

# Calgary SAVE and Edmonton Reimagine Services Review

## ISSUE

Through the City of Saskatoon's Continuous Improvement initiatives and culture, the Administration is always looking for opportunities to improve efficiencies and find savings. The Calgary SAVE program and Edmonton Reimagine Services Review provided an opportunity to review what other municipalities are targeting to improve efficiencies and to evaluate if there are any recommendations Saskatoon can learn from or implement.

## BACKGROUND

During the 2022/2023 Preliminary Business Plan and Budget Deliberations on November 29, 2021 City Council considered a report entitled, "Budgetary Management Programs in Selected Cities" and resolved;

"That the Administration report with an itemized examination of the proposals in Calgary's SAVE program and Edmonton's Reimagine Services program with an analysis of the various options they implemented, or didn't implement, to reduce cost, and recommendations on what we can learn from their work"

## CURRENT STATUS

In 2005, Saskatoon City Council adopted a resolution that aimed to increase the corporation's productivity and efficiency. City Council also instructed Administration to report annually on efficiencies implemented in the previous year. This direction was further embedded into the organization in 2013 through the City's Continuous Improvement (CI) Strategy, which was included in the City's first 10-year Strategic Plan.

Specifically, the CI Strategy focuses on the use of innovative and creative means to support workplace efficiencies and provide the best possible services to residents, resulting in potential savings to the corporation and taxpayers over time. The Strategy balances this by focusing on improving effectiveness and efficiency to help the City deliver affordable and sustainable programs that support sustainable growth and the quality of life in Saskatoon.

To chronicle these efforts, Saskatoon started formally producing an annual report called Service, Savings and Sustainability (SSS) in 2014. According to the City of Saskatoon's 2021 SSS Annual Report, an estimated \$850,000 in operational savings were realized in 2020. In the absence of these savings, the 2020 property tax increase would be approximately 0.4 percentage points higher than adopted, all things equal. Since 2013, work under the CI Strategy has identified more than \$400 million (nominal) in reduced expenditures, deferred costs, time savings, and additional revenues. In the absence of such a program, it is anticipated that the City of Saskatoon's fiscal circumstances, programs, services, and quality of life would be substantially different than it is today.

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

In November 2019, Calgary’s City Council directed its Administration to find internal savings through a program originally called the Strategy for Improving Service Value, later renamed as “Solutions for Achieving Value and Excellence” (SAVE) in 2021. The purpose of SAVE is to target a reduction in operating budgets of \$24 million in 2021 and \$50 million in 2022. These targeted amounts are equivalent to a zero percent (or less) property tax increase in 2021 and 2022 as part of the City’s 2019-2022 multi-year budget, known as the “One Calgary 2019-2022 Service Plans and Budgets.”

Like Saskatoon and Calgary, the City of Edmonton implemented a formal expenditure management program to help reduce its proposed budgetary property tax increases. According to the City of Edmonton, “in July 2020, it committed ‘to bold and decisive actions’ in managing its finances during a time of uncertainty.” To that end, they adopted a service review program, called “Reimagine Services” for its five largest budgeted service areas:

- Facility Management and Maintenance;
- Fire Rescue Services;
- Fleet Management and Maintenance;
- Park and Open Space Access; and
- Recreational and Sport Facility Access/Recreation and Cultural Programming.

These service areas were selected because they were deemed to have the greatest cost-saving or revenue-generating potential. To perform this review, the City of Edmonton engaged an external consultant to develop business cases and then the Administration proposed ideas to City Council.

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 include a comprehensive overview of the initiatives that Calgary and Edmonton City Council’s have directed their respective administrations to proceed with. Saskatoon Administration has gone through each individual initiative and provided comments. A summary of these comments can be found below:

	Administration will report back regarding the initiative	Initiative already underway in Saskatoon. Council direction would be required for more information or to alter our current path.	Council Direction would be required to investigate this further.	Not Applicable
Calgary	1	14	4	3
Edmonton	1	9	6	1
Total	2	23	10	4

As outlined in the table and based on the overviews provided, many initiatives identified by the Calgary Save and Edmonton Reimagine Services programs are already underway in some capacity at the City of Saskatoon. While there is a significant

amount of information publicly available regarding these programs, the information regarding the specific initiatives are summarized for brevity. Although Administration has completed as thorough review as possible, there may be nuances between Saskatoon's current approach and Calgary and Edmonton's that make an apples-to-apples comparison difficult.

There are also ten initiatives identified that are not currently underway, each of which would require City Council direction to investigate further. For example, these include initiatives such as expanding paid parking to parks throughout the City, outsourcing golf course operations, and changes to community partnership funding.

As noted in each Appendix, Administration identified two initiatives that will be further investigated and reported upon. The first is a review regarding the current property information report charges (Tax Certificates, Assessment Information, etc.) which at first glance appear to be significantly under what other municipalities are charging. The second, is the reporting on not-for-profit and service group lease rates, which was already underway based on previous City Council direction.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Calgary Save Initiatives and Comments
2. Edmonton Reimagine Services Initiatives and Comments

### **REPORT APPROVAL**

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