



Budget address 2022–23

presented by

**PREMIER
SANDY SILVER**

First Session of the Thirty-fifth Yukon Legislative Assembly

Whitehorse, Yukon
March 3, 2022

Introduction

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

I am very pleased to present the Yukon's budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

It is a great honour to be on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwächän Council to present our government's second budget, which comes at a pivotal time for our territory.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created acute challenges across the Yukon, testing the strength of our public health systems and the resolve of our communities, our businesses and our people. After two long and trying years, Yukoners, like people across the country and around the world, are looking to turn the page on COVID-19 and move firmly along the path to recovery.

At the same time, the promise of the Yukon continues to draw people to our territory. Our commitment to reconciliation based on respectful relationships with our First Nations partners; balancing environmental stewardship with economic growth and diversification; building healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities; and creating a modern, inclusive and welcoming society is resonating well beyond our borders. Our government's strong leadership has guided our territory through the pandemic and kept our economy going. The Yukon is leading the nation as we witness unprecedented growth of our territory's population and economy.

The 2022–23 Budget includes \$1.97 billion in spending. Of this, a record \$546.5 million in capital expenditures is identified, representing a 26 per cent increase from last year and nearly double the capital budget from just five years ago. Operations and maintenance expenditures account for a total of \$1.42 billion. This year's budget shows a surplus of \$39.5 million, which reflects our government's enduring commitment to responsible fiscal management, even in the face of COVID-19.

Budgets are fundamentally about choices. With limited resources, choices must be made about where to focus government spending to ensure it is responsive to the needs of the present while also creating the conditions for prosperity in the future. This year's budget addresses critical needs in the territory while making necessary investments to make sure all Yukoners benefit from our territory's historic economic growth. We are building a brighter future for our territory by investing in housing, education, healthcare and social services, green energy and resilient infrastructure that will create sustainable communities for the next generation of Yukoners.

The Yukon's growing economy

Honourable Speaker, the Yukon's economy is seeing tremendous growth that truly sets it apart from the rest of Canada. Indeed, our economy continues to experience strong growth despite the impacts of COVID-19. At the outset of the pandemic, our government took immediate action to protect the health and safety of Yukoners. We introduced comprehensive economic relief programs to protect Yukon businesses and mitigate the effects on local employees, employers and organizations. We have continued to adapt support programs throughout the pandemic. To date, these programs have provided over 500 businesses and organizations with more than \$85 million in support.

The Yukon's economic support programs have been recognized as the best and most generous in the country and they have prevented the most severe economic impacts of COVID-19. In fact, the Yukon's economy exceeded expectations throughout the pandemic. In 2020, the Yukon had the strongest GDP growth in the country and was one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth. We also continue to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, as we have for much of the last few years.

Along with the 2022–23 Main Estimates, I am pleased to present the Fiscal and Economic Outlook for the Yukon. It forecasts robust economic growth of 9.6 per cent in 2022, along with continued economic growth each year out to 2026. Among other promising trends, the Outlook notes that our tourism sector continues to recover along with our labour market, which has seen gains in every industry since May 2020. The average weekly earnings of Yukoners continue to increase while consumer spending is pushing record levels. The outlook for employment also shows strong growth in both 2022 and 2023.

Under the leadership of our government, mining is flourishing in the Yukon, creating tangible benefits and economic opportunities for communities and Yukon First Nations. In 2015, the Yukon was in a recession, had only a single operating mine, and was mired in division and expensive legal disputes that discouraged investment. We have built strong relationships with First Nations that have fostered reconciliation, and worked in partnership with industry to help restore investor confidence in the Yukon. Our territory now has three operating mines, with a number of others under development, and mineral production is expected to increase to more than \$1.1 billion this year – a record high – while staying above \$1 billion each year through to 2026. Mineral exploration spending was \$139 million in 2021 and we are developing a new Mineral Exploration Fund to support junior mining companies in the Yukon.

This year, Victoria Gold President and CEO John McConnell was awarded the Association for Mineral Exploration's 2021 E.A. Scholz Award for excellence in mine development in British Columbia or Yukon for his work to bring the Yukon's Eagle Gold Mine into production. The mine continues to provide many jobs and benefits to Yukoners, particularly First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun citizens and the Village of Mayo. Through industry leadership and a commitment to creating positive community impacts, Mr. McConnell and his team continue to demonstrate what modern mining is all about. Mining remains a significant driver of our territory's economy and our government has worked with partners to ensure the Yukon is helping lead the way in the development of sustainable mining practices.

The strong momentum of our economy is bolstering private sector confidence in the Yukon that will continue moving us along the path to recovery. Northern Vision Development recently announced plans for the first Hyatt hotel in northern Canada on Main Street in the heart of downtown Whitehorse. Our tourism sector has been deeply impacted by COVID-19 and Northern Vision Development's commitment to develop the Hyatt Place Whitehorse represents a bold investment in the future of tourism in the Yukon. Condor has announced it will be resuming direct international flights from Frankfurt, Germany to Whitehorse this summer. Air North, Yukon's airline will also be introducing service to Toronto for the first time this year. This is fantastic news for the Yukon's tourism operators as they prepare to welcome back tourists from around the globe to enjoy the unique and world-class experiences on offer across the territory.

Strategic investments in this year's budget will continue to support our private sector and increase economic opportunities for Yukon businesses. Alongside the Budget, I am very pleased to present the Government of Yukon's latest Five-Year Capital Plan, which includes average annual spending of \$519 million for a total of nearly \$2.6 billion in spending. Since it was first introduced five years ago, the Five-Year Capital Plan has dramatically increased transparency around government capital planning while creating more certainty for the private sector. It has also maximized federal funding opportunities through improved coordination with our First Nations, municipal and private sector partners. By working together, we are addressing an historical infrastructure deficit while advancing community-driven priorities throughout the territory. Despite record spending, I am proud to once again deliver a balanced budget that reflects the prudent fiscal management Yukoners expect from their government, and which they deserve.

Improving access to housing

Our government's sustained efforts to build a modern Yukon continues to attract people to our territory. Yukon's population has grown at a higher rate than any other Canadian jurisdiction over the last decade. Since 2016, our population has grown by 12.1 per cent, well above the national average of 5.2 per cent. This has created an unprecedented demand for housing in the territory that we are working to address through strategic investments and partnerships. Over the past 5 years, housing construction has kept pace with population growth, with the the number of private dwellings in the Yukon increasing by 12.9 per cent. In fact, residential investment has reached record highs in the Yukon, with \$267 million in residential construction in 2021 shattering the 2020 record of nearly \$200 million.

This year's budget includes more than \$60 million for housing initiatives across the Yukon. We are investing \$255 million in capital over the next five years to support access to stable, affordable housing and to allow for future development. These are historic investments throughout the housing spectrum, from land development and affordable housing construction to barrier-free housing and supported, accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Our government is making more affordable and supportive housing available for Yukon families through partnerships with the private sector. We are also working together with municipalities to make more residential lots available throughout the territory.

A flurry of housing construction is happening right across the territory and a variety of exciting projects are scheduled to be complete this year. In Whitehorse alone, where the majority of new citizens are choosing to live, hundreds of new homes will soon be available for Yukon families. The Yukon Housing Corporation's new community housing project at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street will create 47 new affordable homes along the Yukon River for those in need. Challenge Disability Resource Group's Cornerstone supportive housing project will create 45 new homes for vulnerable Yukoners at the end of Main Street. The Normandy Manor project on Range Road will create 84 new homes for Yukon seniors within walking distance of McIntyre Creek. And in the city's newest neighbourhood of Whistle Bend, 87 new homes will soon be available as part of the Boreal Commons affordable and rental housing project. In partnership with local businesses and organizations, our government has helped fund these innovative projects that fill longstanding gaps in the territory's housing continuum.

New homes are taking shape in our rural communities as well. More than \$15 million is budgeted for the completion of a new mixed-use community housing project that will provide 10 new homes in Old Crow. Money is also included for planning a mixed-use community housing project in Carcross. A total of \$6.5 million in Northern Carve-Out funding under the National Housing Co-Investment Fund is supporting community housing projects in Dawson City, Teslin, Watson Lake and Whitehorse this year. We have also included \$1.5 million through the new Community Housing Development Fund to support community partnerships that increase housing supply throughout the territory. Our strategic investments in lot development and residential construction are helping to ensure that all Yukoners have access to modern, affordable housing into the future.

In partnership with First Nations governments and Yukon communities, our government is working to develop land to address increasing demand for residential lots. This year's budget includes more than \$30 million for land development. Our territory's population growth continues to be concentrated in Whitehorse, where construction of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood continues along with planning of the Range Point Road subdivision in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. More than \$11 million is included to incentivize residential construction for projects like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision expansion in Copper Ridge that would create more than 180 new residential lots. The land parcel at 5th and Rogers, which has the potential for new downtown residential lots, will also be out for tender this year while the site of the old Macaulay Lodge will create new housing development opportunities in Riverdale.

We continue to work with partners to meet demand in our growing communities as well. Work on serviced and country residential lots is underway on the Dome Road and the Dredge Pond development in Dawson City. In Carmacks, urban and country residential lots are under development. We are also working with the Village of Carmacks and the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation to plan new residential and industrial subdivisions. New lots are being serviced in Haines Junction as planning gets underway for the next residential and industrial subdivisions together with the Village of Haines Junction and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Residential development on the upper bench above Mayo is being planned in partnership with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo. A substantial portion of the Lone Tree development near Teslin is scheduled for completion this year and we are working with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Village of Teslin to identify further areas for residential, commercial and industrial development. Planning and feasibility work is also underway in Watson Lake, Carcross and other rural communities.

Our government continues to take bold and progressive action to address the housing needs of our territory. In 2019, we opened the first-ever Housing First residence in the North to provide barrier-free housing to those most in need in Whitehorse. Last year, operations were successfully taken over through an innovative partnership between the Council of Yukon First Nations and Connective. We are providing an additional \$650,000 this year for a total of \$1.25 million to ensure that these organizations can continue to provide holistic and culturally-informed service delivery to our most vulnerable Yukoners. \$4.5 million is included to build a new Housing First residence in Watson Lake in collaboration with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. An additional \$383,000 will help establish community housing for Justice-involved women for the first time in the territory.

Meeting the ever-increasing housing demands in the territory is not something any one government or organization can accomplish on its own. That is why we continue to develop and support partnerships and innovative approaches to address housing needs in the territory. Last year, we provided the Safe at Home Society \$5 million to help transform the old High Country Inn into a new supportive housing program that will help Yukon youth and women that need a safe place to call home. We have identified land in Whitehorse for the territory's first community land trust. This will provide a long-term affordable housing solution not seen before in the Yukon. We also continue to support Yukon First Nations governments to register their Settlement Land in the Yukon Land Titles Office in a way that does not impact Aboriginal rights and title. This has created new residential and industrial land lease opportunities in the territory while creating exciting new economic opportunities for Yukon First Nations.

Yukoners want to see more affordable housing in the territory and our government is listening. The Housing Initiatives Fund continues to support the development of affordable housing options, from housing with services and rental housing to home ownership. Since 2018, it has supported the development of approximately 470 new homes in partnership with developers, contractors, community organizations, First Nations governments, First Nations Development Corporations and individual Yukoners. More than half of these homes will remain affordable for the next 20 years. This Fund has increased affordable housing options across the Yukon and we are pleased to increase the amount of funding available this year by \$2.1 million for a total of \$5.7 million.

Nearly \$2.5 million in this year's budget will help Yukoners afford to rent homes that meet their needs. More than \$1 million is budgeted for the Canada Yukon Housing Benefit. This innovative program provides up to \$800 per month directly to Yukon tenants to help them afford their rent. \$1.4 million will continue to help several Yukon households afford a place to live through private market rental supplements. \$13.7 million is included for rent-geared-to-income housing. Together, these community housing programs provide much needed housing solutions to roughly 1,000 Yukon households. \$1.65 million under the Home Repair Program will also help Yukoners afford to make emergency repairs and accessibility enhancements to their

homes. A further \$3.2 million will help rural Yukoners buy or build their first home through the Rural Home Ownership Program.

By continuing to work collaboratively with partners and support a diversity of housing options, we will ensure all Yukoners have a safe, affordable place to call home.

Prioritizing Health and Safety

The health and wellbeing of Yukoners is the foundation of a bright future for our territory. Targeted investments are needed to meet both immediate needs in our communities and to continue building a sustainable health and social services system that supports holistic, collaborative and people-centred care to improve outcomes for all Yukoners into the future.

The Yukon, like the rest of Canada, is in the grip of two health emergencies of historic proportions that are having devastating impacts in each of our communities. Successive waves of COVID-19 have tested the limits of our public health systems while altering the lives and livelihoods of all our citizens. Our government ensured Yukoners had access to life-saving vaccines as soon as they became available. A swift, comprehensive and historic vaccination rollout provided a robust layer of protection throughout the territory that prevented the most severe outcomes from occurring. Nevertheless, the pandemic has taken a toll on our territory. Twenty Yukoners have lost their lives from COVID-19 and new variants have emerged during the pandemic, presenting additional challenges for the territory and the rest of the world.

Faced with an historic and unprecedented public health emergency, our government has consistently followed the science to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners. With a highly vaccinated population, we have developed a plan to forge ahead towards recovery in a way that protects the most vulnerable in our territory and supports the health and wellbeing of all our communities. We owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to Yukon healthcare professionals and essential frontline workers that have gone above and beyond in response to the pandemic. These are the heroes that have ensured Yukoners continue to have reliable access to services and supplies while supporting our loved ones.

More than \$11.6 million in this year's budget is dedicated to the health and social resources necessary to manage the ongoing risk of COVID-19 in our territory. Guided by *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's continuing response to COVID-19*, we will continue to address both acute care and public health responses such as testing; transmission control and mitigation; vaccinations; and vaccination verification. We have also included a \$10 million COVID-19 contingency fund to ensure we can continue to respond effectively as we move from pandemic to endemic. All Yukoners have been affected by the pandemic and our government will continue to support them as we move further along the path to recovery.

Alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, another crisis has wreaked havoc on our country and taken the lives of far too many Canadians. Substance use is killing people and creating mental health crises in all our communities as people grapple with the grief and pain of a tragic loss of lives. We need to face this challenge with resolve and compassion, ending the stigma of substance use to ensure people get the support they need. Earlier this year, the Yukon declared a Substance Use Health Emergency in recognition of a tragic increase in overdose related deaths in the territory. That declaration is a commitment to action by our government and a call to action to all Yukoners. We need to work together to address substance use in our territory and make our communities safer and healthier.

The root causes of the Substance Use Health Emergency are complex. Addressing them requires leadership and coordination across all levels of government, communities and health and social care professionals. Last

month, our government brought together hundreds of individuals from across the Yukon and Canada for phase one of a Mental Wellness Summit. This was a vital opportunity to discuss substance use prevention, treatment, support services and aftercare, and to share information about harm reduction models and solutions. As we heard, there is no magic solution to substance use and the associated mental health challenges Canadians and Yukoners are facing. What is critical is that we work together to address these challenges and improve the health of all Yukon communities.

Substance use, at its core, is a health problem. Our government has taken the most progressive steps towards substance use harm reduction in the history of the Yukon. Building on our 2018 *Opioid Action Plan*, we have continued to expand harm reduction initiatives that have saved lives in our territory. Last year, we opened the first supervised consumption site in the North to increase safety for those who use substances and improve access to social, medical, mental wellness and substance use supports. Last year, we also expanded access to a safer supply of opioids for Yukoners suffering from addiction and serious substance use issues. The supervised consumption site and the safer supply program are important tools to address the opioid crisis, along with continued outreach, public education and harm reduction initiatives like drug testing. While we have taken significant action to address substance use in our territory, we know we need to do more.

Over \$5.5 million in this year's budget will support our government's immediate response to the Substance Use Health Emergency. This includes more than \$1.1 million to enhance the supervised consumption site to increase access and support more people in need. More than \$850,000 will allow the safer supply program to be expanded to rural communities and increase availability in Whitehorse. Nearly \$1.8 million will support additional mental health and social services throughout the territory. As part of increased funding for policing services this year, almost \$300,000 will bolster the RCMP's response to the toxic supply of illegal drugs in the territory. We know that many Yukoners are struggling with mental health and substance use issues. By coming together as a territory, we are working to find solutions that will help ensure every Yukoner can access the support they need when they need it.

To ensure a bright future for the territory, we must continue to invest in a sustainable, people-centred health and social services system that improves outcomes for all Yukoners. As our government continues to implement the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report, the Yukon's healthcare system is being transformed into a national leader.

Our government has taken significant steps to make service delivery more sustainable, effective and responsive to the needs of all Yukoners, including reducing pharmacy markups and fees, and expanding palliative and end-of-life programs and supports for Yukoners. We doubled the medical travel benefit for Yukoners as part of enhancements to the medical travel program and hired additional nurse practitioners to increase access to primary health care providers in Yukon communities. We also expanded access to publicly funded vaccines including the shingles vaccine. In fact, our government received the highest grade improvement out of all Canadian jurisdictions for our adult vaccination programs this year. Work is also underway to establish Wellness Yukon, a new public health agency for the Yukon that will improve outcomes and experiences for clients, patients, families and health and social service providers.

Our government is committed to modernizing the Yukon's health and social service delivery to better meet the needs of all Yukoners. \$20.7 million is identified in this year's budget to continue to transform our health system into a national leader. More than \$1.8 million will allow us to begin providing dental coverage to uninsured Yukoners. \$13 million for the Health and Wellness Centre in Old Crow will ensure quality services are available in our most remote community. More than \$2.6 million will support the new Bilingual Health Centre in Whitehorse. This health centre will use a collaborative, team-based model of care, and will be the first health centre in the Yukon based on the integrated primary health care model recommended in *Putting People First*.

Yukoners can be proud of the growing range of quality healthcare services being delivered through Yukon hospitals. Just last year, the Yukon's orthopedic care team completed the territory's first-ever total hip replacement surgery at the Whitehorse General Hospital. The orthopedic care team includes one of our homegrown surgeons, Dr. Scott Westberg. It is wonderful to see Yukoners pursuing the honourable calling of healthcare professions. This year, \$255,000 will support health and social services training in Yukon communities. An additional \$250,000 is included to support careers in health and social services, including adding an additional cohort to the Licensed Practical Nursing program at Yukon University. This program provides opportunities for up to 18 new students each year to pursue healthcare careers, and we have jobs waiting for them upon graduation. \$397,000 in the Budget will allow us to hire additional nurse practitioners and a Chief Nursing Officer to enhance community nursing in the territory.

By investing in the territory's healthcare system, our government is increasing access to medical services while reducing wait times and the need for out-of-territory medical travel. A total of \$88 million will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to continue providing Yukoners the best hospital care services. We have, once again, increased the Hospital Corporation's operations and maintenance budget, as we have in each of the last five years, to ensure Yukoners receive the standard of care they deserve. An additional \$1 million is included for drug dispensing units and mobile units for the Hospital Corporation. Another \$1 million will expand spirometry services in the territory. This will provide care close to home for all Yukoners, help to keep wait times low and reduce the need for travel out of territory for specialist lung appointments.

In addition to expanding services, we are also enhancing our healthcare facilities to ensure they meet the needs of all Yukoners. \$10.8 million in this year's budget is for the completion of a new short stay psychiatric unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. This will offer a safe place for patients with a mental health diagnosis to receive medical care. More than \$3.3 million is budgeted for the ongoing implementation of 1Health, a modernized information system that will give health care providers and Yukoners improved access to integrated, accurate health care records and information. A further \$315,000 will support renovations to the Health and Wellness Centre in Carcross.

Together with modernized health and social services, creating safer communities is vital to the wellbeing of Yukoners. Working with partners across the territory, our government continues to fund innovative community safety programming across the Yukon. \$300,000 in this year's budget will advance the Community Safety Planning Project. This is part of nearly \$3 million to support the implementation of community safety initiatives in the coming years. A further \$400,000 will support the Selkirk First Nation Community Safety Officer program. These community-designed and community-led initiatives have been recognized across Canada for helping create safer and stronger communities across the territory.

An increase of \$125,000 will support the expansion of the Sexualized Assault Response Team to rural communities to improve access to victim-centred, wrap-around services for victims of sexualized assault. Nearly \$150,000 will allow the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue providing women and children with support through the Sally & Sisters program. \$3.2 million is included for the Cultural Connections program to support children living in out-of-home care to remain connected to their communities, languages and cultures.

The Yukon was the first jurisdiction to develop a strategy in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This year's budget includes \$285,000 for the ongoing implementation of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy*. We are proud to be working in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Indigenous women's organizations to take action to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people. This is a vital aspect of our efforts to advance reconciliation and ensure a brighter and safer future for all Yukoners. We are also providing \$595,000 to support the work of the Yukon First Nation Governments'

Burial Site Investigation Committee. Our government recognizes the lasting impact of the trauma caused by the residential school system on Survivors, their families and communities. We continue to support efforts to bring to light and record the harms of residential schools as we move together along the path of reconciliation.

Honourable Speaker, creating a safer territory requires ending discrimination and making a more inclusive society that is welcoming to all Yukoners. In 2021, our government launched the territory's first ever LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan as part of our commitment to reduce barriers, increase inclusivity and create more equitable government programs and services. We have included \$110,000 to continue implementing this innovative plan, which takes a multifaceted approach to creating a more inclusive territory. We have also included \$425,000 towards the very first Pride Centre in the Yukon, a safe and welcoming community space for LGBTQ2S+ individuals and their families operated by Queer Yukon. This funding is being delivered through the Yukon's Women and Gender Equity Directorate – formerly the Women's Directorate. The new name reflects our government's commitment to advocate and support women, girls and the LGBTQ2S+ community in our territory.

Empowering the Next Generation

Our government continues to make historic investments in early learning and childcare to ensure that all Yukoners have access to a bright future. Last year we launched the Yukon's first universal, affordable childcare program to put more money in the pockets of Yukon families and ensure Yukon children get the best start at life. This program offsets the costs of childcare by up to \$700 per month, per child. It also ensures that fully qualified early childhood educators in the Yukon receive over \$30 per hour, the highest minimum wage for early childhood educators in the country. This ground breaking program has made the territory "Canada's new leader in early learning and care" according to the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto. By investing in early learning and childcare, we are making life more affordable for Yukon families and ensuring that our children have the support they need to succeed.

We are building on these historic investments in Yukon families by contributing more than \$40 million this year toward early learning and childcare initiatives. Working in collaboration with our partners we have reached an agreement to access an additional \$54.3 million in federal funding over the next five years to support expanded access to high quality early learning and childcare throughout the territory.

Ensuring Yukon learners are supported from childhood right through to adulthood is an essential part of building a brighter future for the territory. We are committed to working together with our partners to ensure our education system empowers all Yukon students on their learning journey. This year, on the 49th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, our government officially established the Yukon First Nation School Board in partnership with the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education. This marks an exciting new chapter as we continue to build a modern education system that meets the needs of all Yukon students. This historic partnership reflects our government's unwavering commitment to reconciliation based on respectful relationships with our First Nations partners.

As more families choose to raise their children in the Yukon, our education system continues to grow. More than \$25 million is included in this year's budget to build a new elementary school in Whistle Bend, the fastest growing neighbourhood of Whitehorse. The school is being built by Whitehorse-based Ketza Construction and will be the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in more than 25 years. It will provide modern learning spaces for over 400 students and support a vibrant and thriving community. Additionally, more than \$1 million will advance planning and design of the new Kluane Lake School project in Burwash Landing while over \$2 million will support modernized learning spaces in Dawson City.

Nearly \$800,000 in this year's budget will support the implementation of the recommendations of the review of inclusive and special education in the Yukon. The review provides a blueprint for building a world-class system where the strengths of every learner are built up to help them meet their personal goals. Our government is committed to improving and modernizing inclusive and special education programming to more effectively support student learning needs and outcomes.

The health and wellness of our students is paramount. More than \$450,000 will ensure Yukon students are successful at school in the era of COVID-19 while also ensuring the health and safety of students, families and staff. An additional \$400,000 will bolster mental health supports in Yukon schools. Through increased education and expanded developmental supports, we will ensure we give students the ability to talk about, understand, and seek support for their mental health.

Supporting our educators is instrumental to the success of our students. This year \$3.7 million will support education professionals throughout the territory to continue empowering Yukon students. Through a new agreement with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, the salaries for teachers will increase over the next three years while teachers-on-call, education assistants and Yukon First Nations language teachers all receive additional pay to support their invaluable work.

As the Yukon continues to enjoy historic population and economic growth, it is important to continue expanding advanced and post-secondary education opportunities within the territory. Yukon University provides a growing range of opportunities from continuing education options to made-in-Yukon degree programs. More than \$1.2 million is being provided this year to support the growing staffing, information and equipment needs of the institution. Our government is proud to have helped establish the first university in Canada's North. We are committed to supporting its ongoing innovation and development as a hub of knowledge that supports the diverse learning needs of Yukon communities.

Through collaboration and strategic investments, we are making enhancements throughout our education system. Together with our partners, we are writing a new chapter on education in the Yukon and building a brighter future for the territory.

Supporting a Diverse, Resilient and Green Economy

Our government is building a stronger future for the territory by investing in resilient infrastructure to meet the needs of Yukon communities while moving us toward our climate action targets. Record capital spending on modern transportation, renewable energy and community infrastructure is contributing to sustainable communities throughout the territory and supporting a diverse, resilient and green economy.

Our actions are guided by *Our Clean Future: A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. This comprehensive, 10-year strategy was developed in partnership with municipalities and First Nations across the Yukon. For the first time in the territory's history, it identifies clear targets to reduce the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions; ensure Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable and renewable energy; adapt to the impacts of climate change; and build a green economy. This year's budget contains more than \$80 million to address the Yukon's climate emergency through *Our Clean Future* initiatives.

Yukoners recognize the urgent need to tackle climate change and our government is taking action to meet the Yukon's climate change goals. Last year, we mounted the largest flood mitigation effort in Yukon history. It was truly inspiring seeing families, businesses and organizations come together to support Yukoners in a time of need. This year's budget includes \$3.7 million for flood remediation and recovery in the Southern Lakes and Lake Laberge areas. This will help Yukoners restore their properties, mitigate against future flooding events and prepare long-term plans to better prepare our communities and residents for future

climate change events. An additional \$3.1 million is budgeted for Wildland Fire Management this year. After reaching an agreement with the White River First Nation last year, our government is proud that all fourteen Yukon First Nations are now involved in keeping Yukon communities safe from wildfire. We will continue to work with our partners across the territory to protect Yukoners from the increasing threats of climate change.

We continue to support the Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year Renewable Electricity Plan. This plan complements *Our Clean Future* and sets the Yukon on track to be a national leader in sustainable electricity by 2030 in collaboration with First Nations and development corporations. It has been endorsed by all parties in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

This year's budget includes more than \$35 million for renewable energy projects. \$15 million will go toward the Atlin Hydro Expansion Project. Earlier this year, Yukon Energy signed an Electricity Purchase Agreement with Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership that will increase the supply of dependable renewable electricity in the Yukon. This is an exciting opportunity for the Yukon to expand our renewable energy capacity in partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation while reducing the territory's emissions and ensuring energy remains affordable for Yukoners.

More than \$7.7 million will advance additional energy system upgrades, including the new grid-scale Battery Storage project in Whitehorse. This 7 megawatt battery will be a first in Canada's North and will replace the need for four rental diesel generators each winter. \$12 million under the Arctic Energy Fund will advance a range of exciting community-driven projects such as the Haeckel Hill Wind Project, the Dome Road Solar Project and the Kluane Wind Project. An additional \$2.5 million is budgeted for the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative to support more renewable energy projects in Yukon communities. These are the most substantial investments in renewable energy in the Yukon in more than a decade and mark significant steps forward in meeting the territory's climate change targets.

More than \$13.9 million is dedicated to upgrades to help existing community buildings conserve energy, including the Beaver Creek grader station; Mayo administration building; Copper Ridge Place; Elijah Smith Elementary School; Yukon University; and the Yukon Justice Centre. \$16.5 million will support a range of community infrastructure projects, such as the Faro public works building and fire hall; the arena and public works building in Carmacks; a new public works facility in Old Crow; the fire hall, municipal centre and public works facility in Teslin; the Teslin Tlingit Council public building; and the City Hall and Services Building in Whitehorse. A total of \$19 million will allow for the installation of solar energy systems at off-grid grader stations over the next five years. This will contribute approximately 10 per cent towards our greenhouse gas reduction target for government buildings.

Our Clean Future is a Yukon-wide strategy to tackle climate change that involves all levels of government, businesses, organizations and individuals. Our government is leading by example and we continue to support efforts that empower Yukoners and Yukon businesses to advance the territory's climate change goals. This year we are spending more than \$1.5 million towards the electrification of our transportation network. This includes expanding the Yukon's network of electric vehicle chargers in communities and along the highways that connect them. A total of 19 fast chargers will be installed by the end of this year to enable electric vehicle travel to all of our road accessible communities. We are expanding our Good Energy rebate program to help more First Nations, municipalities and businesses to install electric vehicle chargers. More than \$1.7 million will also help enhance public transportation in Whitehorse to increase options for commuters.

More than \$3.7 million in this year's budget will help retrofit homes throughout the territory to make them more energy efficient. We are also working with municipalities to create the Better Buildings Program. This innovative program would provide Yukoners with up to \$50,000 to retrofit their homes, and up to \$100,000

to retrofit their businesses, at the lowest interest rate in the country. Making it more affordable for Yukoners to upgrade their homes and businesses will save Yukoners money on heating costs while reducing the territory's greenhouse gas emissions. It will also increase economic and employment opportunities in the Yukon's green economy.

We continue to implement *Cultivating Our Future*, the Yukon's 10-year agriculture strategy, developed together with Yukon's fast-growing agricultural industry. Nearly \$1.5 million will provide support throughout the territory for community gardens and markets as well as farm business plans, building farm infrastructure and funding specialized equipment. By working together we are fostering the growth of Yukon's agriculture sector while increasing food security.

Our territory's strong economic growth and record low employment rate has led to jobs being created at a faster rate than they can be filled. Nearly \$6.5 million is included in this year's budget to support the development of the Yukon's labour market. A strategic restructuring will see services from the Department of Education established as a new Labour Market Unit within the Department of Economic Development. With a sharper focus on economic development, the Labour Market Unit will make support more easily accessible and will help Yukon employers and business owners find new opportunities for growth and development. We also continue to adapt the Yukon Nominee program to meet the needs of employers as work continues on the Yukon's new Immigration Strategy.

More than \$150 million will advance resilient infrastructure projects to support our territory's growing economy. This includes nearly \$43 million for improvements to the North Klondike Highway. This is part of over \$330 million we have secured to enhance one of the most critical transportation links in our territory. \$10.8 million is included for Resource Gateway projects to support Yukon's mineral resource development sector while creating economic opportunities in partnership with Yukon First Nations. More than \$27 million is included for improvements to the Erik Nielsen International Airport runway, which is set to welcome international flights again this summer. With over \$51 million in the Budget, our government continues to make historic investments in the Yukon's airports and aerodromes to support our aviation industry, tourism and increase economic opportunities throughout the territory. A further \$69 million will support a wide variety of community infrastructure projects in and around Yukon communities.

\$27 million in this year's budget will advance the Dempster Fibre Line. Construction is underway on this long-awaited project that will make northern information technology infrastructure more resilient while bolstering the growth of our nationally recognized knowledge and tech sector. Our government's continued focus on developing this sector has contributed to the diversification of the Yukon's economy. Building on the momentum of NorthLight Innovation, the first innovation hub in the North, we will be launching an Innovation Strategy this year to continue stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in the territory.

Fostering our creative and cultural industries sector is another way our government is building a strong, diverse and resilient economy. Nearly \$500,000 is included to continue implementing *Creative Potential: Advancing the Yukon's Creative and Cultural Industries*, the territory's first-ever creative and cultural industries strategy. The Yukon's creative and cultural industries sector will play an important role in the recovery of the Yukon's economy and promoting well-being throughout the territory. An additional \$310,000 will enable us to co-host the 2022 Arctic Arts Summit with the Canada Council for the Arts. This will be the first time the Summit has ever been held in Canada and will provide a unique opportunity to showcase the Yukon's arts and cultural sectors while strengthening and promoting circumpolar collaboration.

Last fall, our government supported the Yukon Film Society to reopen the iconic Yukon Theatre as a community space for screening films, performing arts, lectures and concerts. The Yukon Theatre was the focal point as the Film Society hosted the 20th Anniversary of the Available Light Film Festival last month.

In addition to devoted film lovers, the Yukon is home to exceptionally creative and unique film and digital creators. This year, our government launched four new film, television and digital media funding programs to support local media content creators with projects at every stage of development. We have included more than \$1.2 million for these new programs that will support the territory's internationally recognized media sector, help Yukon creators bring their ideas to the screen, and contribute to the diversification of our economy.

In addition to a flourishing arts and cultural scene, the Yukon is home to thousands of priceless and globally-significant archaeological artifacts and paleontological specimens. \$850,000 is set aside for planning and designing a new Arts and Heritage Collections facility together with First Nations to meet the storage needs of these treasures now and into the future. An additional \$450,000 is included for the Yukon's Beringia Exhibit to create a more hands-on, exploratory and immersive experience for visitors from across the country and around the world.

The Yukon is also gaining an international reputation for world-class recreational infrastructure that helps elite athletes gain a competitive edge. This year's budget includes significant investments to enhance recreational facilities that encourage active living and support the development of Yukon athletes.

In recent years, Mount Sima has established itself as the premier early season training ground for Canada's best skiers and snowboarders. Max Parrot, who won the gold medal for Canada in snowboard slopestyle at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, has trained at Mount Sima in recent years alongside Mark McMorris, who won bronze. More than \$3 million in upgrades will enable the electrification of Mount Sima's hill operations, leading to a significantly smaller carbon footprint. This will improve the reliability of seasonal snow making operations so Mount Sima can continue to provide early season training opportunities for amateur and professional athletic teams. The installation of LED lighting will also conserve energy and extend operating hours and recreational opportunities for Yukoners.

The Yukon is well established as a breeding ground for top-level cross-country skiers. Dahria Beatty competed in several solo and team cross-country skiing competitions at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, where she recorded new personal bests. She joins Knute Johnsgaard and Emily Nishikawa who have each participated in Olympic competitions in the last decade, along with Graham Nishikawa, who will be returning to the Winter Paralympics this year as a guide. Yukon's biathletes are also starting to make their mark. Nadia Moser is a Canada Winter Games medalist who was named the 2019 Female Athlete of the Year by Biathlon Canada. Over \$230,000 is included in this year's budget to begin developing a new space for Biathlon Yukon. This will support athlete preparation, hosting activities, storage, and future growth of the sport. This investment will ensure the territory continues to enjoy world-class cross-country ski and biathlon facilities to support the next generation of Olympians.

More than \$8.85 million will support the construction of a new gymnastics gym and climbing facility. This new, multi-use sports complex will support the growth of the Polarettes Gymnastics Club and the Climb Yukon Association. Last year, Bianca Berko-Malvasio, Maude Molgat and Lily Witten were the first members of the Polarettes Club to compete in the Canadian Nationals in 20 years. In addition to growing the sport of climbing in the territory, Climb Yukon has been actively working towards getting a dedicated climbing facility in the Yukon for years and we are pleased to be supporting them to make it a reality.

Conclusion

Honourable Speaker, under our government's stewardship, the Yukon is truly emerging as a leader in Canada.

While our territory was not immune to COVID-19, we led the country's vaccination efforts and worked with our partners to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response that prevented the most severe health impacts. We introduced Canada's best economic support programs and have continued to adapt them to support local businesses and organizations move along the path to recovery. Our government's strong leadership has guided our territory through the pandemic and kept our economy growing.

Our record capital investments have kept Yukoners working while continuing to enhance community infrastructure throughout the territory. Historic investments have made the Yukon's early learning and childcare the best in the country while making life more affordable for Yukon families. Our efforts to diversify our economy have placed us at the forefront of entrepreneurship while growing our agricultural industry and fostering the development of the Yukon's beloved arts and culture sector. Our collaborative approach to tackling climate change is increasing community resiliency throughout the territory while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating opportunities in the green economy. The Yukon already has one of the greenest energy systems in Canada with 93 per cent of our electricity coming from renewable sources. By working with partners and making strategic investments, we will ensure we continue to set the standard for green energy.

Our commitment to strong government-to-government relationships with First Nations has ensured the Yukon continues to be a national leader in reconciliation. From the revitalization of the Yukon Forum and establishing National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday to finalizing the Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan and working in partnership to develop a Yukon-wide strategy in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we have charted a new, respectful and collaborative path for the benefit of all Yukoners. The establishment of the Yukon First Nations School Board is yet another milestone that honours the vision of past First Nations leaders while building a brighter future for the next generation.

This Budget will make sure all Yukoners benefit from our territory's historic economic growth. We are improving access to housing through strategic investments and innovative partnerships. We are prioritizing health and safety as we create more effective and sustainable health and social support systems to better meet the needs of all Yukoners. We are empowering the next generation by making life more affordable for families and modernizing the Yukon's education system. We are creating a diverse, resilient and green economy that will contribute to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities across the territory.

Our territory's population growth is the strongest in Canada, which has seen the strongest population growth of all the Group of Seven countries. The more we tell the story of the Yukon, the more people want to listen and be a part of it. We will continue to work together with our partners to write the next chapter of the territory, one that ensures a prosperous future for Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Merci.

Mahsi' cho.

Gunałchish.