

Update: Northern Relations

Initiative Title:	Northern Relations
City Council Lead(s):	Mayor D. Iveson, Councillor T. Caterina, Councillor E. Gibbons
Department Lead(s):	Sustainable Development, Gary Klassen/Paul Ross

Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term

Objective:

History and geography have forged links between Edmonton and northern communities that are unique compared with many other southern urban centres. Connections and relationships are found across a wide variety of sectors, including healthcare, social services, education and research, tourism, arts and culture, and a range of business lines. As a two-way hub for exchange between southern Canada and the North, over the years we have built a strong foundation, developed our competitive advantage, and created enduring partnerships.

The Edmonton Northern Partnership (“The Partnership”) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, City of Edmonton, University of Alberta, and Edmonton International Airport. Its vision is to build and strengthen committed relationships between Edmonton and northern communities to help foster shared economic, social, and cultural prosperity. Its vision is to act as a catalyst for relationship building through information gathering and sharing; fostering new connections and strengthening existing relationships; and coordinating joint projects and initiatives.

Note: The City of Edmonton is one of five members of the Edmonton Northern Partnership which was initially called the “Northern/Circumpolar Secretariat”. The other members will report separately to their organizations’ respective governance bodies on their individual northern relations activities. The update below is focused on those activities carried out by the City of Edmonton and collectively by the Edmonton Northern Partnership.

Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of April 2017:

Overview

- The City of Edmonton’s funding contribution to the Partnership was approved in March 2015, based on a three-year business plan (2015-2017). The funding contribution for 2017 is \$62,000. The City of Edmonton’s funding contribution in 2016 was \$37,750. The differences in year-over-year funding is to align with the contributions of partner organizations.

- A Memorandum of Understanding between the five partners became effective November 4, 2015.
- The Chair of the Partnership rotates each year. Roger Epp, Director of UAlberta North, serves as the Chair of the Partnership in 2017. Janet Riopel, President & CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, served as Chair of the Partnership in 2016. Glen Vanstone, Vice President, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation will serve as the Chair in 2018. Edmonton International Airport will designate a Chair in 2019, and the City of Edmonton in 2020.
- A Manager, Edmonton Northern Partnership was hired on a part-time basis in September 2015 to support the day-to-day operations and work of the Partnership. The Manager resigned from this position in November 2016. A new Manager was hired in January 2017. This person left the position in March 2017.

Ongoing Activities

- An Air Service and Tourism Working Group has met on several occasions and brought together representatives from the Government of Northwest Territories, Northwest Territories Tourism, Edmonton Tourism, and Edmonton International Airport. The Working Group has done extensive analysis of air service connections between Edmonton and the North to identify opportunities to debottleneck and serve new markets. Joint summer and winter tour itineraries have also been developed and are being marketed at international travel trade shows.
- Since January 2016, the Partnership has been supporting the organizational development of Inuit Edmontonmiut – a community association for Edmonton's Inuit community.
- Since January 2016, one member representative of the Partnership – UAlberta North Director Roger Epp – and the Partnership's Manager have served on the WinterCity Advisory Council and WinterCity Shakeup Planning Committee, with the aim of improving marketing in the territories and integrating northern speakers into the program. During the 2017 conference several aspects of the program included focus on the territories.
- Since January 2016, the Partners meet on a monthly basis to share updates regarding areas of common interest with respect to the north, and to plan and coordinate partner specific and collective Partnership work. The ongoing interactions between partners has created new conversations regarding opportunities for alignment and collaboration with respect to northern relationships.

Specific Activities

- From September 7-9, 2016, a delegation of the Partnership's representatives attended the Opportunities North conference in Yellowknife. This included a representative from the City of Edmonton. This event is part of an annual conference series that rotates between Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Edmonton, and is led by the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Edmonton Chambers of Commerce. In addition to side meetings with counterparts, the delegation participated in the event's trade show, had several speaking opportunities as part of the conference program, and hosted a reception for conference participants,

- local officials, and local University of Alberta alumni. The delegation advanced the Partnership's goals, and resulted in both numerous new relationships, and an increased awareness of the Partnership.
- On October 6, 2016, the Partnership held a strategic planning workshop during which it confirmed its vision, mission and identified 2017 goals. These goals include: undertaking a mission to Yellowknife and Whitehorse; hosting a successful Opportunities North conference in Edmonton in September 2017; and, developing a proof of connectivity tool to ensure that relationships built through the partnership are leveraged and utilized most effectively to demonstrate value of the Partnership.
 - On November 7, 2016, the Partnership met with the new Assistant Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Trade, Cynthia Farmer, to discuss the Partnership's work and connections to the Province of Alberta.
 - On December 8, 2016, the Partnership coordinated a meeting with the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce in Edmonton to discuss business, social and cultural connections.
 - From February 23-25, 2017, the Partnership participated in a Mayor-led mission to Yellowknife and Whitehorse. Among those who attended were Mayor Don Iveson and Councillor Ed Gibbons, delegates from each of the Partnership's respective organizations, and twenty business and community leaders from a variety of sectors. The Partnership hosted a public discussion and luncheon with Mayor Don Iveson and Mayor Dan Curtis in Whitehorse on February 24 and with Mayor Don Iveson and Mayor Mark Heyck in Yellowknife on February 25. A number of sector-focused meetings took place during the mission. City Administration played a significant lead role in planning and executing the Mayor's mission. Mayor Heyck indicated interest in creating a formal body in Yellowknife to respond and work with the Partnership. The mission advanced the Partnership's goals, and resulted in both numerous new relationships, and an increased awareness of the Partnership.
 - On April 20, 2017, the Partnership participated in the University of Alberta's public forum discussion on Community Engagement, Content and Connectivity in the North.

Future Steps:

- The Partnership is co-organizing the Opportunities North conference in Edmonton from September 12-15, 2017. Participation will include a trade show booth, reception, and the integration of Edmonton speakers into the program. Opportunities for complementary sessions and roundtables on tourism, exports, business and reconciliation, health, and emerging economies are being planned by the Partnership. City Administration is working with the City Administrations in Yellowknife and Whitehorse to advance a number of activities during the conference.
- The Partnership is currently drafting a Request for Proposals to hire an external consultant to undertake the duties associated with the Manager position. The Partnership intends to hire a contractor by the end of June 2017 to undertake Manager associated duties through to the end of 2017. Over the next few months, the Partnership will be evaluating the best approach to move forward.

Evaluation

The Partnership has advanced several of its goals over this reporting period and continues to make progress in demonstrating the value of a Partnership model to address shared goals and outcomes with respect to northern relations. The Memorandum of Understanding between the five Partners and the three-year business plan provides the time necessary for the Partnership to mature and demonstrate continued value to each respective organization.

Administration recommends that the initiative should continue.