency in relation to the federal and territorial supports that have been made available will be explored
- review must include balancing possible short-term actions with the City's long-term economic plans

Recommendation #2: Provide interest-free deferral of property tax instalments scheduled for March through to December 31, 2020.

Recommendation #3: Provide interest-free deferral of water/wastewater payments for all businesses from March through to December 31, 2020.

RESPONSE:

- As of March 2020 no new late fees or non-sufficient funds (NSF) charges for utilities, wastewater and property taxes
- Practice will continue until further notice

Recommendation #4: Waive all development fees for April 1 to December 31, 2020.

Recommendation #5: Waive all business-related permit fees until December 31, 2020.

RESPONSE:

- City has limited financial resources
- legislatively required to adopt a balanced budget
- Budget 2020 was based on projected revenues which included penalties related to utility and property taxes, development and building permit fees, and business licence fees
- must continue to monitor the pandemic situation and its effect on the City's anticipated revenues and expenditures before further reductions can be considered

Recommendation #6: Transition all business licensing and permitting online by December 31, 2020.

RESPONSE:

- Permitting for many permits is available online (<https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/living-here/applications-forms-licenses-and-permits.asp>).
- Business licence permit applications are available online and completed forms can be e-mailed to the City for processing.
- Preliminary work has been done to provide business licensing services online, however it is difficult to commit to a timeline as current staffing arrangements both within the City and at our vendors make this a challenging time to introduce major process changes

Recommendation #7:

Work with the federal and territorial governments to develop a COVID-19 Commercial Rent Strategy for Yellowknife. This strategy should focus on providing rental relief for businesses who have been forced to close or are unable to generate revenue as a result of COVID-19.

RESPONSE:

The City would welcome the opportunity to work with the territorial and federal governments on a Commercial Rent Strategy



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Federal Recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Waive the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy programs 30% reduction in gross revenue requirement for any Northwest Territories businesses that have incurred losses as a result of COVID-19 and government-imposed restrictions.

Recommendation #2: Work with the Government of the Northwest Territories to develop a COVID-19 Commercial Rent Strategy for the Northwest Territories. This strategy should focus on providing rental relief for businesses who have been forced to close or are unable to generate revenue as a result of COVID-19.

RESPONSE:

The City provided a letter in support of the recommendations to the federal government by the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce on April 24, 2020.



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Territorial Recommendations:

Seven recommendations were made to the Government of the Northwest Territories by the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce to address the effects of COVID-19 on the business community.

RESPONSE:

The City supports the advocacy work of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and encourages the territorial government to review and implement recommendations as possible.



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ADDITIONAL CITY ACTIONS

(i) Infrastructure Investments

The City will continue with core infrastructure projects such as roads, utilities, and other infrastructure to support future growth.

(ii) Employment

Working within the parameters of physical distancing, the City has been able to maintain its full-time staff complement by providing employees with the ability to work from home, adjusting work hours and tasks, and creating safe work practices.



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ADDITIONAL CITY ACTIONS

(iii) Suspension of Parking Meter Fines

As part of the City's response to Covid-19, the City has stopped enforcement of parking meters in the downtown business area until further notice.

(iv) Free Transit

Transit has been provided to residents free of charge since March 2020.

(v) Letter of Support

The City provided a letter in support of the recommendations made by the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce to the federal government

NEXT STEPS

- Respond to Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce letter dated April 9, 2020
- Continue to work with Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce
- Continue to work with territorial and federal partners

Questions?



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