

Council moves Culture Services Delivery and Governance Review to public feedback stage

At their Feb. 11 meeting, City Council directed staff to begin community consultation for the draft Culture Services Delivery and Governance Review.

In their report to Council, staff explained that the purpose of the Review is to evaluate the overall delivery of culture services in Abbotsford in order to find strategic ways to enhance these services for the community. At this stage of the Review, four themes — Enhance Heritage Services in Abbotsford, Reconsider Cultural Partnerships, Invest in Cultural Spaces, and Review Culture-Friendly Municipal Policies and Services — have been identified and further developed to include specific projects with detailed plans including estimated timelines, community engagement points and financial considerations.

These themes were developed around the following principles:

- Strategically enhancing cultural service delivery for the community with a focus on increasing support for less-established service areas
- Strengthening cultural partnerships and building community capacity
- Leveraging existing planning processes and strategies for cultural facility and infrastructure planning
- Maximizing the impact of City investment through external funding and partnership opportunities

Council and community input on the Review will inform the creation of the Final Review, which will further develop the four themes and serve as a guide for the implementation of the Review.

Council approves request for UBCM emergency preparedness funding

At their Feb. 25 meeting, City Council directed staff to proceed with making an application for \$23,849.52 in grant funding from the Union of BC Municipalities 2025 Community Emergency Preparedness Fund to support the ongoing training and development of the City's Emergency Support Services (ESS) team.

In their report to Council, staff note that Abbotsford is recognized as a leader in ESS response, and that this funding would enhance our response to a disaster in our community and in neighbouring communities.

This training would include six ESS responders attending a provincial conference in Prince George, hosting a full-scale ESS response exercise, and providing enhanced training to extended ESS volunteers.

The funding would also cover the purchase of two cargo trailer covers and hitch locks for the ESS response trailers when they are parked outside during the impending Fire Hall 6 renovations, as well as provide team gear for the first response ESS team, and volunteer appreciation and recognition.

An effective, well-trained ESS response team provides front-line support to our community in any disaster at any level. Each year in Abbotsford the ESS team supports on average 20 residential fires and at times more than 800 residents in response to calls for support services.



Council reviews City’s 2024 investment performance

At their Feb. 25 meeting, City Council reviewed the City’s 2024 investment performance, which brought in \$6.7 million more than expected (\$39.4 million versus \$32.7 million) thanks to higher yields and higher than planned cash and investment balances. This represents a 4.86 per cent weighted average rate of return across all cash and investment holdings compared to the budgeted return of 4.44 per cent.

In their report to Council, staff explain one factor that typically drives this kind of investment performance is the average amount of funds invested. For 2024, cash and investment balances averaged \$72 million more than budgeted (\$811 million versus \$739 million), resulting in \$3.5 million in investment income.

The other factor is the available rates of return on cash and cash equivalent investments. This pushed the actual weighted average rate of return to exceed budgeted return by 0.42 per cent, resulting in investment income of \$3.2 million.

The City’s investment structure will be largely maintained throughout 2025.



Council agrees to host 2025 BC Culture Days launch event

At their Feb. 11 meeting, City Council accepted the invitation to host the 2025 BC Culture Days launch event in Abbotsford in September.

The invitation came from the Society to Bridge Arts and Community, the organization that supports and administers BC Culture Days, and includes a \$5,000 grant to help fund the event and other Culture Days programming. In their report, staff said the City of Abbotsford was selected in recognition of its growing success in cultural programming and community engagement and recommend the Reach Gallery Museum as a venue.

BC Culture Days takes place from Sept. 19 to Oct. 12, and the launch event will be scheduled for the opening weekend.

Last year Abbotsford’s Culture Days program included 23 events and activities hosted across the community, including artist-led workshops, cultural presentations and live performances.

