



Community Services Standing Committee Meeting

MINUTES

The Community Services Standing Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, April 8th, 2025 @ 6:30 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Cr. Benwell, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Bathe, D/M Keizer, Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette
Regrets: Cr. Heaton and Cr. Tuckey
Staff Present: Tracy Thomas, Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Victoria Urquhart, acting Director of Community Services

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fergusson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and handed the chair to Cr. Karasiuk. Cr. Karasiuk read the acknowledgment of First Nations.

B. REVIEW

a. Agenda

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

PASSED

b. Minutes

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette

Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That the minutes from the Community Services Standing Committee Meeting on March 11th, 2025, be adopted as presented.

c. Vision and Values

d. Declaration of Financial Interest

C. DELEGATION

a. Aurora Research Institute, Aurora College – Emily Gomes-Szoke

Andreanna Robitaille presented for Emily due to technical issues. She is a trained nurse and social scientist, currently working as a Nursing Instructor at Aurora College in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and as a health researcher. Andreanna has over 15 years of experience working with Nunavik communities in northern Quebec and has been living and working in the Northwest Territories for the past four years.

She is the Research Coordinator and Principal Investigator of the "Spark Inspiration" project, a health research initiative funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Aurora Research Institute's Northern Families Health Research Unit. The project began in 2023 and focuses on encouraging northern youth, particularly students from grades 8 to 12, to pursue careers in health and social services within the Northwest Territories.



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The project responds to critical staffing shortages in healthcare across Canada, particularly in the North, and aims to address the underrepresentation of Indigenous and northern residents within the healthcare workforce.

The "Spark Inspiration" project involves several key components:

- Focus groups and engagement with high school youth.
- Wisdom circles and discussions with Elders.
- Interviews with northerners currently working or studying in health and social services.
- Exploration of barriers and supports for youth pursuing healthcare careers.

The research team includes members from Aurora Research Institute, Indigenous scholars, Elders, community leaders, and Indigenous governments. To date, the project has engaged with more than 60 participants from communities including Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Fort Resolution, and Behchokò. The team is working to expand partnerships with additional communities.

Andreanna recently met with local leaders, including Deputy Mayor Mike Keizer, as well as representatives from the Northwest Territories Association of Communities, to share information about the project and seek guidance on conducting the research respectfully and collaboratively. The team is scheduled to be in Fort Smith from April 22 to April 28, 2025, with plans to visit the high school, participate in the Trade Show at the Aurora College booth, and continue building community relationships.

Andreanna emphasized the team's openness to feedback, ideas, or requests from the community and council, such as providing briefing notes or returning to share project findings in the future.

D. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. Community Services Director's Report for March

Mayor Fergusson expressed appreciation for Town staff's significant efforts in making the recent Frolics event a success, recognizing the extensive overtime, setup, and support provided across multiple venues.

Deputy Mayor Keizer acknowledged the Aquatics update, noting community excitement about the reopening and the importance of adequate staffing to maximize facility use. He praised the maintenance work and encouraged continued focus on staffing to ensure a smooth launch. SAO Thomas noted that this was an important call out to the community that there was a shortage of lifeguards and the Town provided training for this.

Mayor Fergusson also raised the possibility of early ice installation at the arena in anticipation of Arctic Winter Games tryouts this fall and asked Administration to explore the feasibility of a September timeline.

She further inquired about the banned books featured at the library. SAO Thomas explained the display aimed to highlight titles banned in other parts of Canada and confirmed all books remain available for checkout locally.

E. ADMINISTRATION

a. Briefing Note – Donation Recipients from 2018-2024



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SAO Thomas explained that the report was prepared in response to Council's request for a list of previously approved donations. She noted that recurring events like Frolics are now incorporated into the regular budget, with \$4,500 set aside for ad hoc applications. The report provides historical context but is not a comprehensive account of all Town contributions.

Councillor Couvrette recommended using the term "contributions" instead of "donations" to more accurately reflect the Town's discretionary financial support for community groups. He suggested the report be updated to include regular contributions to organizations such as the Northern Life Museum, NACC, the Ski Club, and the Golf Club to ensure clarity and transparency for both Council and the public.

Deputy Mayor Keizer asked for clarification on the variation in donation amounts. Mayor Fergusson explained that increases in certain years—such as the jump to \$29,000—were due to reallocating funds from events that were cancelled during the evacuation year. For example, funds normally designated for fireworks or other affected events were redirected to other community needs. She also noted that some contributions, like for Treaty Days, were one-time occurrences.

SAO Thomas emphasized that the briefing note was created specifically to address Council's request for historical donation information, particularly to inform budgeting for the ad hoc fund. She clarified it was not meant to cover all budget lines or ongoing contributions, and that some changes in how funds were managed in previous years—such as a temporary removal and reinstatement as budgeted line items—were based on recommendations from the former Director of Community Services.

b. Briefing Note – Acceptance of Final Organizational Review Report

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council accept the final Organizational Review Report prepared by Western Management Consultants as a strategic framework to guide ongoing organizational and governance improvements;

And that Administration be directed to use the report to inform future decisions related to budgeting, staffing, service delivery, and operational planning, with actions to be undertaken incrementally and within the limits of available resources and internal capacity.

PASSED

SAO Thomas provided an update on the revised report developed by the steering committee following a review of the initial draft. The final version incorporates identified changes and outlines nine key priorities and recommendations, which have been reviewed and approved. She emphasized that while the recommendations are strong and align with expectations, their success depends on appropriate human and financial resourcing. Implementation will need to be phased in over multiple budget cycles, as full execution is not feasible within the first year. SAO Thomas stressed the importance of careful planning to ensure the recommendations are effectively carried out over time.

c. Briefing Note – GNWT Cannabis Retail Licensing – Upcoming RFP Process

SAO Thomas shared that she and D/M Keizer recently met with Kim Wilkins, Director of Liquor and Cannabis Operations, to discuss an upcoming Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new cannabis store operator. The RFP will be distributed to Council once it's released. Kim Wilkins informed them that the new operator of the liquor store will not have a cannabis retail license. She also mentioned that several individuals had already shown interest in the opportunity. Additionally, Wilkins shared that the annual retail gross for this type of



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business is around \$1 million, with a profit of approximately \$250,000. Thus indicating sufficient demand for retail services.

F. OTHER BUSINESS

G. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Cr. Heaton and Cr. Tuckey be excused from the Community Services Standing Committee Meeting on April 8th.

PASSED

H. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Community Services Standing Committee Meeting will be on May 13th, 2025.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Bathe

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:35 pm.