




BUDGET ADDRESS 2017 - 2018

presented by

**PREMIER
SANDY SILVER**

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Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great honour to rise today and present our government's first budget.

On behalf of my Cabinet colleagues and government members, we do so with great humility and gratitude.

We do so with humility because we recognize that everything we achieve in government is enabled by the hard work and resilience of Yukoners.

It is a privilege to serve them.

Our government is grateful to voters for entrusting us with the profound responsibility of governing this wonderful territory and its diverse, vibrant communities.

We are determined to ensure strong, sound public finances for Yukoners.

Sound finances cannot just look good on paper, in here, within the Legislature.

Sound finances enable progress out there – in Yukoners' lives and in their communities.

Coming into office we understood that Yukon had a surplus budget.

Yet, there was no surplus.

There was a deficit.

In fact, this past fiscal year, our government needed to issue a special warrant for the last three months of the fiscal year.

It provided additional budgetary authorization for up to \$29.4 million.

This amount represented commitments by the last government not accounted for in the previous budget.


Mr. Speaker, our government presents a 2017/18 Budget today that is clear and measured.

We know that sound finances are not simply a government achievement to be trumpeted.

They are a shared achievement, made possible by the contributions of Yukoners themselves.

Finance ministers often buy new shoes on budget day.

In the spirit of our government's commitment to authenticity and hard work, I'm here in the type of shoes Yukoners wear every day – a pair that have been well used.



The shoes may be different, whether dress shoes, work boots, even running shoes.

But it is that act every day – lacing them up and getting out to work – which provides the revenue to make public investments possible.

Mr. Speaker, such hard work and commitment entitles Yukoners to budgets that are forthright and forthcoming.

Because we respect Yukoners, our budget is open and transparent.

Because we need the ideas of Yukoners, our future budget process will include engagement.

Because we believe in Yukoners, we will deliver a series of budgets that address their concerns and speak to their hopes for themselves and the territory.

Because government-to-government relationships with First Nations are Yukon's future, our budgets will reflect the need for collaboration with First Nations governments.

Budgeting challenges

Mr. Speaker, Yukon faces several challenges that demand greater strategic thinking and financial acuity in our budgeting.

One challenge we face is that long-term revenue must align with long-term expenditure.

In 2015/16, the fiscal plan was put at risk because the previous government based their plans on revenues that were too optimistic.

Anticipated tax revenues had to be adjusted downward.

In 2015/16, corporate tax revenues were lower than the previous government expected by \$19 million.

Personal tax revenues were lower than the previous government expected by \$10 million.

On the expenditure side, as capital projects are green-lighted, ongoing costs of operation and maintenance must be accounted for.

As Yukon's public capital assets grow, operations and maintenance costs will increase.

In the past, long-term plans have not fully accounted for this.

This was the case with projects such as the Whistle Bend continuing care facility and the new French-Language high school.

Another challenge is infrastructure.



There is a dual challenge here.

Municipalities need new infrastructure because much of what they now have is aging.

At the same time, they need to keep pace with improvements in technology.

They need infrastructure that is more efficient and environmentally friendly.

We are not just replacing.

We are modernizing.

Another challenge relates to demographics.

Yukon will have more seniors in the future.

In 2016, people who were 66 and older made up 10.3 per cent of our population.

By 2030, it will be 15.3 per cent.

We need to begin planning for the services we will need.

Those seniors will want to live full and engaged lives.

Other challenges originate outside our borders.

Mining and tourism are two of our largest economic strengths.

These sectors are directly impacted by shifts in the global economy.

Trade can be volatile.

Technology is changing.


Competition is increasing.

We need to invest strategically to weather the occasional, and inevitable, economic turbulence.

Of course, the future is not just about the challenges facing us.

Yukon is truly coming into its own.

There are new opportunities for jobs and new growth.



Our talented people are dreaming of – and acting on – new possibilities.

Our budgeting and financial management needs to create the right conditions for them to thrive.

First Nations governments and businesses are an emerging source of growth and prosperity.

Modern treaties and Self-Government Agreements have opened many economic development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I have listed challenges.

I have outlined sources of opportunity.

There is difficult and important work ahead.

But we know Yukoners are up to the task.

People who shy away from doing hard things rarely find themselves living in Yukon.

Our people embrace challenge.

They are drawn to opportunity.

They have put down roots in a territory where growth and prosperity takes real effort.

That effort is richly rewarded with a quality of life that no other place can match.

Our government is determined to present a series of budgets over the next several years that will create an environment for Yukon's people and economy to thrive.

Expert Financial Advisory Panel

Planning that more prosperous future means re-considering our current path.

The reality is, Yukon's current path leads to further fiscal uncertainty.

As Yukoners know, the longer you go down a path in the wrong direction, the harder the trip back will be.

Better to stop, look around, get your bearings, determine the course correction, take stock of what you need – and get headed in the right direction towards a new destination.

We need to make such an assessment ourselves, together as Yukoners.

Yukon needs a real conversation about choices.



That is why our government is establishing an expert Financial Advisory Panel.

The Panel will be chaired by a Yukoner, and it will include members with backgrounds in business, government and research.

It will balance local knowledge with outside experiences.

It is not a political or partisan exercise.

This is about bringing in new voices.

It will be a true dialogue.

The Financial Advisory Panel will inform, and provide Yukoners with facts, options and ideas.

They will listen to and hear from a broad cross-section of Yukoners.

The Panel will engage with First Nations and municipal governments.

It will hear from business, labour, environmental and social organizations.

Yukoners will have their chance to contribute to the discussion.

The Panel will begin their work in June and provide recommendations in October.

That input will inform our government's 2018/19 Budget and future budgets.

We've allocated \$250,000 to cover the costs of the panel's work, including broad public engagement.

We will put Yukon's finances on a sustainable path, together, through open and honest dialogue about our shared future.

Finance for the future

Mr. Speaker, to make the right choices, we need accurate information.


We need to fully understand the nature of challenges.

We need to be able to quantify measurable progress towards our goals.

That is why we are improving the Yukon government's financial planning capacity.

For example, the government has been forecasting tax revenue based on a share of Canadian forecasts.

We need a Yukon-specific forecast.



So, we are making changes.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics and the Business and Economic Research branch were moved into the Department of Finance.

This will help create a consistent population and economic forecast.

So, future budget forecasts will be Yukon-specific.

They will contain more data, which will make them more accurate and evidence-based.

This will help avoid the need for significant adjustment, as we saw in recent years.

In fact, we are making the Yukon Economic Outlook available at the same time we table the budget.

This is a first.

It will become the standard.

More than that, in future budgets we will show how decisions were influenced by the Yukon Economic Outlook.

We will provide the “what” – the budget decisions.

And we will give the “why” – the underlying realities that informed them.

However, this is just a start.

We are fully committed to evidenced-based decisions.

Evidence defines problems.

Evidence shows progress.


Evidence helps to understand why plans should be adapted because circumstances have changed.

Like any government, we made commitments.

We made them in the belief that they are needed.

However, they must pass the test of evidence.

If they do not, we may need to adjust - we will own up to that.



As Minister of Finance, I will accept that responsibility.

To me, that is the ethical and responsible choice as stewards of public funds.

In government, you do what the evidence shows is right for Yukon.

You do not simply do what political expediency tells you is right for your party.

Evidence is also crucial to reconciliation and partnership with First Nations communities.

Our new relationship is built on trust, goodwill and mutual understanding.

Better information helps build a partnership based on truth.

To do all this, we need more capacity in government for gathering and analyzing information.

So, we will reorganize the Department of Finance's lines of business and make an overall investment of \$1.96 million.

We will modernize budgeting and reporting systems.

We will create a program evaluation unit within the department as part of this strategic investment.

To sum up, we need to move from a department of budgeting to a true Department of Finance — one that is making full use of the talents of our public servants.

This evidence-based approach will be guided by our priorities.

As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, these enduring priorities will be:

- Our people and their well-being;
- Our healthy, vibrant communities;
- Strong government-to-government relationships fostering reconciliation and cooperation with First Nations; and
- Sustainable economic growth providing good jobs for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, our budget will help create the conditions for making life better for Yukoners by working with Yukoners.



OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR WELL-BEING

Our people and their well-being is truly the foundation of Yukon's prosperity.

We all know what our health and wellness means to each of us.

It supports all we want to achieve in life.

It's the same for Yukon as a whole.

We need everyone at their best to reach Yukon's true potential.

This why many budget investments focus on health and wellness.

To support progress, we have had productive conversations with the Government of Canada.

We reached an agreement on annual increases to Canada Health Transfer payments.

The increase will be three per cent annually or the rate of nominal growth in gross domestic product, whichever is higher.

We also negotiated another \$11.4 million over ten years in funding to enhance mental health and home care.

The agreement came into effect on April 1, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, health and wellness begin by helping young people get a good start in life.

Yukon is stronger when young people have hope and confidence.

A healthy childhood and adolescence is the beginning of success in school, work and life.


So, we are investing in resources and supports that help children and youth.

This year, our government is investing \$220,000 in additional funding for youth groups.

This will fund drop-in centres, leadership training and after-school programs to help young people build confidence and self-esteem.

It will support Boys and Girls Club, the Heart of Riverdale Community Centre, Bringing Youth Towards Equality and the Youth of Today Society.

We are also investing \$60,000 in the Single Track to Success Program.



This will expand development of mountain biking trails by youth.

So that young people working on the project build a sense of achievement.

And we will all have a world class trail network to generate tourism and good health.

Our government is supporting an Early Childhood Strategy to improve developmental outcomes.

Additional federal funding will help increase the number of subsidized child care spaces in rural Yukon.

This also helps to improve school readiness.

To encourage physical activity, our government is investing \$2.5 million, over two years, in the track and field and recreation site at FH Collins School.

We are also committed to working with Yukoners to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harms.

This will include addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, including enhanced supports for rural communities, and for children with FASD.

We will engage the commitment and expertise of organizations, such as the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon.

This will also align with work being done under the Yukon government's Mental Wellness Strategy.

In addition, we will develop and expand online education and outreach, including the "Be a Responsible Server" program, and age verification system at our retail outlets.

Promoting health also means discouraging smoking.

So, we will increase the rate of tax on cigarettes and loose tobacco.

It will rise from 21 cents per cigarette or gram to 25 cents on July 1, 2017.


It will further rise to 30 cents on April 1, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, this budget enhances access to health care in a number of important ways.

The Canada-Yukon Agreement on French Language Services will provide almost \$14 million from 2017/18 through 2019/20.

It will support significant improvements in delivering French language in primary, emergency and mental health care.

For example, the government will study the feasibility of a bilingual primary health care clinic.



We will also move forward on a bilingual staffing plan.

This will allow our government to designate additional bilingual positions, with a strong emphasis on health services.

Nurses provide the skilled, compassionate care that is the backbone of health care delivery.

Many of our young people want to choose this vocation.

This is now a little easier.

The Yukon College practical nursing program will now take in a new class every 12 months instead of every 18 months.

We are also enhancing home care by investing \$771,000 to support care for complex patients in their homes, as well as those in hospital awaiting a continuing care bed.

We will provide funding of \$650,000 towards the purchase of four new ambulances.

We will provide \$120,000 to enhance the Emergency Medical Services electronic patient care reporting system.

eHealth holds great promise in providing caregivers with quick access to important clinical information on patients.

It improves access to care, and quality of care.

Yet, eHealth comes with a duty to protect privacy.

So, our government will invest \$1.6 million to support eHealth programs and services, as well as security enhancements.

Mr. Speaker, addiction can be one of the toughest struggles a person can face.

When Yukoners need help, we do not want them to face this struggle alone.


We are investing \$160,000 in capital costs and \$1.49 million in operating costs to support 11 new full-time addictions and mental wellness workers in eight communities outside of Whitehorse.

An additional \$1.46 million will support operations and maintenance at the newly opened Sarah Steele addiction treatment facility.

Land-based healing has been shown to be valuable for many people.

The pilot project at Jackson Lake has shown great potential.

We are continuing our investment in this facility.



Our government is also investing \$150,000 to begin planning a Yukon-wide land-based healing program.

Wellness also includes preparation for life's challenges

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the nature of work is changing.

New technology impacts every industry.

Jobs that exist today may not be among the jobs of tomorrow.

At the same time, our children may do jobs we have not yet imagined.

We do not know exactly what the future holds, but we know our young people will need to be ready to adapt.

So, we are providing \$422,000 to put greater emphasis in education on skills and experiential learning.

We also know First Nations governments and corporations represent emerging economic drivers.

Yukon's future leaders, entrepreneurs and workforce can benefit from exposure to First Nations culture and history.

We will enrich education in these ways while maintaining academic standards and raising graduation rates.

We also need to close the education gap for youth in Yukon First Nations.

Our government will continue developing a Joint Education Action Plan with \$451,000 in funding.

There is a proverb that says: "When you fall down seven times, get up eight".

When Yukoners experience a setback in work and career, they get new skills and find new opportunities.

To help them on this journey, our government is investing almost \$16.8 million in education and training.

This will support student aid, literacy programs, skills re-training and other ways that Yukoners can take positive steps forward.

When you invest in Yukoners, there's no telling how far that investment might go.

That is because there is no limit to what our people can achieve.



GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH FIRST NATIONS TO FOSTER RECONCILIATION

Mr. Speaker, fostering reconciliation is a morally necessary exercise.

We are better able to understand how actions in the past continue to impact First Nations today.

We are better able to focus our sights squarely on the future.

Reconciliation is an active choice, one that takes real effort.

We do more than imagine a better future.

We commit to action.

Building shared prosperity can only come through sustained effort.

This is what we will do.

On January 13, 2017, Yukon took an important step towards its future.

At the Yukon Forum, the declaration Working Together was signed.

It was signed by all Yukon First Nation Chiefs, the Grand Chief of the Council for Yukon First Nations, and all members of Cabinet.

This intergovernmental declaration is a commitment to work together in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

It confirms a commitment to a constructive relationship – one that contributes to and promotes good governance for all Yukoners.

The declaration sets out the commitments to four Yukon Forum meetings each year.


These will be a venue for frank discussions on the issues in a respectful manner.

We will learn about the positions and interests of others.

We will achieve outcomes that will move the territory forward in a sustainable direction.

Senior officials will also meet to develop a joint five-year action plan.

That plan will zero in on specific common priorities, and lay out clear steps for implementation.



To build on the intergovernmental declaration, our government will transfer \$100,000 annually to help coordinate the Yukon Forum.

We are supporting the resolution of issues relating to transboundary First Nations and Yukon First Nations without final agreements.

As part of this commitment to reconciliation, we are adding one additional permanent position to the Aboriginal Relations division. Creating this new senior consultation advisor position will have a cost of \$130,000.

Mr. Speaker, here in Yukon and across Canada, we need to keep talking to each other about the legacy of pain and injustice experienced by Indigenous people.

There must be dialogue on the continuing issues faced by Indigenous people as a result of that legacy.

This is truth we must always confront.

In this budget, to support Truth and Reconciliation, one-time funding of \$150,000 will support three Aboriginal women's organizations.

They will complete work on recommendations from the 2016 Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the second Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit and contribute to the National Inquiry in Yukon.

We will also support a two-year term position, with \$97,000 per year in funding, to coordinate the Yukon government's participation in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The Yukon delegation that attended the national roundtable showed true leadership in advocating for a regional process.

Our government is committed to supporting an inquiry process that reflects the Yukon experience and context.

This initiative must lead to real progress in addressing the urgent issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Reconciliation will be a continuing theme throughout our government's agenda.

For example, legislation to amend the *Employment Standards Act* to include June 21st as a statutory holiday has been prepared and is ready for introduction this spring. This will contribute towards reconciliation.

The Government of Yukon will provide \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle to deliver traditional sport development and leadership training in all communities.

This will also help to train Team Yukon as they prepare to proudly represent us at the North American Indigenous Games this July.



Yukon's Wildland Fire Management works with First Nations to build capacity through contract fire crews.

There are currently 11 First Nations contract crews in Yukon, helping to protect lives, property and community assets.

To expand this important work, our government is investing \$149,000 for a 12th crew this summer for the Kluane First Nation.

A seven-year agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon Emergency Measures Organization will formalize the delivery of services to White River First Nation, the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation.

To achieve this goal, \$1.6 million will be provided over seven years, including \$70,000 in 2017/18.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations have identified housing as a priority.

Many communities struggle with overcrowding, overdue repairs and affordability.

A good home is a place to rest, study and succeed in education.

A good home enables a nutritious diet and contributes to good health.

It provides the stability that enhances confidence and supports success in life.

That is why our government is providing \$1.5 million for the First Nation Housing Program.

It will support First Nations governments, development corporations and housing providers in making improvements.

It will also provide rent supplements on newly constructed units.

Clean, reliable and affordable energy also supports community growth.

Yukon communities want to get past the diesel era and enter the renewable era.

To help, our government is providing \$1.5 million for the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative.

Supporting small community-driven renewable energy projects is the best way of increasing the supply of sustainable energy in First Nations homes and communities.

In doing so, it improves economic prospects and quality of life, which in turn, support reconciliation.

To further the work of reconciliation, we will seek ways of preparing more public servants for engaging in government-to-government relationships with First Nations.



DIVERSE AND GROWING ECONOMY

A diverse and growing economy provides the means for Yukoners to build a high quality of life.

We know that when Yukon businesses and workers have the right environment, they can compete and win.

We know that Yukon's strong entrepreneurial culture is among our best assets in seizing new opportunity in emerging sectors.

To boost competitiveness, our government is taking the first steps to lowering taxes.

However, as I said earlier, our government is also committed to acting on evidence.

In this budget, we will deliver on our promise to reduce the general corporate tax rate from 15 per cent to 12 per cent.

In 2017/18, we are also reducing the corporate tax rate for small corporations from 3 per cent, to 2 per cent.

We will then evaluate the implications of this change before making future decreases.

While we committed to a zero tax rate, we must ensure that this move is the best one towards achieving our overarching goal of ensuring sound public finances.

Mr. Speaker, a strong economy is one that values everyone's contribution.

We will provide one-time funding of \$60,000 to support the Yukon Human Rights Commission in researching equal pay for equal work.

Yukoners have worked hard to build a range of industries in the territory.

As we all know, tourism is one of the most promising of those industries.

People want travel experiences that are meaningful and authentic.

They want to meet interesting people.

They want to feel a connection to the natural world.

They are fascinated by First Nations culture that stretches back millennia.

They want stories to tell to friends and family.

Yukon occupies a special place in people's imagination and hearts.



We offer year-round experiences, from hiking under the midnight sun to experiencing winter under the northern lights.

Last year, images of royal family members enjoying our outdoors were seen around the world.

International media have featured Yukon travel.

This is a time to build on our profile.

To reach new audiences, our government is preparing to invest \$500,000 in a digital development tool that will engage a global audience.

It is a significant investment.

But one that is needed because we are competing online for eyeballs, and Yukon has a wealth of engaging images and stories.

We want the wonder, awe and fun of being here to come across online.

To help our businesses hone their pitch, our government is providing \$50,000 to look for ways to share more information online with Yukon tourism operators.

We will invest \$200,000 this year as part of a two-year effort to conduct a comprehensive survey of visitors.

This will help tourism businesses learn more about their customers so they can make more informed business decisions.

We will also invest \$150,000 in a tourism strategy, one focused on measurable results.

To help share our heritage with the world, we are providing \$75,000 to the Yukon Arts Centre to host an arts summit.

A \$50,000 investment will be provided to begin developing a broad-based arts and cultural policy to support growth in this sector.


We are also supporting the Carcross/Tagish First Nation Learning Centre in creating a community gathering place.

Our government will contribute \$145,000 to operational and activity funding related to the cultural component of this new facility.

Mr. Speaker, so much of the prosperity Yukon enjoys today has been supported by the strength of our resource industries.

Resources development will be as important to our future as it has been to our past.

However, we also know that our industry must keep pace with changing technology, and changing expectations around mining activity.



We are adding \$830,000 in one-time funding this year to the Yukon Mineral Exploration Program, bringing total investment to \$1.6 million.

It helps prospectors and exploration companies with early-stage work, which usually leverages additional funding from the market.

For each dollar invested by government, over three dollars in private-sector investment has been leveraged in the same year, and a number of significant mineral discoveries have been made.

In addition to the three existing program modules for mineral exploration, this year the government is considering a new module specifically for placer exploration.

Mr. Speaker, it is also worth noting that our government approved an amendment to Minto Exploration Limited's mining plan and issued an amended quartz mining licence on December 13, 2016.

The amendment means the company can begin work on a new open pit at the Minto mine near Pelly Crossing.

The new pit should allow the mine to continue operating through 2017.

The government will continue working with the Yukon Mining Alliance to attract investment dollars into Yukon's socially and environmentally responsible mining sector.

One of Yukon's strongest value propositions in mining will be the full engagement of First Nations governments and corporations in advancing projects that reflect community priorities.

To support this advantage, we will continue to support implementation of the Government of Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations memorandum of understanding, which was signed at the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver in January.


Mr. Speaker, while mining has contributed to the prosperity and quality of life we enjoy today, future prosperity will be further enhanced by a diverse economy.

Our government has made a commitment to develop a fund for promoting economic diversification and innovation in Yukon.

This year, we will complete the groundwork needed to successfully launch this new initiative.

To stimulate development of economic opportunities in Yukon communities, the Regional Economic Development Fund's budget will be doubled, from \$405,000 to \$800,000.

To support the growth of local brewers and distillers, the Yukon Liquor Corporation will review its pricing policies to ensure there is the right balance between profitability and supporting local producers.



Let me say here that our government appreciates the advocacy and contributions of business groups and other non-governmental organizations.

Yukon businesses compete with each other.

But they also know Yukon competes with the world.

So they value collective action that supports the growth which benefits all businesses.

We are committed to listening and leveraging their knowledge.

In the spirit of listening, we have heard from Yukon's burgeoning media industry.

We heard the Yukon Film Production Fund and the Yukon Film Development Fund had not kept pace with matching federal funding programs.

Specifically, these two programs did not allow for the funding of digital media elements.

Federal programs required digital media elements.

So, we fixed this to allow Yukon media producers to take advantage of innovations and technological changes while providing them with enhanced access to national funding sources.

We need to make it simpler and easier to do business with the government.

We need to reduce red tape in registering with government.

We will invest \$100,000 in the case management system of the employment standards and residential tenancy functions.

This will improve customer service and reduce red tape.


We are also addressing the need to reduce red tape in the professional regulatory licensing system with an investment of \$90,000.

The Government of Yukon recently launched Phase 1 of the Yukon Corporate Online Registry.

Our government will continue implementing this multi-stage project.

This suite of new e-services will reduce red tape for Yukon businesses and organizations, and make it easier to interact with the Yukon government.

Mr. Speaker, when the Yukon government spends, Yukon businesses should be benefiting as much as possible.



At the same time, government must get the best possible value for public investment.

Improving government procurement systems and services helps achieve both.

We are investing \$150,000 to continue modernizing procurement.

In the land title regime, Yukon is breaking new ground.

This year, we will be contracting for service to develop a new system for the Land Titles Office.

Among other benefits, it would support First Nations in seeking market financing of settlement land.

It is believed to be the first initiative of its kind in the world for a land titles system.

It will also support housing availability by allowing the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and municipalities to create condominiums on leasehold title.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's infrastructure needs to be renewed.

Every day, we benefit from the foresight and vision of previous generations.

They built the roads, highways and community infrastructure that transformed life in Yukon.

They were ambitious and determined to create the Yukon of their dreams.

Today, our generation is called on to do the same.

Yukon infrastructure must be renewed.

And it must be transformational.

It must serve growth in our communities and economy.

It must address inequality by connecting people to opportunity and by improving their quality of life.

We will plan carefully and strategically.

And we will make investments that consider multiple generations.

We will do this through a five-year capital plan for infrastructure.

This year, to support the movement of people and goods, we are investing \$15.25 million for bridge repairs.



This budget invests \$33.4 million for highway maintenance and repairs.

The budget also continues support for the restoration of critical highways.

Infrastructure for the future also means investing in institutions of learning.

We will support the ongoing transition for Yukon College to provide university education.

We are also providing \$8 million this year for the continued development of a new French-Language high school.

We will invest over \$11 million in the maintenance of government buildings, including schools — work that will include radon remediation.

Mr. Speaker, just as the economy relies on the movement of goods, the new economy relies on the free flow of ideas and information.

Connectivity is a gateway to global opportunity in learning and commerce.

We also need to make it easier for Yukoners to connect with government services.

Our government will continue supporting the Fibre Diversity Project to ensure more reliable and consistent connectivity.

We have also heard from business and other stakeholders that they can benefit from more access to government information.

Government, in its operations, collects a lot of data and information.

Inside government, we do not always see the full value of that data.

Businesses and other organizations often see innovative ways that data can be leveraged to benefit the economy or help citizens.

For example, as I said, we are already putting more tourism information online so businesses can use it.

We are in the early stages of planning for open data.

This year, we will invest \$100,000 on developing an open data repository.



HEALTHY VIBRANT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are proud of their territory.

We work in common purpose together.

We are also deeply connected to our communities.

That is why our government is also committed to healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

More people are recognizing that Yukon communities offer a wonderful quality of life.

People growing up in Yukon want to create households of their own, and build a life in the place they love.

To support that dream, our government will ensure land is developed.

This year, we will invest \$9.8 million to develop new lots in Whistle Bend.

A total of 79 new lots will be ready for sale to the public in the fall of 2017.

Work is underway on Whistle Bend Phase 4 design, which will provide 170 lots.

We are investing \$14.3 million in 2017/18 to build surface works and underground utilities this summer.

To support the growth of smaller communities, \$30 million will be invested across the territory under the Government of Canada's Small Communities Fund and the Clean Water Wastewater Fund.


This will support over 30 projects including: a solid waste investment in Haines Junction, Mayo reservoir upgrades, a Watson Lake wet well and lift station, Old Crow lagoon upgrades, and a Faro pump house, to name a handful.

This budget invests \$660,000 to plan for replacement of three group homes in Whitehorse so those residences can fulfil their vital services to people in need.

We will invest \$553,000 to support the Salvation Army Centre of Hope and fund 25 shelter beds and 20 transitional living units.

To support the building of affordable rental units we are investing \$1 million in the Municipal Matching Rental Construction Program.

Our government is also providing Habitat for Humanity with \$500,000 in support of a new multi-family affordable homeownership project in Whitehorse.



Our government is investing \$200,000 in Energy Retrofit Projects.

This will help plan, design and implement energy retrofit projects in Yukon government buildings.

In doing so, we reduce operating costs, increase local economic benefits and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

To improve air connection in Dawson, our government will invest \$250,000 to Dawson City Airport planning.

Again, we are taking the time to get it right.

We are seeking the best information to make the best decisions so we meet the goals of Dawson residents.

The airport is a vital connection, we need to make sure investments meet community needs, today and in the future.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are proud Canadians.

They are excited to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

This budget provides \$300,000 in funding for celebratory activities, including for Music Yukon and Canada Scene signature events.

We are also investing \$130,000 in developing a heritage management plan for historic sites in Yukon First Nations Final Agreements.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, budgets are not only a product of the government.

They are a reflection of the people – their hopes, concerns, challenges and opportunities.

Yukoners are hopeful about the future of our territory.

They are realistic dreamers.

They choose dreams that take work.

You walk down any street in our territory, or visit any river or lake, and there is a story.

Those stories are about previous generation that transformed Yukon.



Stories that shaped our present day.

Well, there is history happening in Yukon today.

We are shaping a future.

Decisions we make now will reverberate in decades to come.

That is why our government will focus relentlessly on making decisions that are credible and stand up to scrutiny.

Because we know they will be tested by time.

Evidence-based decisions sounds technical.

It sounds dry.

It seems detached.

Our government sees it differently.

We see it as the most hopeful way of governing.

It is not blind hope.

It is a confidence that Yukoners can confront their real challenges.

That we have come of age.

It speaks to a belief that we can solve any problems we see.

We can achieve any goals we set.

Yukon is already leading the way on reconciliation and partnership with First Nations.


There is no place in the world like Yukon, so there is no lead we have to follow.

This budget supports the commitment and hard work that Yukoners are willing to put in.

It is the first budget in a series that will build a brighter future for the territory.

Work has already begun.

We're only just getting started.



Real change is coming.

And let me assure Yukoners, they will see the evidence that it's happening.

They will be part of the transformation.

We're stepping boldly towards Yukon's future.

We do so with confidence.

We do so, together.

Thank you.