

# WATSON

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**Monday, February 1st, 2021**  
**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:30 A.M.**

On Monday, February 1st, 2021, Mayoral Candidate Cheryll Watson virtually opened her campaign office located in the heart of Downtown Edmonton on 10117 Jasper. Watson stated “we know and understand how critical a thriving downtown is for our economy, and city.”

In support of her campaign vision: A City That Works, she went on to release a new brand and website Monday morning. “The number one reason I decided to campaign to become your Mayor is to help build a City That Works - for all of us. A city that works has a number of different meanings to me... from the basics (like being able to use debit to buy a transit ticket) to the aspirational (a smart-city leading in innovation and technology)” said Watson.

Along with the campaign office opening, Watson announced one of her first policy commitments: the creation of a Chief Accountability Officer. The full policy can be found below and will be available on her website <https://www.cheryllwatson.ca>

## **The Problem**

“A city that works” has a number of different meanings, from the basics like being able to tap a phone or a card to ride transit, to the aspirational, a smart-city leading in innovation and technology.

- A city can work *for you*, like easy commutes and 15min communities
- A city can work *with you*, like enabling our local small businesses to sell to our municipality
- A city can *work functionally*, like integrating our transportation systems and regionalizing our transit
- A city can *work for all of us*, like coming from a place of “yes”

Effectively leading a city that works starts with a Council that works. Both during my time at Innovate Edmonton when I would participate in Committee and Council meetings to today when I continue to attend them virtually, I notice that far too much time, energy and taxpayer money is spent exploring ideas that other cities have already researched and implemented. We need to embrace their learnings.

The feeling that we spin our wheels wasting time on unnecessary pilot projects or chasing ideas that lack common sense is something I have heard time and again from the hundreds of conversations I've had with Edmontonians since I announced my Mayoral intentions last year. On top of this, members of Council have directed work that isn't aligned with where we, as Edmontonians, have said we want to go. Sometimes it goes against the interests of our community partners, be they local businesses, hardworking non-profits, or other orders of government.

Finally, it's important that we recognize that institutional knowledge is one of our city's most important assets. We have a new City Manager and are about to welcome a number of brand-new Council members. In order for them to be effective early will require historical knowledge of things we've tried before or are already doing.

The bottom line is that we're wasting time, and other cities are outpacing us.

### **The Policy**

As Mayor, I will lead a collaborative, aligned council. I commit to ensuring our debates, motions, and inquiries are based on the principles of our own planning. The City Plan is our guiding document. We've gotten off course on too many occasions and lost the thread on what to care about and spend time on being pulled in too many directions. While individual Councillors can vote as they like, as Mayor I will hold Council and City Administration accountable to our defined goals and objectives maintaining focus.

When elected, I will establish a CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER, independent of City Administration, who will rapidly vet and inform any motions or work directed by City Council.

This experienced City Builder will advise Council of previous explorations of the topic, how other cities have tackled the problem, whether it aligns with Edmonton's vision and values, and whether it serves to strengthen our partnerships. They will keep us focused on the bold action we need to take to recover from COVID-19, to align with our city plan, address our biggest challenges such as houselessness and continue building a city that retains and attracts the best talent in the world.

Specifically, this independent role would:

- Be responsible for advising Council and Mayor if the motion/inquiry or line of work has been explored before, advising of the results of past exploration and an assessment of if conditions/context has changed sufficiently to warrant another examination. They would also complete a preliminary jurisdictional scan and advise how other Cities have answered the question or tackled the issue.
- This position would sit outside of Administration (similar to the Office of the City Auditor or the Office of the Integrity Commissioner) and provide non-binding advice to members of Council.

- Advise how motions/inquiries/work aligns with stated values, visions and plans as well as considerations for partnerships with other orders of government/regional partners/post secondaries/non-profits/business and first nations communities.
- Suggest changes or amendments to the motion/inquiry/approach to mitigate and align.
- Be responsible for tracking the full time and money cost of reports and council directed work to ensure the focused and disciplined expenditure of energy and resources.

## **The Outcome**

The work Council directs is focused and aligned with the vision and goals of the City Plan and ConnectEdmonton. It strengthens our partnerships with other orders of government, the region, non profit/post secondary sector, first nations and our business communities.

We no longer spend time reopening and examining things we have already done in the past, unless the context has changed enough to warrant it. We stop trying to “reinvent the wheel” and can take the lessons from other cities on the front end.

All Council directed work is clearly costed out, so we know exactly how much time and money was spent on preparing reports and doing work that diverged from approved work plans. This rigor and accountability will reduce the amount of unnecessary motions/reports and allow Council and Admin to apply limited taxpayer resources more effectively.

A specific and impactful action a mayor can take is setting the tone by aligning and focusing council from the top. This is an innovative solution that drives real results and maximizes the City’s use of your tax dollars and the valuable time of city staff and community partners. This is the start to building a City that Works.

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While media were invited to attend this announcement in person (safely following COVID rules), Cheryll is available to comment or answer questions at your earliest request.

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