

Strathcona County

2024 Audit Plan

September 26, 2024





Ernst & Young LLP
EPCOR Tower
10423 – 101 Street, Suite 1400
Edmonton, AB T5H 0E7

Tel: +1 780 423 5811
Fax: +1 780 428 8977
ey.com

September 26, 2024

**Mayor and Council
Strathcona County**

Dear Members of Council (“those charged with governance”),

We are providing information related to the current year audit plan for Strathcona County [the “County”]. This document outlines the scope of our services and the key considerations that will affect the 2024 audit.

The audit is designed to express an opinion on the 2024 consolidated financial statements. We are currently completing the planning phase of our audit and have aligned our procedures to consider the County’s current and emerging business risks and evaluate those that could materially affect the consolidated financial statements.

We appreciate that Strathcona County selected Ernst & Young to perform its 2024 audit and are committed to executing an audit that is responsive to your needs and maximizes audit effectiveness, delivering the high quality you expect in the most efficient manner possible.

Very truly yours,

Ernst & Young LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants
Robert M. Jolley, CPA, CA
Services provided through Robert Jolley Professional Corporation

2024 EY Services

At the end of the engagement we will express opinions on:

- The consolidated financial statements of Strathcona County prepared in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (“PSAS”);
- The Financial Information Return for the year ended December 31, 2024, prepared for Alberta Municipal Affairs in accordance with Section 277 of the Municipal Government Act;
- The County’s compliance with the Family and Community Support Services Act; and
- The County’s compliance with the Family Resource Network Operational Grant Agreement.

In addition, we will report on the agreed upon procedures on the annual contributions to the Local Authorities Pension Plan (“LAPP”) and the APEX Pension Plan for 2024.

Issue a written communication to:

- Management and those charged with governance describing significant deficiencies in internal control or other internal control deficiencies that merit management’s attention identified during our audit, should any be noted.
- Those charged with governance that comments on the results of the audit and addresses matters that we are required to communicate under our professional standards.

Responsibility for financial statements

Management's responsibility for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in accordance with PSAS and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements based on our audit. We will conduct our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on our judgment, including the assessment of risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, we will consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

The detailed terms of our engagements are outlined in our audit engagement letters, which were signed by Ms. Jennifer Cannon, Chief Financial Officer & Associate Commissioner, Corporate Services, and other key management personnel in the affected areas, and are available on request.

Summary of audit approach

For purposes of the audit of the consolidated financial statements, our audit scope is developed after considering the inherent and control risks and the effectiveness of the County's internal controls. A variety of factors are considered when establishing the audit scope including size, specific risks, the volumes and types of transactions processed, changes in the business environment, and other factors.

We distinguish between the following strategies:

- Identify and evaluate controls at the transactions level (controls strategy)
- Do not identify and evaluate such controls (substantive strategy)

Audit approach for 2024

- All accounts of the County were determined to be significant based on preliminary materiality determinations except for the following:
 - development levies and charges, inventories of materials and supplies and prepaid expenses were determined to be insignificant due to their low dollar value and their low susceptibility to material misstatement.
 - property tax receivable, investment interest receivable, deposit liabilities, long term debt and accumulated surplus were determined to be limited risk due to factors such as low annual activity and the non-complex nature of transactions. We will still continue to perform full audit procedures on these accounts.
- Using our cumulative knowledge of the County's business, including the results of audit procedures in prior years and the knowledge gained from the current year's procedures that have been completed, we have established that a fully substantive strategy will yield the most efficient audit approach.

Materiality

- At the conclusion of the audit, we formulate our opinion on the consolidated financial statements of the County as to their fair presentation in all material respects in accordance with PSAS. Our estimation of planning materiality requires professional judgment and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations.
- Based on the 2024 budget and the County's August 31, 2024 results, we estimate the materiality for the audit of the 2024 consolidated financial statements to be \$13,000,000, which represents 3% of expected expenditures for the year ended December 31, 2024.
- The 2024 preliminary materiality level will be reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout our 2024 audit. Should actual results vary significantly from those forecast, the materiality level may be adjusted in order to recognize this change in circumstances.


Audit timetable

Timeline



- Interim fieldwork:
November 4 to November 8, 2024
- Year-end fieldwork:
March 3 to March 21, 2025
- Approval of consolidated financial statements and report to Council:
April 2025

Areas of emphasis



Our audit procedures emphasize testing areas with the highest risk of misstatement (e.g., those accounts, contracts, processes or transactions where we believe there is the greatest risk of material misstatement to the consolidated financial statements, whether due to error or fraud, including disclosure items). We consider the effects of current market risk factors on the County, and emphasis is also placed on those areas requiring difficult, subjective, or complex determinations by management with heightened professional skepticism. Accordingly, our audit procedures are planned to focus on the following areas:

Topic	Significance	Considerations
<p><i>Revenue recognition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxation revenue is recorded at the time the tax rates are authorized by County Council and the tax notices are issued. • Government transfers are recognized in revenue when they are authorized and when eligibility criteria have been met. Under certain circumstances, some agreements' criteria may create a deferred revenue liability which is recognized into revenue when criteria are met. • Development charges must be used for specific purposes and are deferred and recognized in revenue in the period in which the resources are used for the specific purpose(s). • When appropriate, fees and user charges are deferred and recognized into revenue in the period in which the resources are used for the specified purpose(s). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the County's method for recognizing revenue and validate whether it is consistent with the prior year, your policies, the related accounting standards and common practice. • We will update our understanding of the flow of transactions for taxation revenues, government transfer revenues, development charge revenues & fees, and user charge revenues. • We will perform analytics over the main revenue streams to determine the appropriateness of revenue recognized in the year and if it is within expectation. • We will confirm significant grant revenues. • We will ensure that tax revenue is calculated based on tax rates approved by County Council. • We will perform detailed testing over a sample of revenue transactions to ensure they were correctly recorded and accounted for.

Areas of emphasis (continued)

Topic	Significance	Considerations
<p><i>Adoption of new accounting standards</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County will be adopting the following new standards effective January 1, 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PS3160 Public Private Partnerships PS3400 Revenue Public Sector Guideline 8, Purchased Intangibles 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on work completed to date, the standards will not have a significant impact on the County's consolidated financial statements.
<p><i>Tangible capital assets</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tangible capital assets are recorded at cost, which includes amounts that are directly attributable to the acquisition, construction, development, or betterment of an asset. The costs, less residual value of the tangible capital assets, excluding land, are amortized on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives. Tangible capital assets include asset retirement obligations associated with assets that are in productive use. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will update our understanding of the flow of transactions for the tangible capital asset process. We will review the continuity schedule and test all material additions, transfers, disposals and amortization of tangible capital assets. We will review the write-down analysis performed on the tangible capital assets balance if/when conditions indicate that a tangible capital asset no longer contributes to the County's ability to provide goods or services, or that the value of future economic benefits associated with the tangible capital asset is less than its net book value. We will audit management's analysis of asset retirement obligations in the current year, including any changes to prior year assumptions and calculations and any new obligations arising during the year.

Areas of emphasis (continued)

Topic	Significance	Considerations
<p><i>Expenses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with PSAS, expenses must be recorded in the period in which they are incurred, not in the period in which cash is paid. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review the County's method for recognizing expenses and validate whether it is consistent with the prior year, your policies, the related accounting standards and common practice. We will update our understanding the flow of transactions for expenses. We will perform detailed testing over a sample of expenses to ensure they are correctly recorded. We will perform cut-off procedures to gain comfort over completeness of expenses and to ensure expenses are recorded in the appropriate period.
<p><i>Investments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County values investments at amortized cost less amounts written off to reflect a permanent decline in value. If fair value of investments is less than cost, the County must assess whether the impairment is considered other-than-temporary and, if so, recognize the other-than-temporary impairment in the statement of operations. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will conduct substantive procedures on the amortized cost of the investments and perform confirmation procedures to verify the current market value of the investments. Any significant difference between the market value of the investments and their book value will be assessed for impairment to determine whether the decline in value is other-than-temporary.

Fraud considerations and risk of management override

We are responsible for planning and performing the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.

Our audit procedures will include brainstorming, gathering information to facilitate the identification of fraud risks and performing procedures in the areas where fraud risks are identified including performing procedures required by our professional standards, designed to address the risk of management override (including examining journal entries, reviewing accounting estimates and evaluating the business rationale of significant unusual transactions).

We evaluate the risk of management override using the fraud triangle which includes rationalization, opportunity, and incentive and consider the actions management has taken to respond to those risks.

As a result of our audit planning activities, we have not identified any fraud risks aside from the presumed risk of management override. In response to this risk, we will review non-standard journal entries around year-end and examine management estimates.

Inquiries

We perform inquiries related to fraud or error and other matters to help inform our audit strategy and execution of our audit procedures. We would like to be informed of any matters of which you believe we should be aware, including, but not limited to:

- Your views about the risks of material misstatements due to fraud, including the risks of management override of controls
- Your knowledge of any actual, alleged or suspected fraud
- Your awareness of tips or complaints regarding the County's financial reporting, other matters relevant to the audit (such as violations or possible violations of laws or regulations) or any significant unusual transactions
- How you exercise oversight over the County's assessment of fraud risks and the establishment of controls to address these risks
- Your understanding of the County's relationships and transactions with related parties that are significant to the County and any concerns related to those relationships or transactions



Appendix A

Accounting developments

Accounting developments

	Effective date applicable to the County
<p>PS3400 Revenue</p> <p>The new section proposes a framework which includes two categories of revenue – exchange transactions or unilateral transactions. Revenue from an exchange transaction is recognized when the public sector entity has satisfied any performance obligation(s). If no performance obligation is present, revenue would be unilateral revenues. Unilateral revenues are recognized when a public sector entity has the authority to claim or retain an inflow of economic resources and a past event gives rise to claim on economic resources.</p>	<p>January 1, 2024</p>
<p>Public Sector Guideline 8, Purchased Intangibles</p> <p>The new guideline permits recognition of intangible assets that are acquired through an arm's length exchange transaction between willing parties.</p> <p>Purchased intangibles are identifiable non-monetary economic resources without physical substance.</p> <p>Purchased intangibles are recognized as assets in financial statements when they meet the asset definition and the general recognition criteria in Financial Statement Concepts, Section PS 1000.</p> <p>Application may be retroactive or prospective.</p>	<p>January 1, 2024</p>



Accounting developments

Effective date applicable to the County

<p>PS3160 Public Private Partnerships</p> <p>The new section contains requirements for recognizing, measuring, and classifying infrastructure procured through a public private partnership. The main features of the new Section include:</p> <p>a) PS 3160 applies when public private partnership infrastructure is procured by the public sector entity using a private sector partner that is obligated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design, build, acquire or better new or existing infrastructure;• Finance the transaction past the point where the infrastructure is ready for use; and• Operate and/or maintain the infrastructure. <p>b) Public private partnership infrastructure should be recognized as an asset when the public sector entity acquires control of the infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An infrastructure asset acquired in an exchange transaction should be initially measured at cost, which should be equal to the infrastructure asset's fair value on the initial measurement date.• The cost of the infrastructure asset would be amortized over the useful life of the asset in a rational and systematic manner. <p>c) A liability, which could be in the form of a financial liability, a performance obligation, or a combination of both, should be recognized when the public private partnership recognizes an asset.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When a liability exists, it would be measured at the same value as the asset, reduced for any consideration previously transferred.• Subsequent measurement of a financial liability should be at amortized cost using the effective interest method.• For the subsequent measurement of the performance obligations, the revenues would be recognized, and the liability reduced in accordance with the substance of the public private partnership agreement.	January 1, 2024
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