



Budget address 2024–25

presented by

Minister of Finance
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Honourable Speaker,

The Yukon has enjoyed three straight years of economic growth.

Budget 2024-25 enhances Yukoners' lives and addresses our territory's growing needs.

Our government is tackling the rising cost of living, fostering healthy communities through infrastructure, housing, and health care investments, and responding to challenges like the Substance Use Health Emergency and the climate crisis.

Our economy is thriving.

We have a strong labour market, with robust demand for labour contributing to higher wages, and low unemployment. With the highest population across Canada's three territories, the Yukon continues to be an attractive destination for residents, students, workers and visitors.

Through Budget 2024-25, we are ensuring that the benefits of our stable and growing economy are extended to all Yukoners.

In 2023, we achieved so much.

Paid sick leave for businesses.

Raising the minimum wage.

Celebrating the historic completion of the Haeckel Hill wind project, which will power up to 650 homes each year with clean electricity, offsetting up to 115,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

We launched the Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, a recommendation from the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*.

Alongside the Yukon Hospital Corporation and our health partners, we released a *Health Human Resources Strategy* to attract new health professionals to Yukon hospitals and clinics.

We celebrated the 125th anniversary of our territory joining Confederation, while also acknowledging the pain and trauma that accompanied the loss of the way of life for those who were here since time immemorial.

We marked the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*.

This August, the first cohort of students will enrol at Whistle Bend Elementary School, the first new elementary school to be built in Whitehorse in more than 20 years.

Over 1,700 children and their families benefit from our universal child care program, saving over nine thousand dollars per child per year.

Construction of the 800-kilometre Dempster Fibre Project and the Nisutlin Bay Bridge are ahead of schedule and major improvements are underway at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.

We ratified a new collective agreement with the Yukon Employees' Union that recognizes the value of our public servants and the programs and services they provide to support Yukoners.

We doubled the on-call wage for EMS personnel, and we worked closely with municipalities and First Nations government to support several Yukon communities as they navigated the many wildfires and floods that impacted our territory.

Ongoing efforts of this government have the Yukon well-positioned for continued success.

But don't take my word for it.

In October 2023, the C.D. Howe Institute reaffirmed that our government is on the right track when it comes to fiscal accountability.

In July, S&P Global Ratings affirmed our strong financial position, issuing an 'AA Stable' credit rating and stable outlook for the territory, reflecting their expectation that the Yukon will continue to show strong economic growth for the next several years.

In March, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said we are delivering stability for small businesses at a time when many are feeling uncertain about the future of the economy.

And University of Toronto researchers note that our territory is further ahead than many other Canadian jurisdictions when it comes to ensuring that social supports respond to higher costs of living.

In short, Honourable Speaker, the economic data is proving each and every day that we are on the right track.

But now is not the time to take our foot off the gas.

Too many Yukoners are feeling the impacts of the global financial pressures of inflation, the national housing crisis, and the international shortage of health care workers.

In the face of rising costs of living nationwide, we hold fast to our Yukon Liberal values by protecting struggling families with increases to minimum wage, introducing a made-in-Yukon dental insurance program, increasing the Yukon Child Benefit, improving our social assistance programs, and continuing the Interim Electrical Rebate on residential electricity bills.

Budget 2024-25 goes even further.

With \$484 million in capital investments and \$1.6 billion in operation and maintenance spending, we continue to deliver on the Premier's commitment to support a sustainable economic future that benefits all Yukoners.

Our government pledged to exercise good governance and responsible fiscal management. We continue to deliver on that commitment with a budget surplus of \$119 million and a contingency fund of \$50 million. As in the past, we anticipate using this contingency on emerging priorities like wildfire and flood response, which have reached historic, unpredictable proportions in recent years.

Honourable Speaker, this is a budget for Yukoners.

To make their day-to-day lives more affordable, more equitable, safer, healthier, and to create a brighter future for everyone in our territory.

I will now touch on the Premier's four priorities and how Budget 2024-25 delivers on these promises to Yukoners.

Our Premier and our government keep working to make life more affordable for Yukoners, to strengthen our territory's social safety net, and to invest in the middle class.

We've raised the territory's minimum wage and tied future yearly increases to Whitehorse's Consumer Price Index.

We increased supports for caregivers, increased social assistance payments, introduced new protections for renters against above-market rent increases, invested in supportive housing options for low-income seniors and elders, and worked with the private sector to construct energy-efficient, affordable new homes.

In Budget 2024-25, we will continue to make life more affordable for Yukoners.

Since the launch of the Good Energy rebates program, the Government of Yukon has issued more than 28,000 rebates for more than 36,000 energy efficient products or home upgrades. It is our goal to see this number continue to increase in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

We are continuing the Interim Electrical Rebate, which provides Yukoners with an automatic monthly reduction on residential bills, and continuing the dental program we introduced back in 2023, which covers up to \$1,300 per year in dental benefits for eligible Yukoners.

We're making housing more affordable, investing \$53.7 million to build and renovate homes across the housing spectrum.

And we are continuing to fund our nation-leading early learning and childcare program, which puts nearly \$800 per child back in the pockets of Yukon families each month.

Advancing reconciliation – especially economic reconciliation – is another priority for our Premier and our government.

Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility of all governments and individuals in our society.

It means listening to and working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a long history of inequality and discrimination.

In Budget 2024-25, we continue to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations towards the shared goal of reconciliation.

We continue to work together to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-spirit+ people. We approach this work in the spirit of reconciliation, in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Indigenous women's organizations.

In October 2023, the Yukon's *Missing Persons Act* came into force. An important part of our government's commitment to justice and to reconciliation, this legislation supports efforts to work with Yukon First Nations to build safer and healthier communities for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit+ People through coordinated and effective violence prevention, intervention, and crisis response across the territory.

Through Budget 2024-25, we are funding two full-time positions within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate to continue this work. We are providing funds to the Yukon Advisory Committee to continue their important work. We are offsetting costs for the annual Accountability Forum on MMIWG2S+ and technical gatherings for partners and contributors to the strategy, and we are continuing to support the Indigenous Women's Equity fund. We are also increasing funding for the Family Information Liaison Unit, an information service for families of missing and murdered Indigenous people.

Reconciliation means supporting Yukon First Nations as they revitalize the customs and ways of life established prior to the violent upheaval of contact and colonization.

Following a successful pilot project last year, we are pleased to extend the Indigenous Artists and Cultural Carriers Micro-grant. This program has enabled opportunities for Indigenous artists and cultural carriers to access funding and increase the sector's contribution to the Yukon's economic and social wellbeing.

We are also pleased to provide assistance to the protection and preservation of historic sites like Tr'ondëk-Klondike and Rampart House. The Government of Yukon will be providing \$50,000 to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and \$60,000 to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation for the collaborative heritage management of these two sites.

The Chinook salmon, the Porcupine caribou herd, and other wildlife are tremendously important to Yukon First Nations culture and ways of knowing, doing and being. Their traditional knowledge is rich with information about conservation, population management, and migration. Governments must do more to ensure conservation of these and other species. We owe it to ancestors, Elders, to our children, and to the next generations.

In this, the second year of the landmark Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement with the Government of Canada, we are advancing conservation priorities in the territory. Of the more than \$20 million that will be invested from 2023-26, \$7.48 million has been allocated this fiscal year for projects that increase protection of the Yukon's land, water, and species at risk, support Indigenous leadership in conservation, and support ways to compile and share conservation-relevant data.

Alongside First Nations, industry, stakeholders and other levels of government, the Government of Yukon developed the Yukon Wetland Policy to define a common approach to wetland stewardship. This fiscal year, nearly half a million dollars will go towards the implementation of this policy.

Reconciliation means working hand-in-hand to action self-government and land claim agreements so that First Nations governments and enterprises can continue to create meaningful opportunities for their citizens.

We are investing significantly to ensure we meet our obligations under Final Agreements.

We are investing \$1.7 million this year to meet our obligations under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, providing funding to support the planning of next year's Yukon North Slope Conference, and working collaboratively with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to look at the changing ecology of moose and wolves within the Porcupine caribou range.

We are working alongside Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous groups to develop new made-in-Yukon minerals legislation that will improve our regulatory system, respect First Nations' relationships with the land, protect the environment, provide more certainty for industry, and strengthen our economy.

We are investing an additional quarter million dollars to continue work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan and are meeting with other Yukon First Nations to begin collaborative work on the four remaining regional land use plans. Two additional full time Yukon government employees will be joining these project teams.

We saw an incredible example of the work that First Nations governments and their development corporations can achieve when we celebrated Kwanlin Dün's Chu Niikwan Limited Partnership Haeckel Hill Wind Project. This 4.0-megawatt project will help power the Yukon with clean electricity, diversifying and expanding the sources of renewable energy that our territory needs to grow.

In Budget 2024-25, we are continuing to invest in First Nations proponents to develop renewable energy projects. Our government's \$7.9 million capital investment in the continuation of the Arctic Energy Fund will see the Yukon Development Corporation continue the important work to power our needs with renewable energy sources.

The Premier also recently announced the Winter Crossing housing project in Whitehorse's Whistle Bend neighbourhood. This 105-unit project will be the single largest affordable housing development in the Yukon's history. This project expands on the existing successful partnership between the Government of Yukon and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council's Da Daghay Development Corporation at their River Bend Property.

Reconciliation means investing in community safety and health and social supports so that First Nations citizens have the tools to address the historical and intergenerational traumas of the residential school system, as well as the racial and discriminatory biases that were left like a scar on broader society.

Our government is working with the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment initiatives as components of the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* and the *Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan*.

And we are working with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to create community safety officer programs, through investments of more than \$700,000. We are also increasing our investment in the Indigenous Court Worker Program and for the Gladue Report Writing Project.

Reconciliation means we are working in partnership, following the letter – and the spirit and intent – of the Yukon’s modern treaties to ensure that the dreams of those who authored *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* live on in the children of today, tomorrow, and the next seven generations.

The Yukon Forum is an important venue for collaboration and meaningful dialogue that allows ministers and chiefs to sit face-to-face, side-by-side to identify and take collaborative action on shared priorities that advance reconciliation and improve the lives of all Yukoners.

While there was a lengthy pause in Yukon Forum meetings under other governments, we are proud to report that there have been 28 Yukon Forum meetings since February 2017, most recently this past February.

Notable accomplishments include a Memorandum of Understanding on mining and work underway to co-develop new minerals legislation, the establishment of the Yukon Environmental Socio-Economic Assessment reset oversight group, the creation of a Government of Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy, creating a pathway to a more representative public service through the development of the Breaking Trail Together plan, the establishment of the Yukon First Nations School Board, and co-authored amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, just to name a few.

Recent meetings have included in-depth conversations about the devastating impacts of the Substance Use Health Emergency on Yukon families and communities.

On behalf of our government, I want extend condolences to all those who have been touched by the Substance Use Health Emergency, and also thank the Council of Yukon First Nations and all Yukon First Nations leadership for the bold steps they have taken to help lead the way in responding to this ongoing crisis.

In February 2024, the Council of Yukon First Nations launched the Moccasin Mobile Outreach van, which reduces barriers for street-involved persons in accessing support services by meeting them when and where they need support. This mobile outreach initiative is part of an ongoing, collaborative approach to enhance safety in downtown Whitehorse.

We know that the Substance Use Health Emergency is directly linked to the lasting and widespread traumas caused by colonization and the residential school system. While the Substance Use Health Emergency is not specific to First Nations, we know from statistics collected by the Yukon’s chief coroner that more than half of the people who lost their lives due to overdose in 2023 identified as First Nations.

In response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, we developed Car 867, increased opioid treatment services and access to safer supply, expanded the methods of consumption available at the Whitehorse supervised consumption site and extended its hours of operation, initiated a Paramedic Response Unit in Whitehorse’s downtown core, and increased access to life-saving harm reduction supplies like naloxone.

In 2023, alongside the Council of Yukon First Nations, our government released the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. At that time, we announced an investment of \$1.9 million and we are pleased to increase that amount to \$2.6 million in the 2024-25 budget.

None of this work would be possible without the work of partners like Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Connective, the RCMP, CYFN, Yukon First Nations, and federal and municipal governments all working together to address this public health emergency.

The finding of 15 potential grave sites at the former location of the Chooutla Residential School in Carcross emphasized the need for ongoing support and compassion from our society as a whole.

Our government will continue to support the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project Working Group in their efforts to bring light to the histories and impacts of residential schools and to help communities as they grieve. We will continue to be guided by the working group and will provide support on an as-needed basis.

The Premier's third priority is to look after people by building healthy communities.

Yukoners value our public health care system, and we know they want more autonomy and more empowerment when it comes to managing their own health and wellbeing.

This ongoing shift to a more patient-centered approach is discussed in depth in our *Putting People First* report, which provides 76 recommendations for implementing a new approach to providing integrated, whole-person care across the health care system.

Our 2023 annual *Putting People First* progress report showed that 89 per cent of these recommendations are in progress or operational, and Budget 2024-25 sets us up to continue to transform our health care system into one that delivers integrated health care and social services.

In Budget 2024-25, our government is significantly investing in our health and social services system, adding \$30 million to our insured health services program and providing an additional \$15.3 million to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

In the short term, Yukoners can expect to see new health care cards, the introduction of legislation to create a health authority, increased funding at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the opening of a Managed Alcohol Program in Whitehorse, a key action under the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* and the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan.

Our government will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure we are providing the services and supports Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care.

We are investing more than five million dollars to complete the construction of the new Mental Wellness Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Our health care system faces many of the challenges we see reflected in the broader Canadian health care system, exacerbated by the health care workforce shortages seen around the world.

The World Health Organization estimates a projected shortfall of 10 million health care workers globally by 2030, with countries at all levels of socioeconomic development facing difficulties in educating, employing, deploying, and retaining health care professionals in their workforce.

In December 2023, the Government of Yukon, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and territorial health partners, released *The Yukon's Health Human Resources Strategy*, which is our government's response to the challenges facing our health workforce.

This strategy provides a systemic, coordinated and informed roadmap towards a health and social services system that will meet Yukoners' current and future needs.

It builds on recommendations from the *Putting People First* report, which aims to improve the health, wellness and experiences of everyone in the territory.

Initially, our government invested \$3.3 million between December 2023 and April 2025 to support work on short-term priorities like training and education opportunities and developing supports for internationally-educated health professionals to practice in the Yukon.

And we were pleased to announce a new \$3.6 million Foreign Credential Recognition Project to integrate internationally educated health care workers into our health care workforce, funded by the Government of Canada.

Through Budget 2024-25, we are investing \$2.8 million in addressing our health human resources shortage. Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges related to an insufficient supply of health care workers. For communities, this can mean health facility closures and longer wait times. We know we need to address these challenges and are working hard to attract more health care workers so our health system can better support all Yukoners.

We are also continuing to regulate health care professions, with planned completion of psychologist regulations scheduled for later this year. Upcoming Registered Nurse Profession Regulation amendments are focused on the pathways to licensure and expansion of the prescribing powers of Nurse Practitioners, so they can better meet patient needs and reduce wait times across the territory. Drafting of these new regulations is in the final stages.

The Department of Health and Social Services is already conducting a needs assessment to plan for the next phase of capital development of our hospital system. This could lead to expansion of our hospital system to include more hospital beds, an expanded operating room, or new facilities as needed. This work is ongoing, and we look forward to hearing more from the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services.

We look forward to soon hosting the federal health minister to sign the Working Together Health Agreement and the Aging with Dignity Agreement.

Aussi, notre gouvernement améliore l'accès aux services et à l'information en français. Cela comprend l'amélioration de l'accès aux services de santé en français et l'augmentation des communications d'urgence bilingues en cas de catastrophe naturelle. Le coût est de 7,8 millions de dollars.

As we work to build healthy communities, it would be a mistake to overlook the dangers that gender-based violence and racial intolerance create for many Yukoners on a day-to-day basis.

Many Yukoners face various forms of discrimination, including gender-based violence, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, anti-Indigenous racism, transphobia, homophobia, stereotyping, stigmatism, and violence. These threats not only endanger the unity of our social fabric but also hinder efforts to create an inclusive Yukon for all. Most importantly, they jeopardize the wellbeing and safety of individuals.

We must recognize the intricate ways in which these forms of discrimination intersect and compound, exacerbating the challenges faced by marginalized individuals in our territory.

The Government of Yukon has signed a bilateral agreement with Canada that includes \$4.1 million in funding for initiatives to address gender-based violence in the Yukon. We are providing over \$2 million in additional funding to more than 10 NGOs that address gender-based violence in our territory. We are committed to working with organizations in the NGO sector to ensure no one is left behind.

Here in the Yukon, we are making further investments in our efforts to make the Yukon a place where everyone is free to live their lives as their true selves. We are implementing the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan*, which was developed in partnership with the queer community and includes multiple actions for government to increase inclusion in programs and services.

We will continue to fund the work of Queer Yukon by supplying that organization with consistent funding from last year and we have allocated an ongoing investment of \$255,000 for the Yukon Human Rights Commission to support their mandate to review complaints of human rights violations in the territory.

We are also increasing the RCMP's budget by \$4.8 million. A nearly \$1 million incremental increase will fund policing costs increases and support the most critical operational needs of the Yukon's RCMP "M" Division by funding eight and a half new positions for specialized units, general duty, and support staff.

An ongoing increase of just over \$1 million will add six additional First Nations and Inuit Policing Program members to better support Yukon First Nations communities and Yukon First Nations' Community Safety Officer programs, and an \$800,000 increase will go to the Guns and Gang Violence Action Fund, which works to stop gun crime and gang violence before it starts.

We will spend over \$3 million in capital funding for major upgrades to the RCMP detachment in Old Crow and maintain other physical assets in the RCMP's portfolio.

We are also increasing funding to the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program. This is another action we are taking to implement the actions outlined in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*.

In February, the Minister of Health and Social Services provided an update on the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan. I am pleased that we are continuing to advance the priorities outlined in this plan with over \$15 million in investments that will make communities across the territory safer, including Whitehorse.

Yukoners are a tough bunch. “A little bit metal,” one might say.

You’d have to be – to survive on the land since time immemorial, to make it through the gold rush and colonization, or to have the fearlessness to leave your home country, province, or territory and immigrate to Canada’s far North. Every winter, Yukoners prove to the rest of the world just how strong they are, mentally and physically.

We survive long, dark, cold winters, and increasingly hot summers.

And with this change in our climate comes the need for greater investment in emergency management.

Because as our climate changes, we see the seasons we’ve relied on change. What was once a distinct winter season, now sees flood and fire season encroaching, with floods and fires starting earlier in the spring and extending further into the fall. We see warmer winters with less snow interrupted by intense cold spikes, and longer, hotter, dryer summers. Or heavier snow falls followed by sharp, abrupt rising temperatures.

Yukoners have a personal responsibility to be prepared for emergencies, with a 72-hour kit ready to go containing enough food, water, medications and other necessary items for each member of your family. Other personal responsibilities like having flood and home insurance, fire-smarting properties, and having and being familiar with your family and community emergency plans can be the difference between life and death when calamity strikes.

The Government of Yukon will be there for Yukoners, alongside municipalities, First Nations governments and the federal government to ensure our communities are prepared. We are allocating an additional \$1.8 million for Yukon First Nations initial attack firefighter crew services, and budgeting \$1.1 million for the Fire Marshal’s Office to operate community fire halls, administer programs, and offer honoraria and travel costs for volunteers.

Nearly \$1 million in additional funding will be invested in acknowledgement that the Yukon is more vulnerable to climate change impacts than other Canadian jurisdictions. We have entered a three-year funding agreement with the Government of Canada to support climate adaptation projects in the Yukon. This funding will support planning and preparation for wildland fires, improving climate resiliency for Yukon Government building assets, and assessing slope hazards in the Klondike region.

In January, following a resolution passed by the Association of Yukon Communities about a shortage of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, our government doubled on-call honoraria for EMS community responders. We want to commend these hard-working volunteers for the services they provide to their neighbours and their communities. As a result of this action, we are already seeing the addition of new EMS responders in many of our communities.

Through *Our Clean Future*, the Government of Yukon is investing over \$1 million to support flood planning and forecasting in at-risk communities, and to assess climate risk and resilience.

The Premier's final priority is to invest in our future, so that the Yukon remains a place so many people choose to call home.

The authors of *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* aptly said that "you cannot talk... about the 'bright new tomorrow' when so many of our people are cold, hungry, and unemployed."

This sentiment lives on today and is reflected in Budget 2024-25 through broad investments to increase access to housing, to protect the environment for the long-term, to improve the lives and livelihoods of our people, including the owners and operators of the small and medium business that are the backbone of our territory's economy, and most importantly, to enhance the territory's education system for our youth.

The most obvious way we can invest in our future is to invest in our youth and their education. If we can distill the responsibility of government down to one key priority, it is to create an environment where future generations can thrive. As a former teacher, this is an issue that is close to my heart.

We are adding additional school-based staff to support student learning and wellbeing, with an unprecedented investment in educational staff, including new full-time wellness counsellors, education assistants and learning assistance teachers.

We continue to invest in the Youth Directorate, supporting local organizations that empower young Yukoners, teaching them the confidence and leadership skills they need to grow into the next generation of community leaders. BYTE – Empowering Youth Society, the Heart of Riverdale, and the Youth of Today Society will each receive \$80,000 to hire additional staff and increase programming.

To support BGC Yukon as it shifts to seven-days-a-week programming, we are investing \$182,000 in their operations. We are also supporting increased youth programming at the Association franco-yukonnaise.

We are investing \$20.1 million to build and upgrade schools in Whitehorse, Burwash Landing and Ross River.

Our government is proud to continue to support initiatives at Yukon University, to welcome the first intake of students at the new Whistle Bend Elementary School this fall, and to continue to work with parents and community leaders in Whitehorse and Burwash Landing as new schools are built in these communities.

As the level of government that deals most directly with Yukoners in our communities, I cannot understate the importance of municipalities. They are responsible for local emergency management, snow removal, developing and following Official Community Plans, waste management, and the maintenance of parks and green spaces, as well as good governance practices like the responsible use of taxpayer funds and bylaw enforcement.

Rural communities continue to do big things with a very small tax base.

We recognize that with smaller tax bases, municipal governments cannot “go it alone.” The Government of Yukon provides municipalities with contributions through the Comprehensive Municipal Grant. Budget 2024-25 includes an increase of \$2.3 million, for a total of over \$24.5 million to be distributed to Yukon municipalities this fiscal year.

We continue to study resolutions passed by the Association of Yukon Communities at their most recent annual general meeting. They asked us to further fund municipalities by increasing the Comprehensive Municipal Grant, raise property taxes on Yukoners living outside municipal boundaries, and undertake a joint review of the *Municipal Act*. We will continue to engage with municipalities bilaterally and through the Association of Yukon Communities on these and other emerging issues of importance to that organization.

We are continuing the Economic Development Fund, which supports projects and initiatives that encourage economic growth and diversification that will ultimately provide long-term, sustainable economic benefits to Yukoners and Yukon communities. The Community Development Fund will also continue to support events and initiatives that provide long-term, sustainable economic and social benefits to communities across the Yukon.

Our electricity grid is a critical component of our territorial infrastructure. Our government is focused on modernizing and expanding our grid to enhance its resilience and meet the growing electricity demands of Yukon residents and businesses, while meeting our renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

The Yukon Development Corporation, with \$5.6 million through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Fund, is working in partnership with Yukon Energy on the grid-scale battery energy storage solution.

Yukon Energy has entered into a 25-year lease with Da Dan Developments, a subsidiary of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation’s Chu Níkwän Limited Partnership, to secure the necessary land for the battery project.

Site preparation activities are underway by businesses owned by Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, while access road construction is being handled by Kwanlin Dün First Nation-owned enterprises. With completion currently scheduled for the end of this year, this battery will stand as the largest of its kind in the North and one of Canada’s largest.

We are continuing to support the British Columbia grid connect project, which is critical to ensuring that the Yukon will have sufficient renewable energy over the long term.

And with a \$2.5 million investment in the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative, our government is supporting independent power producers to develop new energy generation projects.

Investing in our collective future means making sure local entrepreneurs have the supports and opportunities they need to grow their businesses, pursue their passions and plan for the future.

In 2023, our government launched a new Paid Sick Leave Rebate program to provide workers and self-employed Yukoners with up to 40 hours of paid sick leave each year, at no cost to their employers.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Canada's largest non-profit advocacy group championing the needs of small businesses, applauded this program, as well as other measures implemented by our government to assist small businesses such as the elimination of the small business tax.

Given the positive feedback we have received from local businesses on our paid sick leave program, we will be extending this program through March 2025.

We are continuing to invest in the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Launched in April 2023, this program is an investment in the Yukon's agriculture industry to support our farmers and increase their capacity for local food production. So far, the program has approved over \$1 million in funding for over 50 local projects including the development of farm business plans, agriculture research initiatives, the purchase of equipment and helping farmers mitigate the impacts of climate change.

With retail sales up 7.8 per cent in 2023, the Yukon had the strongest growth in the country, and was well above the national rate of 2.1 per cent.

The new Spark Tourism Micro-grant will address the needs of our local tourism sector as it continues to rebound from the pandemic and adapts to new operating realities. This program will grant successful applicants up to \$5,000 to improve visitor experiences or services and is aimed at supporting the development of new and emerging entrepreneurs. The first intake for this program will be June 15, 2024.

We will continue to offer a suite of funding programs to support the territory's creative professionals as we further implement the *Creative and Cultural Industries Strategy*. This includes supports for media and film productions, as well as for performing artists, cultural carriers, and media artists as they grow their skills, entertain us and challenge our way of thinking about the world we live in.

Investing in our collective future means investing in environmental sustainability. We are doing this by directing more than \$55 million worth of funding toward the implementation of *Our Clean Future*.

We are doing this because we know climate change is real. Our government declared a climate emergency in 2019 and followed that with the launch of *Our Clean Future* to lay out our plan to address the situation we find ourselves in.

We saw the catastrophic flooding in my community of Dawson City last year and in the Southern Lakes area in 2021, which necessitated assistance from the Canadian Forces to help with the largest flood response effort in the Yukon's history.

The Government of Yukon is working to make government buildings more resilient to climate change and reduce our carbon footprint. A \$19.3 million investment in the Green Infrastructure Program and Building Development Program will make our buildings more environmentally sustainable and energy efficient while also reducing the burden on taxpayers in the long term.

Infrastructure investments are crucial for our territory's economic, social and cultural wellbeing.

Modern infrastructure enhances our safety, security and social inclusion and drives economic development by facilitating trade, tourism and business activity.

With investments in our roads, airports, highways, bridges and other critical infrastructure, we are ensuring that Yukoners have links to the outside world and across the territory.

Major projects include finalizing the Nisutlin Bay Bridge replacement, ongoing upgrades to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport and the continued construction of the Dempster Fibre Project, which is scheduled for completion this year. These three projects alone account for capital investments of \$136.1 million this fiscal year.

In addition to the Nisutlin Bay Bridge replacement, we will continue construction on the Big Creek Bridge replacement, with \$5 million allocated to this important part of our transportation network in this fiscal year.

Road safety is a major priority for our government. We are working to make our roads and bridges safer for drivers, pedestrians and active transportation users. Budget 2024-25 allocates approximately \$5.6 million to road safety improvements and \$2.5 million to bridge assessments to help maintain our roads and bridges and make them safer for all those who use it.

We continue our work to rehabilitate and reconstruct the North Klondike Highway, allocating \$17 million in capital expenses to this vital link for industry, tourists, and Yukoners. These upgrades will increase safety, improve driving conditions, and better connect our resources to market.

Here in Whitehorse, we have set aside \$4.3 million for improvements to Robert Service Way, Hamilton Boulevard and the Alaska Highway intersection.

It is important to recognize that infrastructure is not limited to highways, roads and bridges. This budget also invests in our cultural and sport infrastructure, with a \$550,000 capital investment in building maintenance at the Yukon Arts Centre and the awarding of a \$31 million contract for construction of the new Polarettes gymnastics and climbing facility in Whistle Bend scheduled for completion in spring 2025.

Yukoners are active and accustomed to living healthy lifestyles. Access to a wide range of sport and recreation facilities is one of the draws of life in our territory – whether it be the extensive network of trails or the gyms, arenas or pools.

As our population grows and the appeal of hosting events increases, we must look to review the existing recreational facilities. Work is underway to support an updated inventory and condition assessment of sport and recreation infrastructure assets owned by various levels of governments,

First Nations organizations and communities. This information will help the Department of Community Services develop sport and recreation opportunities in the Yukon and determine sport infrastructure needs for the future.

Because we know sports are so important to Yukoners, we have committed up to \$4 million over the next two years as we host the Arctic Winter Games alongside partners at the City of Whitehorse. We have also agreed to provide an additional \$350,000 of in-kind supports and are working with the city to secure additional federal funding.

This is a budget for the Yukon.

We are investing in municipal infrastructure across the territory. I doubt there is a community from Watson Lake up to Old Crow where residents and visitors will not see construction underway, whether it be new infrastructure or upgrades to public buildings.

In Whitehorse, residents will see the replacement of the Ryder Apartment complex providing new housing, major upgrades and construction at the airport and hospital, public transit upgrades, road safety and road infrastructure upgrades, lot development, new and upgraded sport and recreation facilities and the continued work to build electricity storage infrastructure.

There are road upgrades underway in Pelly Crossing, a lagoon and solar farm project in Beaver Creek, and a public works, firehall and EMS building under construction in Carmacks.

In Old Crow, work continues on the 10-unit mixed-use housing complex, a new public works facility and the replacement of the health and wellness centre.

Destruction Bay will see money start to flow to that community for improvements to their grader station.

In Dawson City, a working group made up of leadership from the Yukon government, City of Dawson, and Tr'ondek Hwech'in is finalizing plans on the location of a sewage lagoon within Callison Subdivision. Lower Dome regulatory work and detailed design is underway to meet new Dredge Pond II master planning spring targets set by Dawson City Council, with construction tender targets anticipated later this year. The Government of Yukon has also identified up to \$65.6 million for the construction of a new Dawson Recreation Centre and site preparation on Lower Dome Road will begin soon. Pending heritage and servicing work, our government plans to release up to four more infill lots in the community this coming summer.

The good people of Haines Junction can look forward to underground and road upgrades, water well replacements, and a biomass district heating system, as well as new lots in the Willow Acres Subdivision.

Dawson City, Burwash Landing, Carcross, Whitehorse and Ross River will see construction of new schools or upgrades of existing educational facilities.

In Keno, firehall water service is being upgraded. Teslin is benefitting from energy retrofits on buildings and economic benefits resulting from the Nisutlin Bay Bridge replacement project.

In Mount Lorne, funding is projected into the next three years for a water treatment plant.

In Faro, year two of construction is underway on a project to replace critical community infrastructure. We expect this project, which encompasses water, sewer, and road upgrades, will be finished this fall. I am pleased to be able to say that the Faro Public Works and Firehall Building is now complete and was designed to exceed minimum energy efficiency standards by 25 per cent.

Thanks to our ongoing investments, we believe that work to replace the reservoirs in Mayo will begin this spring and be complete by the fall.

In Watson Lake, a \$10.3 million contract was awarded in July 2023 for a number of infrastructure projects, including pedestrian crossings, streetlight upgrades, sewer and water main replacements, and road upgrades. We anticipate work on these projects will also be complete by this fall. That community can also look forward to a 10-plex housing first project, lot development on Frances Avenue and a new lift station.

And the Premier continues to work with the community of Ross River to address their state of emergency and housing shortage. We are proud to have supported the mobile triplex that was provided in that community through funding from the Yukon Housing Corporation.

We are also investing in parks and campgrounds, providing over \$5.3 million to build new infrastructure that will enhance visitor experiences at Yukon parks and campgrounds. This year's capital funding is aimed at supporting more year-round recreational opportunities, more accessible wilderness experiences, replacing dock and boat-launch systems to enhance safety, piloting a reservation service and adding more campsites at existing campgrounds.

Ongoing work to look at the future infrastructure needs of our territory across the board will continue this year.

And finally, investing in our collective future means ensuring that all Yukoners have a place to call home.

That's why our government is continuing to invest in housing across the spectrum, so that Yukoners can afford to rent – or own – the type of home that is right for them in whatever stage of life they find themselves.

The Yukon Housing Corporation works innovatively and collaboratively with government departments, NGOs, First Nations and individual Yukoners to deliver housing initiatives and programs that address the needs of Yukon residents and contribute to healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities.

This includes more than \$24.5 million through the Northern Carve-out, which will support new capital projects across the territory, including the 34-unit Korbo community housing building in Dawson City, a 10-unit Housing First building in Watson Lake, a six-unit community housing building in Teslin, and 45 units of community housing in Whitehorse on the former Ryder Apartment site.

We are providing the Safe at Home Society with \$6 million to renovate the former High Country Inn, which will provide 67 units of permanent supportive housing by spring 2026.

Almost a third of all police-reported violence in Canada occurs between intimate partners and for too long, a lack of stable, affordable housing has been a barrier to women escaping dangerous situations at home.

For people fleeing gender-based violence, knowing you can leave without severe economic consequences can be the difference between staying and going, between life and death.

Through a new stream of the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit, we will provide over \$2 million annually for the next four years to support women and their children fleeing gender-based violence. This funding can be used to pay for the high upfront costs of moving like providing damage deposits, paying the first two months of rent and covering moving fees, as well as providing an 18-month rental subsidy.

We are also providing \$1.24 million in rental subsidies to help Yukon renters meet their needs in the private rental market. As of January, 168 Yukon households are taking advantage of this rental benefit. We are also investing another \$4.8 million in the Housing Initiatives Fund to support the development of more affordable rental housing options for Yukoners.

Of the approximately 800 housing units developed through the Housing Initiatives Fund, close to 700 of these units are designated as affordable, meaning that Yukoners living in these homes can expect to pay below median-market rent for the next 20 years.

Our government is on track to meet our commitment to release 1,000 new housing lots this mandate, with more than 800 new lots released since 2016.

In partnership with the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, we are conducting feasibility and design work on new developments here in our territorial capital.

We look forward to making this a busy summer for Yukon contractors, suppliers and labourers.

Like all financial documents, the budget is a picture of a moment in time. But the work does not stop there. This government continues to work with our partners on projects and initiatives which will continue to meet the evolving needs of Yukoners and of our territory.

With respect to Minto Mine, we continue to work to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of previous governments when faced with mine abandonment and remediation. While \$21.5 million in funding is included in this budget, nearly all of this is recoverable from the bond held in security. We are doing everything we can to ensure Yukoners are not left footing the bill for corporate greed and irresponsibility by bad actors. We continue to work closely with Selkirk First Nation on all aspects of this work and remain focused on remediating the site.

Expenditures associated with Minto Mine do not represent a growth in government spending. They are effectively a flow-through of funds from the security bond intended to take care of the site.

While we continue to work to secure tidewater access in the Port of Skagway for the Yukon's mining industry, the funding to support this project has been reprofiled into future years so that it is available when the project is ready to go.

In the year ahead, our government's focus is clear. We're improving life for all Yukoners. We're tackling rising costs of living, investing in health care, education and infrastructure and addressing pressing issues like the climate crisis and Substance Use Health Emergency.

With a booming economy, higher wages and low unemployment, our territory remains a sought-after place to live, work and visit. Through partnerships and cooperation, we're ensuring everyone benefits from this growth.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.